

JOHN MORGAN, PRESIDENT MALAHIDE CC

We set ourselves up in the Bianconi Room in The Grand Hotel Malahide mid morning in late November with a large pot of tea, plain scones, jam and fresh cream.

JM My grandfather Jack Morgan played cricket and hurling. And then my dad Sonny (Thomas) also played and was very involved in the revival of the Man-O'-War Cricket Club in north county Dublin in the early 1960's. He was also one of the founders of the Man-O'-War GAA Club. I took up cricket when I was about 16 or 17 in the mid 60's. Never picked up a bat before then. At the time there were two teams in the Club. My younger brothers Jody and Thomas also played. I started on the seconds and then made my way onto the firsts which I captained for two years in 1973 and 1974. We won the Leinster Senior 2 League jointly with Clontarf in 1973. I also played a lot of Fingal League cricket which was very important to the local teams. If you didn't beat Balrothery you'd won nothing! The two clubs merged to form North County CC in 1985.

In those early days there was no practice. No coaching either. We just played. In particular I loved fielding and used to practise by myself in the back garden hitting the ball in the air and then catching it never taking my eye off the ball.



1973 Man O War CC Committee
Front l/r: Sean Halligan, John Morgan, Thomas Morgan, Joe Archer, Jim Garry
Back: Liam Rooney, Tom Murphy, Matt Gaffney, Brendan Sheridan, John Murphy, Aisling Rooney

In 1977 I moved to Malahide CC who were the nearest Senior 1 club to me. I was 28 years of age and felt the time was right to move. I also had great memories of playing in the Village which was a factor in the move.

BG You started off on the 4ths in Malahide.

JM Yes, I played under Justin Rodgers on the 4ths, then went with Dougie Keegan on the 3rds and again in '78 I was on the seconds under Stan McMullen. I continued to play for Man-O'-War in the Fingal League for a number of years after I joined Malahide. I made my debut in 1978 on the firsts against YMCA.

BG Looking at your stats compiled by Derek Scott there is no question that 1982 was your standout year in Senior 1 cricket. You scored 587 runs in 22 appearances with a top score of 87. You were the 8th highest run scorer in Leinster cricket in 1982 behind Masood, Short, Grier, Buttimer, Gilmore, Ginger O'Brien, Neville Daniels. You were selected to play Interprovincial cricket for North Leinster. The signs were good early in 1982 when in a pre season friendly against top side Waringstown that included Ivan Anderson, Garfield and Roy Harrison, you top scored with 73 out of a team total of 140.

JM Joe Caprani [former international and Malahide stalwart] was a big help to me. He worked on my technique. Got me playing a little bit straighter. I also used to shuffle across my stumps. Joe

got my feet moving. He photographed my batting. Seeing the results in black and white was very helpful. Although Joe was technical he never coached my natural ability out of me.



1982c John Morgan in Malahide CC

BG You were a member of the first team during a very successful period in Malahide's history. Senior League Winners in 1980, and then Wiggins Teape League winners in 1981, 1982 and 1985. Beaten finalist in the Leinster Senior Cup in 1982. A former teammate commented that you were a vital ingredient during this period. "A breath of fresh air into a close knit Malahide team. Outgoing, good in the dressing room, fiercely competitive, brilliant gully fielder and scored some vital runs. A team player to the core." Would you agree with that?



MALAHIDE CC 1st XI 1985 WINNERS WIGGINS TEAPE LEAGUE
b/r: Alan Martin, Barry Gilmore, Frank Furey, Alan Hughes, Tom O'Neill, Peter Moynan, John Morgan, John Wright President
f/r: Barry O'Brien, Gerry O'Brien captain, Michael Murphy, Brian Gilmore

JM Well yes. I may not have been the best player on the team but I was a good motivator. And we had a bit of skit. What mattered to me was the centre of the scoreboard, not the score of the two lads on either side. In other words it was the team that came first not the individual scores.

BG Were you always a gully fielder?

JM No. I was an outfielder. As I said before I loved fielding. Couldn't get enough of it. When the ball went up in the air. That's out. I caught it. That's the way I looked at it. I always went for the catch. But I got injured. I stood on a nail at work. I could barely walk on the Saturday. So Gerry O'Brien my captain put me in gully so I wouldn't have to run around and I stayed there ever since.

BG You played in the 1982 Leinster Senior Cup Final v Phoenix in Clontarf. What are your memories?

JM Biggest disappointment in my cricket career. The Cup Final was the centrepiece of Leinster cricket. Phoenix scored 235 and we were 99 for 3 overnight. The game was evenly balanced. I was 23 not out going well. The next morning within a couple of balls I ran myself out and then three more disastrous run outs followed. We were all out for 169. We dropped Alf Masood early on and he went on to score 87 which didn't help.



BG You toured Scotland in 1980 and 1985 with Malahide. And to Cheshire in 1995 and Billericay CC in Essex in 1996.

JM They were fantastic trips. For the Scottish trips we drove up in convoy to Larne, over to Stranraer and then made our way to Edinburgh where we played most of our games. As a teetotaler I was a designated driver all the way!

On the 1980 trip we came up against the Australian fast bowler Terry Alderman, a professional with Watsonians CC. I had never seen anything like it before. It was the only time I went to the wicket and there was no one in front of you other than the bowler. And when you hit the ball no one ran. Nobody wanted to face him! By God was he quick! No helmets then. But I enjoyed the battle and even scored a few runs. Hubert Murphy wrote a piece in the Fingal Independent suggesting that maybe the English team should recruit John Morgan as Alderman was causing them all kinds of problems!

Then in 1985 we came up against Pakistan leg spinner Abdul Qadir who was playing for Stenhousemuir. I faced six balls from Qadir and never laid a bat on the ball no matter how hard I tried. Des Cashell who was umpiring said that he had never seen a batsman give six chances in the one over. I tried to brush him a few times. In fact somebody drew a brilliant cartoon of the scene showing me with a long handled brush tied in knots trying to hit the ball with the caption "Abdul ties the Brush in knots!". Bill Grimson Malahide President presented the sketch to me but unfortunately it has disappeared.

BG Explain the reference to the brush.

JM It came from the sweep shot I used to play. It was a flat batted, bottom handed sweep mostly from outside of off down through square leg. The opposition captain often put an extra fielder or two on the leg when I came in. Joey O'Meara from Railway played it one day and turned around to me and said "Page 1 of your book!".

BG You went down the ranks in Malahide. You hit your first ever century playing for the 4ths v North Kildare (101*) and then a couple of weeks later you scored a second ton (101*) v CYMS 3rds. You hung up your boots at the end of 1995.

Then, in 1996 you changed course when you were appointed Manager of Malahide's first team. How did that go for you?

JM Well, the team had lost a few players, travelling etc. It was also in transition. So I thought I could help. There were challenges for sure but it was a good experience. Fielding and team spirit

were my focus and by the end of the two years I felt the team were moving forward. The Hills then approached me and I accepted the offer to manage the first team for a two year stint in 1998/99. One difference was that I was paid an agreed sum while managing the Skerries team. Although it wasn't about the money I think it was better for all concerned that managing was on a more formal basis. It was one of the best experiences of my life. I loved my time at Milverton and had the benefit of my time in Malahide. There was great buy in from the players. We had a very good team including internationals Matt Dwyer, Barry Archer, Paul Mooney and Declan Moore. But there was also a great bunch of young lads who we brought into the team. I am a great believer in giving the youth a go. And if they don't make so be it. We got to the final of the Leinster Senior Cup but were beaten by Pembroke in 1999 which was a huge disappointment. But overall I look back on the four years of management with great satisfaction.

BG You played a lot of Business Houses cricket with your employers the Electricity Supply Board (ESB). This is a mid week evening competition between large companies, public bodies etc who had the resources to field a cricket team.

JM I loved playing Business Houses. We won the trophy a number of times including three in a row. I remember being brought up to the ESB Boardroom for our dinner to celebrate our victories. Frank Malin from Pembroke was a Director of ESB and he would have organised it. Players like Willie Webster, John Brennan, Tommy McGibney, Tommy Kearns and Liam Rooney were all part of a great group of cricketers. Also, we had an annual fixture against our counterparts Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE). Frank Malin put up a trophy. It was called the Malinium trophy! We rotated the fixture north and south each year. I remember left arm International bowler Alan Jeffrey from Brigade turned out for NIE. We had fixtures in Cregagh and Eglinton. I am glad to hear that the fixture has recently been revived.



BG Having been involved in the game for so long you have countless anecdotes. Tell us about your exchange with Alec O'Riordan arguably Ireland's greatest ever all round player.

JM We were playing Old Belvedere in Cabra. Alec was bowling and I was at the non strikers end. Clifford Caprani was facing and we were running everything. I was pushing my luck backing up a little too far. In fact I was well down the track before he bowled.

Alec wasn't happy. So he stopped and held the ball at the wicket and growled "You and I are playing this wonderful game of cricket under completely different rules. This is a warning to you." I stayed in my crease after that!

BG There is the story of one of your first big innings for the Village. On your return to the dressing room after being dismissed you said hopefully

"Must have been close to 50?"

"Actually John you got 75!"

The story was captain Gerry O'Brien had this theory that if you clapped a player's 50 he would lose concentration and get himself out.

BG You played under Gerry (GP) during that successful period in the 1980's. The pair of you were a good fit.

JM GP was my type of captain. Very astute. He was always manoeuvring the field. I enjoyed playing under him. Although it didn't always go according to plan. I remember one time he instructed me to play for a draw as I headed out to bat against Phoenix. I hit the first ball for 6, the next for 4, then a 2 and was riddled the fourth ball trying to hit the cover off it. "That was some draw you were going for" GP grumbled out of the side of his mouth! The truth was I couldn't play for a draw. It wasn't in my nature.

BG Your nephews and nieces Garrett, Gavin, Eoin, Laura and Gwen all followed you at one point or another to Malahide CC.

JM Yes, and all good cricketers too.

BG Obviously Eoin has gone on to have an unbelievable career, playing for Ireland and then captaining England to World Cup victory. You must be very proud.

JM Very proud. Eoin has been brilliant. Anna my wife and myself have travelled the world watching him play. We've gone to three World Cups, to Jamaica when Eoin was playing for Ireland and then when he was playing for England to Australia and England.

BG Does he have a bit of the Brush in him?

JM I'd say so! I remember when I did my coaching course in about 1998. Eoin said to me "I want to be your helper. Don't worry I'll set the field for you Uncle John" that's what he said to me. He was 11 years of age at the time! From early on you could see that he had a great cricket brain. A genius in his own right.



2015 Adelaide Oval
Anna and John Morgan with nephew Eoin

BG You mentioned your wife Anna. Both of you are great supporters of the game.

JM We both love watching cricket. We've had great times. I am very lucky.

BG A few Bests.
Best Innings?

JM Probably when I got my top score of 87 in Senior 1 against Pembroke.

BG Best Bowler?

JM Without a shadow of a doubt Terry Alderman.

BG Best Batsman?

JM Alf Masood. He hit the ball so hard. Tom Black from Greenock and Scotland was another.

BG Best Catch?

JM I was fielding at long on. Mark Cohen of Carlisle was batting. He used to play this in out shot to long off. Dino Ryan was bowling. I always watched the batsman closely and tried to anticipate his shot. Anyway, when I saw him rising the bat I took off. I ran around to long off which was a good distance away from where I was and caught the ball about three inches above the ground. I actually couldn't believe I got there. Also the fact that Mark Cohen was such a good player made it more special.

BG Best Match?

JM 1995. My last ever game. I was captain of Malahide 4ths in the Whelan Cup Final against Pembroke [mid week 20 overs comp]. We batted first and made 69 runs. The game was won in the dressing room before we went out to field. Youngster Alan Quinn took 5 for 3, John Pryor and Dermot Keelan took a couple each and we got over the line. That was some coup!



1995 Malahide CC 4th XI Whelan Cup Winners
back row l/r: Andrew Pyne, Gary Love, Tim Saville, Matt Wheeler, Alan Quinn, Peter Saville
front row: Emmet Ring, Nigel Goodwin, John Pryor, John Morgan capt, Andrew Price, Dermot Keelan, John Pryor Jnr scorer

BG The members of Malahide recently elected you as President of the Club for a two year term. Your acceptance speech was rousing, passionate.

JM I was thrilled to be asked. I thought maybe the opportunity had passed me by so I am really looking forward to the role. Please God, I have good health during my term. I have lots of ideas but one of the things I am keen to do is encouraging our Asian players and families to have a more active role in the Club. They are making a huge contribution on the field and so I would love to see more involvement off the field.

We finished off our chat over a lunchtime bowl of creamy vegetable soup in The Matt Ryan Bar in The Grand.

John Morgan Senior 1 Statistics compiled by Derek Scott: 1978-1988

Matches	157
Runs	1803
50's	6
HS	87
Average	17.17
Catches	61

Brian Gilmore 2023