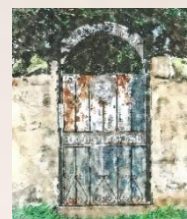


Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club



THE CRADLE OF GOLF



Newsletter - Issue 4 Spring 2024

Welcome to the spring issue of our club newsletter, which we hope you will find this interesting and informative. After a very wet, cold and windy spring, when a few of our neighbouring courses had severe issues with flooding, the links soil at Musselburgh Old Course helped the course withstand the elements. and we are patiently waiting on the summer weather finally arriving.

We were proud to unveil our new stone carved crest on the front wall of our clubhouse and this is another recent improvement we have made to the building. This project has been in the pipeline for a while, and we were delighted when the stone block was finally cemented into the clubhouse wall.



Stone carving by Hugh Douglas

We are looking forward to our club championships that get underway at the end of July, but before that we have this year's Scottish Open at Renaissance Club, which is just a few miles down the coast from Musselburgh and also this year's Open Championship at Royal Troon.

124th DISPATCH TROPHY

Our club entered a team into this year's Dispatch Trophy. This would be our debut in a competition that was first played for in 1890. The Dispatch Trophy has been held permanently at The Braid Hills, a challenging municipal course that commands spectacular views over Edinburgh and beyond.

The competition format is a four-man team event played as a double foursome.

In years gone by, this event has attracted a field of 128 teams, however, in recent years the number of teams competing has dramatically dropped to under 50. Entry into this competition is not restricted to golf clubs or golfing societies as businesses or groups of friends can also enter a team for £80.

Hopefully, the number of teams participating will increase in future years and the Dispatch Trophy can continue into its 150th year and beyond.



Musselburgh Old Course Golf Club Team

Calum Livingstone, Kevin Wyllie, Colin Whoriskey and Euan Glen (left to right)

JUNIOR GOLF SIXES

On Sunday 19th May we welcomed Junior Golf Sixes teams from Gifford GC, Craighielaw GC, Longniddry GC and North Berwick West Links Juniors to play in a Golf Sixes event at Musselburgh Old Course.

Teams consisted of 6 players, playing as 3 pairs. Each pair played with another pair from one of the other clubs over 6 shortened holes.

Congratulations to NB West Links Juniors and Craighielaw for scoring the most points. This competition is more about participation and enjoyment, so well done to everyone who took part on the day and thanks to all the parents for supporting the event.

INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

International Membership for 2024 costs £250 and the proceeds from International Memberships enable us 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>

THE OPEN COURSES BALL MARKER COLLECTION



Can you name the 14 courses that The Open has been played on? The recent 10 are easy. The other four are perhaps not so easy for most people but we do of course all know at least one of them.

The club have recently been given a set of the ball markers (pictured above) by Richard Loudon, a member of both The Renaissance Club and Luffness New. Richard, who is the creator of this exceptional item, came up with the idea as he has a collection of ball markers from the 372 golf courses that he has played.

Richard was going on a world golf trip 10 years ago and wanted a unique gift for golfers who hosted him at their courses. Since then, the idea has evolved a bit. One framed personal version has been signed by several Open Champions including Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Rory McIlroy.

Richard played his last of the 14 Open courses here at Musselburgh a couple of years ago along with former European Tour Order of Merit winner and Ryder Cup player Ronan Rafferty (pictured below) who was also playing his 14th Open course.

This item is not unique but the only people who have a version are the Open Champions who have signed, a few people who have played all 14 courses in return for a charitable donation and a few that have been donated to charity auctions.



MUSSELBURGH GOLFERS VISIT PRESTWICK GOLF CLUB

“The Birthplace of The Open”

At the beginning of May six golfers from “The Cradle of Golf” visited Prestwick to play the course that hosted the very first Open Championship in 1860. Like Musselburgh Old Course Prestwick Golf Club is situated in the heart of the town and on the day, we visited the weather was typically Scottish, dreich but the course was in superb condition. Now an 18-hole layout the first Open Championship was contested by 8 professional golfers with three rounds played over 12 holes and won by Musselburgh’s



(View from the hill approaching the 17th green)



(Inside the Members Lounge)

Willie Park who received a red Moroccan leather belt for his efforts. Prestwick played host to the first 12 Open Championships and after Young Tom Morris won three consecutive Open Championships in 1868, 1869 & 1870 he got to keep the Red Morocco belt. It now resides in the St Andrews Golf Museum. Between 1860 and 1925 Prestwick hosted 24 Open Championships. The last Open to be held at Prestwick was won by Jim Barnes, an expat Cornishman who had moved to the United States in 1906 and had won the first USPGA Championship held at the Siwanoy Country Club in 1916. That last Prestwick Open 99 years ago was notable for the size of the crowds that turned up to watch the world’s best professional golfers of the day. By then the Open had grown to four rounds played over 18 holes with 83 golfers teeing it up in the first round.

The growing public interest in the Open Championship was the death knell for Prestwick as an Open venue. The lack of real estate meant that Prestwick could not expand and today only the challenging 17th hole, The Alps remains from the course played by the 8 golfing pioneers in 1860. Lurking behind the second of two large mounds across the fairway is the famous Sahara bunker in front of the green. As the name suggests the Sahara is a huge desert in the fairway and only adds to the challenges on the most difficult hole on the course.

Following our round the Musselburgh golfers enjoyed a meal in the clubhouse and then were invited into the members lounge which is adorned with golfing memorabilia from the history of Prestwick Golf Club. Musselburgh Old Course and Prestwick are two of only fourteen golf courses that have hosted the Open Championship, and our links are commemorated every July when we host our Musselburgh Hickory Challenge.

Prestwick Golf Club proudly boasts that it is “The birthplace of the Open” and the golfers from “The Cradle of Golf” in Musselburgh enjoyed a memorable day walking in the footsteps of our golfing forefathers. Many thanks to club secretary Ken, starter Bobby and all the staff at Prestwick for their kind hospitality and for making our day so enjoyable.

LEITH RULES GOLFING SOCIETY

For many years, we have played a biannual, home and away match against Leith Rules Golfing Society.

In April, we played our match at Musselburgh, and this resulted in an honourable draw, we are looking forward to the away match in July.

Leith Rules Golfing Society's aim is to increase the recognition of Leith Links as the home of the earliest recorded rules of golf and one of the game's prominent early locations.

The sport has been played on Leith Links since the sixteenth century by golfers of Leith town and nearby City of Edinburgh. Now a public park, it is the home of the earliest recorded Rules of Golf - the world's first golf competition rules.

In 1709, Edinburgh Council agreed to sponsor a Silver Arrow archery competition on Leith Links for the Edinburgh Company (later Royal Company) of Archers and in 1744 on 7th March, as The City Council granted the Company of Edinburgh Gentlemen the Silver Club prize sponsorship for an Open Competition. Perhaps this was initiated by Company member and golfer, Duncan Forbes, Lord President of the High Court of Session and Scotland's most senior law officer. Also, an enthusiastic golfer, in time of snow or frost on the Links, he could be found sometimes playing along nearby Leith Sands. He was a known golfing partner of surgeon John Rattray.



While twelve players subscribed to play, 10 golfers played on 2nd April 1744 the first open Links Golf Competition. In its April 1744 edition, Scots Magazine reported the victor was 'Mr John Rattray Surgeon' in Edinburgh, becoming the first Captain of Golf for the Company of Edinburgh Golfers. The scoring method of holes used is unclear. For a given hole, it could be numbers of competitors beaten by a lower score; or individuals playing several matches with the winner as the one with most holes-up on his competitors.

In 1746, there was no Silver Club competition as Scotland was convulsed by the 1745 Jacobite Uprising - led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart. John Rattray joined as Personal Surgeon to the Prince at the Battle of Prestonpans, marched south with the army but accompanied it to final defeat at Culloden in 1746. He was arrested after the battle and finally taken for trial to London. He was pardoned in 1747 after signing the Oath of Obedience to the British King and returned to Edinburgh. He completed his 1745 Captaincy in 1747 and took part in the March 1747 Silver Cup and won again. See 'Rattray Statue' Section for more details of his life.

The John Rattray Statue, designed by sculptor David Annand, stands on Leith Links Edinburgh, a public park, formerly Common Good Land, used for many activities including golf. The statue is a freestanding public sculpture, in bronze, recognising John Rattray, signatory to the first recorded Rules of Golf from which all subsequent Rules are derived including today's Rules. The statue was commissioned by Leith Rules Golf Society (LRGS) in 2018.

Our Darkest Hour by Gordon Thomson

Our golf club continues to thrive but there have been times in our history when our very existence has been on the line. In the early 1980's we were caught out by an ingenious scam along with many other clubs and social clubs in Scotland that cost us thousands of pounds. As a consequence of this loss, we were on the back foot financially for much of the 1980's and more often than not during the winter months it was a matter of trying to survive until the cash injection of membership fees arrived the following April.

In 1987, winter was not yet upon us but the bank overdraft had reached the limit and debts were piling up. In desperation we convened an EGM and after much meaningful debate a committee of five members was formed with the remit of raising funds. This Committee was to report back to the Management Committee with their plans, but not only did they not report back but none of the five members ever set foot back in the club again! We did try and contact them, but our calls were either unanswered or there was no response to any messages left!

Committee meetings took place weekly with Finance the only item for discussion! We met one Monday and went through our normal routine of paying off any final reminders first, then as many of the lower value invoices as we could. This meant that the one invoice that got overlooked was that of the brewery, but as we had just signed a new contract with them, we felt they would cut us some slack as they would be desperate to keep our business! Our world came to an end next day when a final demand arrived from them advising there would be no further supplies until the account was met in full. We convened a further Committee meeting that evening, but as bar takings were our only source of revenue, we had no option but to wind the club up. The Treasurer, Tom Archibald asked for 48 hours to allow him to contact the brewery, the bank and the council in vain hope of coming up with a solution and this was duly granted.

We reconvened on the Thursday evening, but Tom's best efforts had been in vain and the winding up process began! It was agreed we would meet on the Saturday and break the news to the members and sell off everything that could be sold with the revenue generated getting paid to the brewer. As the meeting drew to a close, a police sergeant from the local station arrived to tell Tom that his Mum had been found dead. As Tom made a hasty exit the Committee experienced a reality check like no other.

The Committee met up on the Saturday morning as agreed with the understandable exception of Tom Archibald. As we sat awaiting the arrival of the first members, the door opened and to our amazement Tom appeared. Before we could say anything, Tom said "Don't just sit there, come and lend a hand". We followed him outside and to our surprise there was his car and trailer with several kegs of beer in it! After we got the beer inside Tom told us he had gone to organize his mum's funeral the previous day and thereafter had gone to the bank. When he got to the bank, he discovered that his mum had left not only sufficient funds to cover her funeral costs, but there was enough money left over to pay off the golf club debts! The likelihood is we would not have a club today had it not been for the death of Tom's mother and the astonishing course of action Tom decided to take. But the story did not end there! The brewery refused to re-instate our credit so for the next six months Tom made a weekly trip to the brewery and put cash on the counter and loaded up his trailer with however many kegs we could get for the money. Tom was to get repaid in full for this "loan" to the club, but I am not certain this actually happened.

Tommy was later awarded Honorary Membership and he is probably more deserving of this than any other Honorary Member.

The next Newsletter will be out in Autumn 2024