

## Castle Miscellany – Our Club, Our People, Our Stories



### **Des Leavy Sr – A notable Castle Clan Chieftain**

**Des Leavy**, in his prime a seven handicap, is our most senior active golfer in the Club. At 94 years young he is still a regular player, competing both in club competitions and playing with family and friends. For those of you that do not know Des personally he is the fine gentleman with a glint in his eye and a ready smile. He is to be regularly seen chasing pars in that unique Castle golf buggy that resembles a ‘Popemobile.’ Nothing pleases Des more these days than to successfully extract a fiver from the wallet of a friend on the golf course.

Des was born in 1931, which was one year ahead of when the first Irish Free State Government, led by William T Cosgrave, handed over power to the first Fianna Fail Government, led by Eamon de Valera. Fourteen other Taoisigh have served since then.

Des was one of six children born into a farming family with a substantial farm in the townland of **Multyfarnham**, just north of Mullingar. Des’s secondary education took place in the local Multyfarnham Franciscan College, a school where boarding was mandatory. Hurling and football were his youthful sports.

On leaving school, Des decided that life outside of the farm was going to be his way in life. His early career saw him learning the ropes in the grocery trade, a journey that started in a D.E. Williams of Tullamore regional store followed by two years with them in Dundalk. While in Dundalk, he followed his love of hurling which resulted in him being capped for the **Louth Minors**. His next adventure involved taking the boat to London seeking his fortune. In that period of his life, the thought of emigrating crossed his mind, so as a test he sent his suitcase to Australia to see how it got on. He never joined his suitcase! A return to Ireland beckoned and after a spell working with Dublin’s premier grocery chain Findlaters, he joined Odlum’s, then Ireland’s leading flour miller.

Those life experiences led him and two partners to set up an agricultural commodities trading company, which in turn led to him joining the Castle. Executives in the agricultural commodities business in the 1970s loved to socialise on the golf course, especially playing in the ‘**Corn Traders Golf Society**’ outings,

Des, in 1969, a then occasional golfer, was invited to play in the in the ‘**Corn Traders**’ golf outing, an event which had been played annually in the Castle since 1913. He was given a society handicap of only 16 and duly went on to win their major trophy on the day, a trophy that he was to lift five times in all. Subsequent convivial chats with Castle members, including one with our 1968 Captain Albert O’Beirne resulted in Des being encouraged to join the Castle. He joined in 1971 after a chat with his budget manager, his late wife Mary, a wise lady. There was then no waiting list!

Des today feels that his invitation to join the Castle was “**one of the nicest events to happen for him during his life.**”

Records show that the cost of **Castle** membership in 1972 was £72, which included a levy of £16, and the entry fee was £31.50. By comparison **Milltown** membership was a mere £22; **Elm Park** £36; **Grange** £43, including an £8 levy; and **Portmarnock** a bargain at £50, with an entry fee of £50.

Since Des Sr's introduction to the Club in 1971, the respected Leavy Clan has taken root, with Des's son **Des Jr** today being the current men's Handicap Secretary and his wife **Paula** our current Vice Lady Captain. In addition, their three daughters became Junior Girl Captains, two of whom are still with us, **Ciara** and **Aoife**, both fine golfers and proud Castle members. Their third daughter **Aisling** is now married and living in Cork.

The clan does not end with just the Leavy family name as we also have Des's daughter **Kara**, who is married to **David Sheppard**, the parents of **Sam** and **Max**. The golfing pedigree is strong in that family. Sam, now a one handicap was the Junior Boys Golfer of the year in 2023 and Junior Boy's Captain in 2024.

The story of the Leavy golf pedigree would be incomplete without recognising Des's other daughter **Jane Leavy**. Jane was an outstanding youth golfer, capped to play on the Irish Girl's team in 1980 and a member of the 1980 Castle Girls team that won the Smurfit Cup. In 1989 Jane turned professional and over several years, based first in Long Island and then in Florida, followed her dream both at club level and on local tours before an injury intervened.

**Coming back to Des and the Castle . . .** Des has picked up countless prizes over the years, but missing from his trophy cabinet is a Castle Major. He is not yet delegating that ambition to the following generations. Off a nice handicap of 36, he could be a major contender in 2026.

Des was the proud winner of a 'Biggie,' the 'Willie Holley' trophy in 2001. Unique achievements for Des over the years included a two at the 6<sup>th</sup>, five turkeys bagged in one year and a rare hole-in-one on the 13<sup>th</sup>, when the feared temporary green was in play!!

Des besides being the Chieftain of the Leavy Clan became the acknowledged leader of the '**Castle Swallows**,' a group of Castle friends who from the mid-1990s onwards, headed each year to the Cape in South Africa for golf, winter sun, and an occasional tincture of wine. **Strand Golf Club**, discovered by Des, offered the 'Swallows' winter memberships. Being proposed and seconded by Des for membership was the key! If you ask Des about any possible scandalous 'Swallow' stories from those South African sorties expect to be reminded of the unwritten rule - "What goes on Tour stays on Tour."

**Des, we wish you continued success and fun on the golf course as you follow Rory's example by winning that elusive Major. Never say never!**