

Ballyliffin-Glashedy Links Northern Ireland

Architect: Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock (1995)

	Par	Yardage	Rating
Gold	72	6884	73
White	72	6466	71

Overview:

Pat Ruddy and Tom Craddock did a first rate job with a first rate piece of land. This course is routed through the mountainous dunes north of the Old Links course where the terrain offers lots of elevation changes and visual feature. It was a challenge to start and end the course in the flatlands by transitioning up the towering dunes in the middle of the property and then back down to the clubhouse. Both on the front and back ramp up slowly to the dunes through a series of par fours and then bring you down precipitously fast with one abrupt and dramatic downhill par three. It seems to me that the holes have the right proportion no matter the wind direction-it is evident that certain bunkers are upwind bunkers and others are downwind bunkers.

Much like the European Club the flow of the holes to the land is marvelous-it just seems like the links belong there. Plenty of room to play in, the dunes just seem to frame the holes without being overly threatening like at Tralee or Enniscrone. They demand plenty of penance for the wayward shot so you must carefully choose your shot lines of approach. The bunkering is just stupendous-mostly the curved edge collection type that seem to gather any approach shot played without conviction. The bunkering is not overdone-usually a few framing the driving area and two carefully placed ones around the greens. The greens are sizeable and have plenty of slope so you are going to get those long sweeping breaks whether you like it or not.

The difficulty in scoring is primarily in the sequence and proportions of the holes. Just three five pars and three par threes makes for a stiff challenge on those pesky par fours. Only one par three on the back gives you two runs of four long holes on that side. The par threes are visually stunning holes-you will not forget them. Make sure to consider the wind when picking your tee length for the day. It is no crime to play at the whites when the wind is up-and that is pretty much all the time. It is plenty hard and more enjoyable if you do not have to kill yourself with 400+ par fours.

If there is any criticism of the course is that the end is not that strong. Back in the flatlands the last four holes are a longish par four, two medium par fours and a medium five. Clearly the wind can make these harder but they are not memorable holes for such a distinctive course.

This is just a jewel in the links tier of Ireland-a must play for anyone who appreciates links golf. Go out of your way to play this one.

Hole-By-Hole:

#1 Par 4 420/388

The first two are on the flat lands that make up the Old Links, but neither is a pushover. The first is gentle dogleg right-hit it to center and now try to work a low on past the collection bunker on left.

#2 Par 4 423/389

Second of the flats gently rises to a green with a deep pit front right that needs to be avoided.

#3 Par 4 408/392

Now you start to climb up the steep sandhills over the next few holes. Drive into the hill above and now you have a look at a large green above with pot bunker short right framing the green.

#4 Par 5 465/455

This is an outstanding par five hole-routed through a valley of dunes. Big bunker on the right of the driving area must be avoided. Collection cross bunker in the layup area forces you to decide whether to layup short or long. Now the green is framed again by collection pits that make the shot in much more precise-access area is on the left.

#5 Par 3 173/163

First of three spectacular three pars. Just a medium iron down the hill-about a one club drop-to a smallish green below pinched on both sides by pots. OB on right is in play if you have a strong left crossing wind. Behind the green is Glasheddy Rock stuck out in the Atlantic which frames the green nicely. Looking back up from green to tee you can start to appreciate how high the big dune of Glasheddy is influencing your round.

#6 Par 4 348/345

Heading back up the dune-sharp dog ear right par four. Drive over the left corner of the dune on the right to get a look at a jewel of a green setting slightly below at the foot of a dune. Two collection bunkers demand that your shot in be more precise. Take some deep breaths, heart attack climb to the next tee.

#7 Par 3 162/127

This is a thrill with a view. From up here you can see the washboard fairways of the Old Links, the houses dotting the big hills of Ballyliffin, the stunning profile of Glasheddy Rock, and the vast majesty of the Atlantic. The first of the "terrible twins". The drop from tee to green is about 40 yards to a small dot of a green that looks to be the size of your palm. Depending on the wind this can be 9 iron to fairway metal. Pond out

right of the green is a concern-then you have bunkers pinching the green and a bail out dune left that sees lots of action.

#8 Par 4 419/379

Back down into the flats. Dogear left-hit your drive on the corner. Look at a green set protected by nasty bunkers.

#9 Par 4 372/368

Heading toward the house-slight leaner right. Your drive must avoid the bunkers that squeeze the driving area on both sides. Access to the green is on the left-bunker collects balls short right.

#10 Par 4 376/371

Dogleg right of this tee-drive between the bunkers. Now looking slightly up at a green wedged between bunkers.

#11 Par 4 413/408

Drive on the left and now straight in to the green on your second.

#12 Par 4 414

The stretch from 12 to 15 is about as hard as it gets here. Anything close to par in this stretch is a major accomplishment. This one is a ferocious dog leg right. Drive to center and you are climbing the foot of big dune to green above. Bunker protects the left so it probably favors a draw coming in.

#13 Par 5 564/488

This is another Kings Dominion Rebel Yell climb up the dunes. The driving area is adequate but the hole becomes progressively more narrow as you work your way to the green. The entire left side is dotted with bunkers so you must maintain a right line on all shots after the drive. Green complex is really extreme. Green is banked right to left and back to front off the dune and a major collection agency short left. More bunkers back right to catch a long ball in.

#14 Par 3 159/131

The second of the "twins"-this has another dramatic drop from tee to a small plateau green at the base of the hill. Maybe one of the most beautiful par threes I have ever seen. Green is saddled across a low hill below with Oreopot bunkers front and back. Big hill behind frames the target nicely. Glashedy Rock behind is just an added visual delight.

#15 Par 4 430/417

Back in the flatlands. Thread your drive between the hallway of dunes and then sew an approach shot into a target tightly bound by revetted bunkers.

#16 Par 4 416/399

Straight away flat par four. Green set is cool. Three Mickie pots short left and one bunker back right.

#17 Par 5 542/475

Nice threaded par five. Drive to center and layup off the bunker on the right. Green is slightly below bunker on right. Massive green from left to right.

#18 Par 4 380/367

Hard left to right dogear to finish. Drive hard to center and you have a short iron around the corner at the green set up on a small table in front of the clubhouse. Bunker short left will catch the meek approach.

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