

# A History



by  
Vincent Byrne



Vincent Byrne



## FOREWORD

The following account is a story of a group of young men from the Ballinteer area who decided to start up a rifle club in early 1981.

It tells the story of how these lads started the club for their own enjoyment, usually on Sunday mornings, when they would shoot paper targets and have informal competitions between themselves.

These Sunday mornings were more of a social gathering than a shoot, there was great craic and plenty of funny stories and jokes usually told by people like Ambrose Glass, Eamonn Mc Cullough, Pat Lawlor, Ivor Harmon, Mick Foley, Con Butler and many others, and cup's of tea and coffee in the open air, what more could a person need.

However as you would expect, things began to change, the club was growing and I think it outgrew these original members, they began to feel that some of the fun had gone out of the Sunday mornings, too many strangers were now joining, too many rules and regulations and acrimonious monthly meetings. I think they felt they were losing control of "their club", their original idea had grown into something different to what they had envisaged and because of this situation, most of them decided to leave, over a number of years.

But even if the present format of the club is not exactly what these founder members had in mind, it evolved from their original ideas and groundwork, for which we, the current membership and club owe them an immense debt of gratitude, and hopefully they would not be too unhappy with what they started, twenty five years ago in 1981.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of a number of club members past and present for their invaluable help in compiling this historical account of our club, starting with Liam Davitt, Michael Foley, and Ambrose Glass for providing documents, photographs, and information going right back to the beginning of the club. Matthew Canning, Brenda Brooks, and Henry Lee for their help in reporting on international silhouette competitions. Anthony Feeney for his graphic design skills, and Adam Lawrie of QPA Print Ltd. for putting it all together, and a special word or thanks to Pat O'Kane, Martin Fox and Ross Lagoda from the Desk Top Publishing course in Fás Loughlinstown for their invaluable assistance.





## BALLINTEER RIFLE CLUB / B.R.C. SHOOTING CLUB FOUNDED 1981

### A HISTORY BY VINCENT BYRNE

I wish to state from the outset that the following history is as accurate as possible, given the passage of time and individuals recollections of events and dates, which can vary slightly depending on whose version you choose to use.

This history is written without prejudice to any individual, or member, past or present of Ballinteer Rifle Club or B.R.C. Shooting Club.

Ballinteer Rifle Club had its genesis in Sept / Oct 1980 when two of the founding members attended a leisure and hobbies exhibition in the R.D.S. where Fassaroe Sporting Club were promoting the sport of shooting.

On the basis of this visit the two aspiring shooters called into Jack Carr's gun shop in Pearse St. to buy a pair of rifles, they settled on a pair of .220 magnums.

When the licences came through they collected their rifles and headed for Fassaroe's range, in Enniskerry one Sunday morning to join F.S.C. club.

You can imagine what happened next, they were told that they had the wrong calibre of rifle, only .220 long rifle and standard ammo were acceptable on the range. They left Fassaroe annoyed and a little embarrassed, and vowing there and then to start their own rifle club.



## PHASE (1) Ticknock / Kellystown 1981-1982

Early in 1981 Liam Davitt and Phillip Brennan got together with another three or four lads from the Ballinteer area, who also had rifles and were shooting vermin in the local farms and hills. A decision was made by the group, that they would try and source a piece of land locally, on which they could develop a rifle range. Two of this group Michael and Philip Brennan had an uncle who had a farm in Ticknock / Kellystown, he was agreeable to allow the group to shoot on a field on his farm, but they could not erect a clubhouse or any temporary structure.

Despite this restriction and the fact that the range could only face a certain direction, due to the proximity of Stackstown golf club, it was decided to take up the offer and start shooting, usually on Sundays. Gaining access to the range (because of the direction it had to face) meant that members had to blow on a whistle to get a ceasefire, which would allow them to proceed in safety to the firing point.

In mid 1981 the group had grown to 19 members, they had decided on a name, Ballinteer Rifle Club, naturally enough, as most of the members were from the Ballinteer area, a committee had been formed, and monthly meetings were being held in the Dundrum House and later in the Beavers pub in Ballinteer. In 1982 having spent a winter on the side of a mountain with no shelter, and no likelihood of one being allowed, the club could not progress any further, it was decided to look for a more suitable piece of land on which to develop a range.

### **The founder members of the club were :**

**Liam Davitt, Michael Brennan,  
Phillip Brennan, Michael Foley,**

**Followed by,**

**Paul Magee, Peter Young, Tom Brazil,  
Liam Mc Ardle, Ambrose Glass, Ivor Harmon,  
Pat Lawlor.**



## Phase (2) Tibbradden 1983 – 1985

The clubs second range was sourced by Liam Davitt a committee member, after he spoke with a local Ticknock landowner, John Kelly who knew of an ideal piece of land in Tibbradden owned by Mary Casey. Liam and the committee met with Mary and negotiated an arrangement that gave the club the use of a large sandpit with permission to build a clubhouse and any other development needed.



The members set about developing this range immediately, starting with a 50mtr. Range and firing point, followed by a block built clubhouse, which was also used as a firing point for the 100mtr. Range (from the clubhouse roof). At this time the club was beginning to compete against other clubs such as Fassaroe and Roundwood and could see how these clubs were developing the sport in many different areas, many good ideas were gleaned from these sources.

One very good idea in particular was picked up from Fassaroe club and this was the new, to this country, sport of Mexican silhouette shooting, which was being pioneered by that club. Ballinteer immediately set about developing this new and exciting branch of the sport, starting with a full four bay 100mtr. Silhouette Range, followed by the metal silhouettes which were sourced by Ambrose Glass, by then a member of the club. Mexican silhouette shooting is an international sport for sporting rifle shooters, and we hoped that someday our members would compete in international competitions in this discipline.

Mr. Denis Ranaghan of Roundwood Club was very helpful to our club during this stage of its development he gave us some very good advice on many issues such as, affiliation to national associations, shooting techniques, insurance requirements, and was a great mentor for the club at a time when we needed it most, he also supplied the sample metal silhouettes so that Ambrose could get them manufactured.

A significant event in the clubs short history took place at this time, a National Silhouette shoot was held on Roundwood's range between Roundwood club, Fassaroe club, Ballinteer and some non club members making up four or five teams in all. This was our first venture at a National Shoot, which was run by the N.R.P.A.I. and the winners were Ballinteer.

This was a great boost for the club who were only beginners in this new discipline. At the presentations hosted by the N.R.P.A.I. in the garda club, Denis Ranaghan of Roundwood club made the presentation to Noel Winstanley of Ballinteer, who were delighted, but there were a few unhappy faces in the Fassaroe camp, and this was the start of a healthy rivalry between the two clubs, which still continues to the present day.

I joined the club in late 1983 or early 1984, and one of the first competitions I competed in was the 25yd. Indoor in Rathdrum, the range is owned by a local businessman and target shooter Mr. Dave Cullen an excellent host and friend to BRC for many years. When I arrived for this competition the first thing that struck me as unusual was that most, if not all the Ballinteer members were busy removing the lubricant from the rounds that they were going to use in the competition, T22.



I was tempted to explain the reason for the lubricant, but I declined because I was only in the club a few months at this stage, and they obviously felt that they would improve their scores by doing so. As it happened the competition was won by Sandy Wilson of FSC, with a score of 400x400, an incredible score given that it was outward gauging that was used to score the cards.



In 1985 this land was bought from Mary Casey, by Dan Durkin the builder. Dan set about building a house on the site directly behind and in line with the 100mtr. Backstop and naturally he was concerned with safety, as he had a number of small children. Our days in Tibbradden were numbered and by the end of the year we were looking for another range.

### Phase (3) Oldcourt / Montpellier 1986 1994

It took about three or four months to find our next range, due in part to uncertainty of farmers liability insurance, and litigation problems going through the courts at the time. The club lost a lot of the original members during this time, a range was needed soon, otherwise we would lose a lot more. Eventually a farmer was found who was willing (with a little persuasion) to let us use a part of his land for a range. This range was very unsuitable for many reasons but it was the best available to us at the time. This range was also facing the wrong way, as usual, it was only 50mtrs. and very exposed on the side of a mountain.

The owner of the farm was Mr. Garreth Smith and his wife Bridie, to whom we were all very grateful at that time. Garreth and Bridie attended many of our presentation nights, at which, we were given a demonstration of their ballroom dancing skills. We spent approximately eight years on this range and developed it as much as possible under the terms of our lease.

We erected a fantastic clubhouse, which was donated to us through George ~~Kelly~~ by a school in Windy Arbour, it used to be one of their pre-fabricated classrooms. During a particularly bad storm in 1990 the clubhouse was flattened this was a devastating blow for the club,

→ GIBNEY



but as usual the hard core of the members set about re building immediately



The first running boar shooting discipline in the country was also set up on this range, it was designed and manufactured by Mick Delaney and John Kane, it had limited success due to some technical difficulties. The membership stood at approximately fifty plus during this phase of our history.

In 1994 we were on the move again this time it was due to the building boom (Celtic Tiger) the building contractors needed somewhere to dump the ton's of soil they were removing from sites and this was an ideal location. Garreth gave us plenty of notice to leave, and in May 1994 we left Oldcourt / Montpellier range.

## **Phase (4) Dublin Rifle Club's Range Blessington June 94 – Feb. 95**

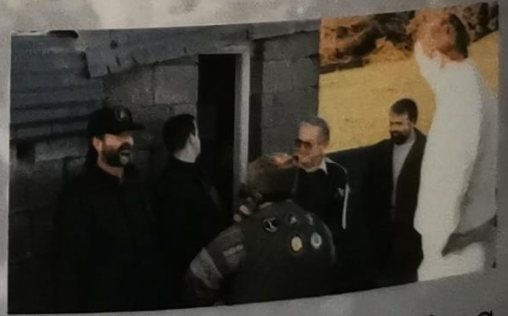
This stage in our history was probably the worst, we had no range and we were again beginning to lose members, but as usual we were able to hold on to the hard core of members that would see us through this crisis and indeed many more.

Prior to leaving our last range in Oldcourt the committee had put together a proposal to South Dublin County Council for the use of a plot of land as a range. This plot of land was in Friarstown, Bohernabreena and had formally been used as a range by The Eagle Shooters Club since the early 1980's. Some members continued to look for a suitable plot of land on which to develop a new range, but it was proving difficult due to cost and insurance factors, we were hopeful that Friarstown would be a runner.

During 1994 we were well looked after by J.K.Walsh and the members of D.R.C. and in particular J.K's Wife Carol who provided us with many welcome fry up's on cold and wet mornings in the winter months of 94.

During this time we kept up our competitions both club and national, and in November 94 we had our annual dinner and presentations in the Yellow House in Rathfarnham.

The Yellow House pub has been trading on its present site since 1827, and prior to that across the road on the site where the church now stands until it was demolished in 1803. Ballinteer Rifle Club / B.R.C. Shooting Club have been involved with the Yellow House. since the mid 80's, where we have been holding our monthly club meetings, A.G.M's and presentation nights.



It is an excellent venue for a meal, a drink, or a meeting, and on behalf of our club I would like to thank the management and staff for looking after us for all of these years, and hopefully we can continue this association for many more.



In early 1994 the club committee were having ongoing meetings with council officials and politicians (local elections were coming up) to try and secure the plot of land in Friarstown. At the end of 1994 the committee's efforts paid off, the club was granted a one year temporary letting lease to be reviewed on an annual basis.

It is important to mention the amount of effort, time and professionalism that the committee put into the campaign to secure this facility, written submissions had to be sent to all of the councillors followed by presentations to groups of councillors, references were required particularly from the Gardai endorsing our exemplary safety record.

The key members of that committee driving this campaign forward were, Colum Courtney, Henry Lee, and Seamus Mc Kenna to whom we owe a huge debt of gratitude, their efforts were all voluntary.

The council deserve a particular mention for their willingness to have a shooting club on their land, it is one thing having a football or hurling club on their land but a shooting club, that was different, and a first for South Dublin County Council in making this giant leap. Councillor Don Tipping deserves a very special mention because without his help and guidance I don't think we would have the fantastic facility that we have today.

### **Phase (5) Friarstown, Bohernabreena. 1995 – 2006**

Prior to moving on to the range some preliminary work had to be carried out, starting with entrance walls, gates and concrete turning area, followed by the foundations and rising walls that would support the two forty foot containers that would be our clubhouse and prone shooting points for many years.

We then engaged Mr. Ernie Kennedy, his excavator and tipper lorry to extend, clean up and landscape this old sandpit to make it the shape that it is today. George Gibney came into his own during this period of the range's development with his building and carpentry skills which he has given freely to the club since he joined, and continues to give.

In February 95 the two 40ft containers arrived and we immediately set about connecting electricity, painting, and generally converting them for our needs. This activity created a great atmosphere in the club at the time and most members got stuck in and gave their time and skills freely, in particular Stephen Hickey and Derek Byrne with their engineering skills.





It took a little time before we had running water in the container, but in the meantime there was always the tap in the cemetery for filling vessels with water, for tea and coffee.

In June 1996 the range was officially opened, by the then vice chairperson of South Dublin Dublin County Council, Mr. Don Tipping who fired the opening shot. This was another significant event in the clubs history, it was a beautiful sunny day, there were speeches by various dignitaries, the range was blessed, we had music and a bouncing castle for the children, and a charity shoot, with the proceeds going to childline, followed by a buffet in St. Annes G.A.A. club Bohernabreena.

During this time the members decided to change the name of the club from Ballinteer Rifle Club to B.R.C. Shooting Club, it was felt that the name change retained our original identity, and at the same time took into account our new geographical location, Bohernabreena, and also the fact that we were open to all shooting disciplines not just rifle shooting. Some of the membership were unhappy with the name change, understandably so.

In 1996 the club applied for planning permission to build our current clubhouse, and after one objection we were granted permission. Early in the year of 2000 our planning was running out and we had to make a decision whether to buy the site from the council or to build a clubhouse.

The decision was made to build the clubhouse, this decision was mainly down to the then chairperson Damien Keenan who had a vision of a state of the art facility that would serve the members well into the twenty first century. A building sub committee was set up by Damien, and their task was to manage this project from start to finish, which they duly did to great effect, despite their lack of experience in such matters.



In October 2000 we started the building of our clubhouse. I am purposely glossing over a number of very important issues that needed to be addressed prior to any building taking place i.e. site survey, test drilling, architect, design of building, positioning of the building, and last but not least financing the project. Our architect was Mr. Tony Colbert who did the drawings and gave us very good advice prior to and during the work.

The building of the new clubhouse was a major undertaking by any standards, a lot of the work was carried out by the members, some had building experience / plumbing / carpentry / siteworks etc. The first job to be undertaken was the foundation, and because of the nature of the ground this had to be a raft foundation requiring shuttering, steel reinforcing and about 45mtrs. of concrete in total, spread by some of the members using rakes and shovels, a daunting task for those not used to seeing eight meters of concrete being poured at a time.



## The foundation was poured on the 11/Nov/2000.

As already stated many members gave freely of their time and skills during the building of this clubhouse, one member in particular has to be mentioned and this is Derek Byrne or digger Byrne as he became known.

Derek who happened to be working at the time for a plant hire company called, A Plant Hire Ltd. who generously loaned us at no cost, many items of plant and machinery, without which we could not have completed this project in the time taken, and the costs would have been prohibitive. Our sincere thanks to Derek Byrne and A Plant Hire Ltd.



When the clubhouse was near completion work was started on the silhouette range and firing point, this is a steel fabricated structure which was designed, manufactured, and constructed by our engineering team, which includes, Derek Brennan, Damien Doyle, Stephen Hickey, Pat Bell, Ciaran O'Brien, and Stephen Ferron, Stephen is also our procurement and transport manager. This group, and others carried out a lot of work on the silhouette bays and bullet catchers, and the overall result is a first class silhouette range second to none.



After moving into our new clubhouse we had no more need for our two 40ft containers, one was given to John Walls who has a shooting club in Balbriggan, and the other which was our prone shooting container was donated to J.K. Walsh and Dublin Rifle Club who had recently lost their range in Blessington, after being there for so many years. D.R.C. are now in Kilbride on the side of a mountain and it was nice to be able to make this tangible gesture as a way of saying thanks for the way that J.K and D.R.C. helped B.R.C. in our hour of need so many years ago.

The landscaping of the range is an ongoing and very important process which on a site this size requires a lot of hard work, work details are carried out when needed, but the bulk of the work is carried out by Paul Delmar and his assistant Tommy Di Cio Cio, and is largely taken for granted. The visual impact of the clubhouse and surrounding boundary on our neighbours and the general public is a critical factor in their perception of shooting and shooters, and this is why the work that Paul and Tommy carry out is so important.





The club, through Colum Courtney are currently (June 2005) in negotiations with council officials for the procurement of a ninety nine year lease on very favourable terms, if these negotiations are successful B.R.C. will at last have a permanent home, which will hopefully bring to an end, our nomadic past, and guarantee us a bright and stable future.

Since 2004 the restrictions on the ownership of side arms, (with some provisions), have been relaxed. This will allow members of clubs to apply for handgun licences and to use these revolvers / pistols on approved ranges. B.R.C. are currently looking at the possibility of such use on our range, provisional noise level tests have been carried out using a number of side arms and the results look promising.

The use of handguns will bring another dimension to the sport of shooting, one that has not been seen since 1972, when the then minister for justice Mr. Des O Malley brought in the infamous " Temporary Custody Order " which allowed the seizure by the state of all handguns, and all rifles over .220 calibre, for security reasons. B.R.C. members are looking forward to this new discipline, along with many more shooters.

2005 has been a very important year for the club, from an international competitions point of view, in June Brenda Brooks a BRC member competed in Phoenix Arizona in the U.S.A. in the small bore silhouette competitions and returned with a total of ten prizes, these were for individual and team events, a fantastic achievement by any standards. Brenda was the only BRC member of the Irish team, which included, Nicholas Flood FSC, and Fabian Connolly MRC. The Irish Team came third in AAA, small bore rifle with a score of 167, and second in AAA small bore hunting rifle with a score of 141.



In July 2005 an Irish team went to Decin, in the Czech Republic to compete against a number of European teams in the small bore silhouette



competitions, the three man Irish team comprising of Matthew Canning BRC, Nicholas Flood FSC, and Fabian Connolly MRC, took top honours in this event, winning the European championship and World Cup Gold Medals, against teams from France, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany and Finland.



"The Irish squad comprised of Henry Lee BRC, Matthew Canning BRC, Damien Keenan BRC, Nicholas Flood FSC, Fabien Connolly MRC, Declan Cahill FSC, and Eoin Gollogley FSC. Matthew Canning achieved a personal best score of 31x40 at this competition thus achieving a Gold Medal in Master class, with Damien Keenan winning a bronze medal in B class."

"BRC hosted the Irish National silhouette championship in September 2005. This two day event was very successful, and involved everyone getting involved in the various tasks such as, range officer, timekeeper, judges, scorers, and most importantly working on the stats desk. It was a highly contested competition with every shooter out to win a top prize. On day two of the event the score aggregate determined who had won what, and there were a number of shoot offs for Master Class and AAA class."

"The organiser of the event Nicholas Flood sent out an invitation to two American silhouette shooters who came all the way from West Virginia to shoot in this competition. Big Joe and Big Rick as they came to be known were welcomed by everyone, enjoyed the hospitality and the two day event. Three BRC members won prizes on the day including Matthew Canning in AAA hunting rifle class and AA in standard rifle class. Damien Keenan took top honours in A hunting rifle class, and Brenda Brooks taking top honours in B hunting rifle class."

I thing that it is worth noting that B.R.C. members have been competing in international silhouette competitions since 1994, when an Irish team went to the U.S. National Silhouette competitions in Pennsylvania. The team comprised of two B.R.C. members Henry Lee and George Kelly the other members were from Fassaroe and they were, Sean Mc Ilwaine, Hugh Daly, and Dave Cooney. This was B.R.Cs first venture into international competition and since then we have gone from strength to strength.

In 2006 B.R.C. will be twenty five years in existence and I have no doubt that this important milestone will be marked in an appropriate manner, in fact a sub committee has been set up in June 2005 to arrange the celebrations. A date of Sunday June the 25th 2006 has been chosen as the official day for the festivities.



Historically, in the first week of September in Ireland a number of events take place, the children return to school, the deer and duck hunting season opens, and BRC go on pilgrimage to Lifford in Donegal. For as long as I can remember Paul Delmar has organised this annual event between BRC and Lifford rifle club. The events are rifle shooting on the Saturday and for those who are able to make it, a shotgun shoot on the Sunday, what takes place between the shooting I have no idea, as I have never attended this event, but judging by the amount of laughter, conversation and innuendo for weeks afterward's it seems to be mighty craic. Our host in Lifford is Eugene Mc Cusker of LRC, and the accommodation as usual is provided by Jackson's hotel, our continued thanks and appreciation to both.

Since joining the club in 1984, I have seen many members come and go, there are currently none of the original founder members in the club, Mick Foley was the last one to leave in 1992.

However we have been lucky to hold on to a nucleus of members, who have shown the qualities that have taken us through the good times and not so good, of these last twenty five years. The qualities I refer to are, vision, tenacity, perseverance, resilience, and a belief that we are the best shooting club in the country, the same qualities required to take us through the next twenty five years and beyond.

The club's longest serving member up until June 2005 was Pat Lawlor who joined in 1982, that honour now passes on to Dermot Kelly who joined the club in January 1983, very few of the current membership would remember Dermot's famous call of "Tea Up" when he would have the tea made for our tea break's on the range in Oldcourt. I would love to hear that famous call again, hopefully sometime in the near future.

This account of the history of our club is by no mean's complete, the purpose is to give the reader an overview of our evolvment from Ticknock to Bohernabreena and some of the significant events that have taken place during our first twenty five years. At some stage in the future someone else may decide to write a more comprehensive version, to include much of what I have omitted, but for now, this will have to suffice.





Finally on behalf of the club I would like to pay a special tribute to a number of our former members who have gone to their eternal rest.

Our former treasurer for many years, Tony Byrne, Walter Mooney, Joe Dunne and Willie Clarke, who all played their part in our club's history and progression, and should not be forgotten.

**Ar deis De ar d'ainm.**

**BRC shooting club p.o. box 7536 Tallaght Dublin 24  
E mail: [brcshootingclub@gmail.com](mailto:brcshootingclub@gmail.com)**



## **Former Club Chairpersons**

Liam Ward

Damien Keenan

Tony Bergin

Damien O Gorman

Colum Courtney

Mick Delany

Noel Winstanley

Cahal Clifford

Declan Clarke

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