

WATERVILLE GOLF LINKS
Irish Republic

Architect: Eddie Hackett (1973) (renovations by Tom Fazio 2004)

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	Par	Yardage	Rating	Slope
Middle	72	6781	72	139

Overview:

The Southwest corner of Ireland is one of the most temperate places on the island since it is saddled by the gulf stream and as a result this area attracted the attention of an array of interlopers over the centuries. The British introduced golf to this area as early as 1889 under the aegis of the Waterville Athletic Club in the form of a crude 9 hole golf course. But the area did not prosper into a real golf destination until the 1960s when an Irish born American named John Mulcahy decided to introduce the most testing golf links in Ireland to the Ring of Kerry. He teamed with Eddie Hackett, the most accomplished links designer of his time, and Claude Harmon, a past Masters Champion and head professional at Winged Foot in the United States. The front nine was reconfigured and expanded to create the current outward half and inward nine was built on the more exposed and rugged ground which gives this links it's unique character.

The course flourished under Mulcahy's direction over the next fifteen years as well as the influence of their long driving professional Liam Higgins. The sixteenth is named Liam's Ace for the distinction of him having made a hole-in-one on this testing par 4. The seventeenth is called Mulcahy's Peak for the back tee on this panoramic par three gives one the sensation of being on top of the world.

Over the years great champions like O'Meara, Woods, Stewart, and Els have played this course in preparation for the Open Championship. Payne Stewart in particular took interest in the place and was named Captaincy of Waterville just before his tragic death in 1999. The life size bronze statue of him stands behind ninth green as testimony to the special bond created with Waterville.

In 2003-04 the club commissioned Tom Fazio to do some major changes to the course. The major change was replacing 6 and 7 with two new, far more interesting and challenging holes. A number of greens were re-sited-including 16-Liams Ace-and new dunes and shell bunkers were woven into existing landscape to make a number of the holes more tactical and interesting to the eye. Actually looks quite original and makes the course that much better.

This is one of the windiest golf courses you will play in Ireland but the weather is usually temperate so the conditions are always tolerable. Because of the temperate climate you actually will see a few Palmetto trees adorn the course-it seems like an aberration but the warm gulf stream wind is part of the weather patterns. But weather aside this is one of the most challenging links courses in the country. It has everything you want in a links layout-serpentine holes wending through tall, intimidating dunes. Severe fall offs in the green complexes and large, swift, undulating putting surfaces that will challenge your mind. I do not think you can appreciate the

severity of the terrain until you get into the more rugged ground on the back nine. But the walk down the fairway of the par five 11th-called Tranquility-will make it very evident to you how sublime and intimidating this course can be.

Don't miss the memorabilia on the walls of the clubhouse or the bronze putting figure of Old Tom next to the practice green. It all part of the pure links ambiance of this wonderful destination.

Hole-By-Hole:

#1 Par 4 395-Last Easy

Simple enough-drive to center. Bounce it on the green. Be aware that the fence on right is in play off the tee, if you hit it wide right.

#2 Par 4 432-Christy's Choice

Drive it left center between the bunkers that collar the driving area. From here it is middle iron to a green that is a bit below you but slightly raised.

#3 Par 4 400 Sanctuary

Now the heat is coming up just a touch. A bit of a Florida hole here-drive to left center off the third bunker on the left.. Now you should have a short club to a green set back into the lake. It is not a particularly dangerous shot unless the wind is coming out of the right-then you might need the life preserver that is hanging behind the green.

#4 Par 3 169-Dunes

This is a marvelous short hole. The green is very small and is perched on a little hill about level to the tee. Depending on the wind the club selection should be short iron. The one bunker in front is nasty-no other bunkers on the hole. Fairly deep green so use the middle and back to hold.

#5 Par 5 551-Tipperary

Fairly simple hole coming up. You hit out of the same nest of sandhills that ensconced the last green-creates a bit of an alcove effect. Now you lay up a mid-iron to 100 and should have an aggressive short pitch at the tiered green.

#6 Par 3 166-Inny Valley

They replaced 6 and 7 in 2004 and they are much more interesting. This one is a downhill par 3 with a burn running the entire right of the hole and then wrapping around the right side of the green One pot bunker between green and burn-shot is a high floater from the left edge to the center of the putting surface.

#7 Par 4 404-Teacher

This is a very difficult hole-you are about to be schooled. The dogear right has the same burn running the right side from tee to 100. You hit a strong drive at the bunkers you see through on the left to get an angle back at the green set to the right nestled in the dunes. Fairway narrows substantially at 130 so you cannot try to over-reach here. Green sits slightly above and has two pot bunkers on the left side.

#8 Par 4 396-Hare

Neatest hole on the front. Drive to center on this dogear left just off the bunkers to get the good look at the green. Now you have to aim at the left side of the green since the dunes obscure view of the green on the right. Green is real deep and totally encircled by low mounds except for the center entrance. If you get it within the ring you are on.

#9 Par 4 405-Prodigal

Difficult closing hole for this side is the troublesome brother. Bend to the right so it to center or left center. Now you have to elevate it to a raised green which is protected by three bunkers in front and a deep grass pit on the right. If you get it on top you will have a good birdie opp. Time for a Club Lemon and a photo opp with Payne.

#10 Par 4 450-Red Beast

Since you are now refreshed you are looking at maybe the toughest hole on the course. Drive to right center and you now get another obscured look at a green set in the hills above you. The long club in will have a reasonable deep green to engage but the green drops off back right and that could complicate things.

#11 Par 5 477-Tranquility

Pure links par five-great flow from the tee all the way to the green. Drive from an elevated tee down between the sandhills into a landing area that seems somewhat confined. Now you can hit a midiron to the layup at 100 right where the fairway constricts. A short one into a green well above you-has a sharp front edge so do not be short. This has a real foothills feel about it.

#12 Par 3 164-Mass Hole

The "Mass Hole" gets it's name from the fact that persecuted religious factions used to meet out here to pray at night. You consider saying a few words to your omnipotent one if you do not hit enough club to reach the green. Cavernous drop between you and the green edge. The green is higher than the tee so it is one more for the elevation before you try accounting for the wind.

#13 Par 5 480-Meadow Lark

Fairly simple par five-much like five with a bit higher shot value. Drive to center and layup to right center at 100. The creek on either side is in play-especially in a cross wind. Birdie opp is likely here.

#14 Par 4 416-Judge

Very interesting hole here. Drive to center of a landing area between the bunkers and you will have a mid to short iron to another raised green. Green is set on a diagonal and the bunkers you see in front are a good forty yards from the front edge-don't be fooled.

#15 Par 4 396-Vale

Very unusual par four. Drive it straight away in between the sandhills that are slightly above you. If you hit it strong it will run down the funnel of the fairway and leave you a short wedge in to a green that is set below you. Bunker in front is deep and painful-green has a tiered effect from 4 to 10.

#16 Par 4 352-Liam's Ace

Liam's Ace-our young caddy was his nephew and even has a photo in the yardage book to prove it. Lengthened recently so hit the driver. at top of the sand dune in the distance. Now you have a shortish iron across a dip to a green above protect by fall offs in all directions. Takes an articulate pitch to stay on this green.

#17 Par 3 172-Mulcahy's Peak

"Mulcahy's Peak" is quite impressive but it is the back tee-worth the trek up to the top just to take in the world view. From the much lower white tee it is a mid-iron at a very shallow green. Deep pot short left and a big ledge dropoff on the entire left side.

#18 Par 5 556-O'Grady's Beach

Simple finish if you don't get the wild rights over the palms onto the beach below. Drive to left center and hit a wood down the hole-it is an advantage to get it as far down as reasonable. There are low dunes left at about 70 and three to five pot bunkers ringing the green's front.

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