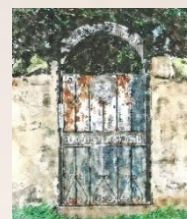


# Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club



## THE CRADLE OF GOLF



### Newsletter - Issue 3 Winter 2023 - 2024

A warm welcome to Issue 3 of our club newsletter and we hope everyone enjoyed their Christmas and New Year. It was a busy period for our chef John, we hosted a Christmas Dinner for a Musselburgh disabled sports group, held a Christmas Dinner for our members and then put on a Kids Christmas Party, with Santa putting in a special appearance. Thanks to everyone involved for making sure all three events were a great success.

Last November, the club and the town's Ship Inn contested their annual charity match for the Ronnie MacWhinnie Memorial Trophy. The club managed to retain the trophy, but more importantly the event raised over £1000 to assist Cycling Without Age Musselburgh with their work in the community. Cycling Without Age Musselburgh, which is run by volunteers, take local, mainly elderly people out and about for piloted cycles in CWA Trishaws.

“We have been blown away by the generosity and kindness shown by members of Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club and their guests from the Ship Inn. Thank you to all who took part, the staff at the Old Course for hosting and of course to the MacWhinnie family for their continued hard work and amazing support.” - CWA Musselburgh

Spring is finally here and having just come through an extremely wet and windy winter, everyone at the club is looking forward to the new season getting underway.

### **Ramping up the Clubhouse**

We were grateful to receive a small Community Activation Grant from Active East Lothian, which was mainly used to purchase a large steel ramp to enable wheelchair users to easily access the clubhouse.

### **New Club Captain**

The committee are delighted to announce that Billy Alexander is our new club captain. Billy, a former secretary of the club takes over the reins from Jackie Brown. We would like to pass on our thanks to Jackie for captaining the club for the past year.

## **Thomas ‘Tam’ Flockhart**

Sadly, we must report the passing of one of our Club’s original members, Tam Flockhart. Tam had been awarded Honorary Membership for his work and all his efforts to get recognition for the club. It was a grey day today due to the weather but also for the club to lose Tam. He kindly donated a trophy a few years ago that is played for, and this will protect his memory within the club for years to come. RIP Tam.

## **Honorary Membership**

At February’s AGM, it was proposed that Gordon Thomson be awarded Honorary Membership of Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club, this proposal was unanimously agreed. Gordon has been a member of our club for 42 years, and he is our longest serving member. He has seen the current good times but also some of our dark days when our club may have disbanded. Gordon was instrumental in decisions and actions that helped save our club. Many congratulations Gordon.



Captain Billy Alexander congratulating Gordon on his Honorary Membership.

## **Club Hickory Championship**

This is an annual fixture for club members, this 9-Hole competition is usually held over the summer but this year it was postponed and rescheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> February. The winner’s name is added to the Hickory Championship Winners Board in the clubhouse and this year’s best score was from Ross Noon.

# East Alliance Scratch Order of Merit

Congratulation to Ross Noon, this year's club champion on winning the East Alliance Scratch Order of Merit.

## 28th March 2024 – Excerpt from The Scotsman

On a day when many others were closed due to the weather, 2023 winner Ross Noon (Musselburgh Old) put up a great defence of his title as he finished third on 70, one better than Bathgate's Graham Bell with Davie Thomson (Pumpherstoun) next on 73. Noon's effort secured victory for him in the season-long Scratch Order of Merit, finishing ahead of Newbattle's Craig Surgeon then Bell and Thomson.

## East Lothian Winter League

DIVISION 2								
Rank	Team	GP	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
1	Royal Musselburgh	7	5	1	1	11	22	9
2	Musselburgh Old	7	5	2	0	10	18	14
3	North Berwick	7	4	2	1	9	20	10
4	Dunbar	7	4	2	1	9	20	11
5	Kilspindie	7	3	3	1	7	14	17
6	Gifford	7	1	3	3	5	12	20
7	Thorntree	7	1	5	1	3	10	21
8	Glen	7	1	6	0	2	9	23

A great season for the winter league team finally came to an end on Sunday 17th March 2024 with a loss in a play-off match versus Tantallon Golf Club. Having finished just short of automatic promotion by coming 2nd in Division 2 they had to play the club in the third relegation place in the 1st Division. Remarkable that our small club with only a hundred or so members can compete in a scratch competition requiring 10 golfers (5 foursomes pairings). It became apparent that the task was going to be difficult when the total of the 10 Tantallon golfer's handicaps were revealed to be plus 22.

Every member that played in the season should be congratulated for their performances throughout the winter, including the Captain Scott McFarlane. Difficult decisions regarding team selection had to be made as we had a large group of members wishing to be picked in the team. The future of the club and the winter league team is looking very good. Once again congratulations are the order of the day for the whole squad and the team are already looking forward to next year.



## Winter Knockout Competitions

The Winter Singles competition was won by Matthew Craigie, in a very close encounter Matthew came out on top in his match with Mike McVean.

Kevin Wyllie and Matthew Craigie won the Winter Pairs by defeating Tony Dolan and James Bonthron.

## 2023-2024 Prize Giving Night

Our annual prize giving night was a great success and nearly all the prize winners were present to receive their trophies. Once the prize giving formalities concluded the evening livened up with live music followed by a disco. Many thanks to committee member Mark MacWhinnie for organising the evening and to Clifford Livingstone, our Competition Secretary, who was our MC for the prize giving presentations.

## Mungo Park 1874 Medal - 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024

On 10th April 1874, almost 150 years ago to the day, Mungo Park won the Open at Musselburgh. As this special anniversary coincided with our first competition of the season, there was an additional prize up for grabs, the player returning the lowest scratch score in this medal would receive a silver tankard.

The competition was won by Tony Dolan with a net score of 66. All the golfers had to battle very high winds, with gusts up to 50 mile an hour. Euan Glen won the silver tankard with his scratch score of 71, incredible scoring it those conditions.

Overall Position	Player	Score	Placing
1	<b>Dolan, Anthony E</b>	<b>90 - 24 = 66</b>	Overall Winner
2	<b>Glen, Euan</b>	<b>71 - 04 = 67</b>	Overall Runner-Up & Lowest Gross Score
3	<b>Thomson, Gordon</b>	<b>85 - 17 = 68</b>	Overall 3rd

## Musselburgh Hickory Challenge

We will soon be sending out invitations to this year's Musselburgh Hickory Challenge, this event has been running since 1999 and we are looking forward to welcoming The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Royal Musselburgh Golf Club and Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society back to Musselburgh Old Course, the course they regarded as their home, in the 1800's. The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews and Prestwick Golf Club will also be joining us to celebrate our common history and tip our caps to those who introduced the game of golf to the world.

We have a stock of hickory clubs that can be used on the course but there are many breakages, which need to be replaced. If anyone has hickory golf clubs that are no longer required, maybe you would like to consider donating them to our club.

# International Membership

We extend a warm welcome to our newest International Members to our new members from Texas and Georgia. International Membership for 2024 costs £250 and the proceeds from International Memberships is used to maintain and upgrade our historic clubhouse. If anyone is interested in supporting the club by becoming an International Member or by buying one as a gift for someone else, please follow the following link ...

<https://musselburgholdcourse.com/international-members-form>



One of the gifts you will receive as part of your welcome pack.

## The Honestas Ball Conundrum

### The Honestas Ball



The Ball



The Logo

This Honestas ball was found under the floorboards of a flat in Easter Road, Edinburgh. "Honestas" is the motto of Musselburgh – The Honest Toun – and is also the motto of the Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club, but none of the experts have ever seen another ball like this one. Made of Gutta Percha, the ball is denoted as being 27½ drams in weight which assumes, according to experts, its date of manufacture as no later than the early 1880's. After that time the ball weight would be expressed roughly as 32 dwt (Troy) being the equivalent. The question is who made the ball? Was it a Musselburgh ball maker? Was it just a brand name or could it have been specially made to launch the formation of the Honestas Golf Club in 1881? If it were for the golf club, then surely it must qualify as the World's first ever "own logo" ball.



## **Golf Place** by David Blackshaw

History teaches us a lot of things and we remember the first, the oldest etc so let's not forget the very first Open held at Prestwick in 1860 was won by a Musselburgh Old Course man, Willie Park Senior. If we go back to a time before and after the course was an Open Championship venue and home to a number of Open Champions. At that time a large number of golf societies used the course, and 4 major clubhouses were built in the road where we are based. These 4 clubs are within the 6 oldest golfing societies in the world. As you walk up our road you can still see engraved in the stonework on the first house the original name for Balcarres Road, Golf Place with an engraving of crossed golf clubs. This shows how important this road was as it led you to our famous course. However, it also shows what the local council of the time thought about the importance of golf to rename it.

Let's walk up the road towards our club. A society of golfers was established in 1761 who used to play at Bruntsfield Links in Edinburgh. In 1848 the new "guttie" golf ball made golf less expensive and therefore more popular. Those links became very busy, and they moved to play at Musselburgh keeping the name Bruntsfield Links. In 1888 they moved into their purpose-built clubhouse. However once again with 4 major clubs playing a 9-hole golf course they moved to their new course and clubhouse on the west of Edinburgh in 1898. This building is now "The Wire Mill Club" and if you look the initials BLGC are still in the stonework above one of the windows. This is now 2 Balcarres Road.

In 1744 The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers formed playing their golf at Leith Links and Bruntsfield Links, moving to their new clubhouse in 1872 which was next door to the Masonic Lodge, now 8 Balcarres Road and currently a nursery. Once again golf at the Old Course became very busy and in 1891, they moved down the coast to an 18-hole course and became an Open venue. They must have liked racecourses because they moved to the Hundred Acres Park which was used previously for the East Lothian race meetings. As we all know this is now Muirfield.

The club now known as Royal Musselburgh which formed in 1774 ordered the building of their clubhouse in Golf Place in the 1870s. which is now 9 Balcarres Road, where they stayed until 1908 when it became too small. They moved next door to the original HCEG clubhouse where they stayed until 1925. They sold the old clubhouse to The Lodge of St John and moved to Preston Grange. We have club members who remember number 7 and 8 Balcarres Road being one building, although now back to two.

It was during their stay at the Old Course that another piece of world golf history took place on our course. In those days one of the duties of those looking after the course was "hole cutters" and often they just dug a hole with a trowel resulting in all different sizes. So why a standard 4.25-inch hole that we know today. In those days drainpipes were 4.25 inches, and the first cut hole may have been done using a sharpened drainpipe. The first purpose-built hole cutter that was used on our course was created by a person working for the Royal Musselburgh and is now held at their clubhouse. Then by the end of the 1800s the R&A agreed the golf hole worldwide would be 4.25 inches. Why did they not use a sewer pipe.

The next clubhouse along the street is ours, now 10 Balcarres Road. The original owners, Edinburgh Burgess now known as The Royal Burgess, who are recorded as forming in 1735 which makes them the oldest golfing society in the world. The building completed in 1875, the year after the first Open at our course. Records show an original cost of £5,000. In 1897 they moved to the other side of Edinburgh. The building was used for a number of commercial uses until we bought it and moved in. So, let's be proud that we have restored a historic building to its original purpose, a building to be proud of and full of historic memorabilia, which is 150 years old next year. May be a reason to have a birthday party!!!

**The next Newsletter will be out in Summer 2024**