

Dover Golf Club

Barry O'Brien - Dover Tales

Founded in 1890 when Colonel Galivey and Mr Ramsay Hunter laid out the links, Dover Golf Club was described thus: "A terrifying chalk pit, a farmyard and ramparts of a fort with artificial bunkers are hazards of this course"

Measured at 2,540 yards, the course lay between the Dover - Deal Road and Upper Road, on a site apparently owned by The War Department and occupied by Broadlees Farm.

Initially listed as a 10-hole course by 1914 it had been reduced to 9-holes which is how it stayed until its final days prior to WW2, although as the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News of March 1st, 1902, noted "a good nine hole course is better than a bad eighteen." The article went on to report that the course had some "sporting holes" although the site was limited in size with the links being so close to Dover Castle. There was also suggestion in the article that plans were in hand to re-site the seventh hole to Broadlees Bottom "where a flat natural green already exists."

Born in Edinburgh, Ramsay Hunter was the son and Grandson of Joiners and Cabinet Makers and was apprenticed to the family business whilst learning to play golf on the Bruntsfield Links, the fourth oldest Golfing Society in the world and located, at the time at Musselburgh, east of the city.

A somewhat more esteemed member of Bruntsfield Links Golfing Society Dr. W. Laidlaw Purves, who had established a, quite literally, worldwide reputation as an aural and ophthalmic surgeon, accepted a position at London's Guys Hospital in 1874 and joined the London Scottish and

Wimbledon Golf Club on Wimbledon Common, later becoming Club Captain.

Together with fellow Scot and keen amateur golfer Henry Lamb Dr. Purves began to look along the south coast of England for a site suitable for siting a links golf course similar to those they had played on the east coast of Scotland. Finally, in 1887 they selected a site at Sandwich in Kent where Purves designed and supervised the laying out of a course which would later become Royal St Georges Golf Club.

Laidlaw Purves invited Ramsay Hunter to consider accepting a position as greenkeeper and club maker at this new Sandwich course, an opportunity he duly accepted, subsequently employing his brother at the course in 1890. Such was his



Poster, Dover Golf Club

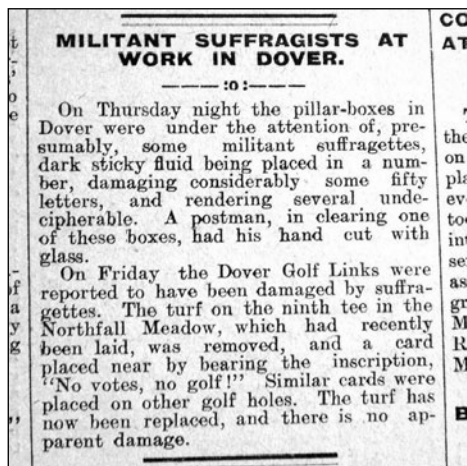
own reputation that Ramsay became instrumental in the design and layout of the course at Dover.

As an aside Henry 'Harry' McGregor Hunter who joined Ramsay in Sandwich, residing in Golf Cottage, Golf Club House, Sandhills, Shoulden, laid out the Cinque Ports Golf Club course in Deal where he remained for 43 years.

An original member of the PGA Ramsay died in 1909 while professional at Mid-Kent Golf Club, Gravesend.

The course at Dover, sadly, did not prosper in the same way as its associated near neighbour in Sandwich and in February 1913 suffered the ignominy of being damaged by Suffragettes, a movement very active in the disruption of golf at the time so much so that many clubs were taking out special insurance policies to cover the cost of damage so caused to courses and property.

It should, perhaps, be noted that Dr Laidlaw Purves was an active supporter of



Dover Golf Club, Dover Express Cutting

women's golf and presided over a meeting in 1893 which led to the formation of the Ladies' Golf Union, his support being described as crucial to its foundation, Purves himself being described as the "fairy godfather of ladies' golf".

Founding Club Captain at Dover was Lieutenant Colonel Davidson of the King's Own Regiment who had first taken up Golf at Gullane, North Berwick some twenty miles to the East of Edinburgh and was thus fully acquainted with the subtleties of Links Golf. Indeed, during his time Davidson laid out a course whilst quartered at Parkhurst, Isle of Wight, and at Gosport in Hampshire while at Fort Monckton, that course now occupied by The Gosport and Stokes Bay Golf Club.

Club Secretary at Dover, Colonel M Morris died during the Club's early years to be succeeded by A R Smith together with Assistant Secretary P King, of 'Mayville', Castle Avenue, Dover.

The professional until 1907 was L Job who held the course record at 80. while Mr V G Smith held the Amateur record with a score of 82.

Visitors' fees on introduction were, 2/- a day, 5/- a week and 10/- a month although, for reasons unknown, it was not possible to play the course at weekends when the nearby links at St Margaret's were available to Dover Club Members.

By 1914, however, Sunday play was allowed with caddies, the course, now nine holes, having been extended to 2,650 yards. "Besides artificial bunkers the principal hazards were the bushes in the chalk pit, a high bank, an old farmyard and, curiously, the ditches of the "Dummy" fort," this latter obstacle presumably referring to the East Wing of Fort Burgoyne.

By this time there was a membership of 150 paying subs of £2/2/0 for Gentlemen while Ladies and Juniors paid 10/6.

With play suspended on 25th March 1915 the course remained closed for the duration of WW1 and when it did resume, on May 14th, 1920, it was under the auspices of the United Services Golf Club with Brigadier General A H Merinden and Lieutenant Colonel Johnson R.A.S.C hitting the opening shots. While civilian members were permitted "nothing definite had been announced on the subject" although it was later clarified that civilians were, indeed, eligible, but their names had to be posted for 48 hours in addition to being proposed and seconded by a member of the club.

A meeting was duly called in June 1920 at The Grand Hotel to discuss the matter of civilian membership at the club, at which meeting it was decided that civilian golfers would be asking the United Services Golf Club to recognise the former Dover Golf Club and allow equality of membership.

Two months later, in August of that year, it was announced that the course was to be open to the public, on payment of a green fee, on Bank Holidays as well as Wednesday and Saturday afternoons which restrictions appear to have placated the

civilian golfers although records suggest their involvement with the Club would be minimal and the course appears to have been mainly used by military personnel.

At a committee meeting held in August 1928 it was announced that the War Office were prepared to transfer the lease of the course on Castle Hill to the Dover Golf Club, subject to the approval of the Military Authorities at Dover who duly gave their assent and Club resumed in full the following month.

The entrance fee would be £2/2/0 or £3/3/0 for man and wife, £1/11/6 for ladies and 21/- for schoolboys under eighteen. Green fees would be 1/- a round, 1/6 a day and 10/- a week with tickets available at various shops in the town. Mr Burvill, the greenkeeper, would also be available to give lessons at a very reasonable rate.

The first tee would be at the top of Castle Hill, handily placed near the bus stop., and the construction of a nearby pavilion was started in October.

The military connection had not been completed erased however as Club Captain at this time was Colonel Ogilvie, who presented two cups for competitions.

The card of the course.

Hole	Name	Yards	Bogey
1	Fort	257	4
2	Short	136	3
3	School	353	5
4	Chalk Hole	188	3
5	Spion Cop	330	4
6	Farm	281	4
7	Broadlees	378	5
8	Road	402	5
9	Home	297	4
	Total	2622	37



Grand Hotel Dover, Postcard

On Saturday 9th May 1931, before a large crowd, Miss Diana Fishwick, the Lady Open Golf Champion, visited Dover Golf Club with a view to setting the par score for ladies. The Ladies Golf Union had fixed the par at 69. Mr Dunville of the North Foreland Golf Club partnered Miss Fishwick against the Dover pro/groundsman, Mr A Burvill and Mr Calam, who had recently the amateur course record with a score of 71.

A member of many clubs including North Foreland, Canterbury, St Augustine's, Wentworth, and Sunningdale Ladies Miss Fishwick had won the British Ladies open Championship 1930, had represented England in International Matches against USA and France, and would go on to Captain the Curtis Cup Team v USA and Canada 1950.

From the Dover Express May 15th, 1931: "The beautiful, controlled swing of Miss Fishwick was an object lesson. She certainly missed Spion Kop each time, but the first time she took another ball as she was testing the course and hit it over the brow within mashie [a medium iron] distance of the green and she got a three with a long putt. The second time she played the ball from under the front bank at the bottom and got the ball out of a very

nasty place with a fine nibbick [an iron with a heavy, lofted head] shot that took the ball close to the guide flag. From the ladies' tee she got on to the seventeenth green with her second shot, but here she made the only bad putt of the round missing a yarder, but most of those who know this green with its very deceiving slope which the adjoining ground so effectively hides, were not altogether surprised. Miss Fishwick went round in seventy-six. The course is to be lengthened at Whitsuntide when hole three for men will measure 450yards and the Spion Kop hole is likely to be lengthened for both ladies and men. The new green will make this about 460yards. The great trouble is that a mistake on almost any hole on the Dover course is very costly."

By February 1939 a circular had been sent out by the committee to members with the intention of gauging support for an extension to the clubhouse and, despite worldwide events, In November 1939 the committee decided that the course should remain open whilst introducing a reduced green fee of 1/- a day for members of the services, members fees having been increased to 2/- earlier in the decade. Owing to the difficulties of the time, however, the AGM was postponed and, inevitably, the course closed in 1940.



Miss Diana Fishwick at Dover (Dover Express)

A meeting was held at the end of March 1946 to consider reviving the golf club once again with the Club Secretary duly detailed to suggest the Town Clerk should approach the Military Authorities with a view to forming an eighteen hole municipal golf course. A year later the War Office responded with the suggestion that 'in the light of the present national emergency and agricultural needs, and in fairness to the tenant who had grazed the land throughout

the war, they could not agree [to the proposal]! They did though offer the land previously used, sufficient for a 9-hole course, at a nominal rent of £10 for three years and thereafter at £50, subject to reservation of training rights and grazing rights. The committee were clearly not taken by the War Departments proposal and recommended that the Corporation could not entertain the proposal. As such

Dover Golf Course was never re-instated and appears to have been dissolved in 1948 when the secretary was T E Archer of Harold Terrace, Dover.

At the time the nine hole course had a Standard Scratch Score of 71.

The Dover Society Executive Committee

Jenny Olpin

Our Society is now in its 34th Year and continues to support, challenge, and develop all planning and day to day issues that affect our lovely town of Dover. During that time various teams and committees have evolved so as the varying interests of active members can be directed into meeting the Society's core objectives. Currently we have the Planning and Refurbishment Teams which meet mainly monthly. In addition to this there are the Project Teams such as Cowgate Cemetery and the River Dour which are physically active in meeting their remit.

Overseeing all this action is the Executive Committee comprising Chairman, Vice Chair, Honorary Treasurer, Secretary and between eight to twelve members. Roles covered by members include Membership Secretary, Minutes Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Newsletter distribution, Chairs of Planning and Refurbishment, Press Secretary, Social Secretary and Web Master. We are needing to give some of these long serving members a rest as they have 'served their time' and will be stepping down at the next Annual General Meeting in April. The Executive Posts that are available for you to consider are:-

Honorary Treasurer
Secretary
Membership Secretary

We have 'job descriptions' compiled by the current holder, and these are available on request to either alan.lee1947@ntlworld.com or jenny.olpin@gmail.com Further contact details are available at the front of this Newsletter. Certainly, do not hesitate to speak to those whom you might know and who are currently active on any of these Society groups.

Further to this our long serving Chairman is also involved in the Winter Monthly meetings. He now needs support with this role in seeking speakers and operating the 'tech' at the events held at St Mary's Hall. Monthly meetings are only held in October, November, January, March and April, the February meeting being a Quiz Night. Does this sound like a job you could do?

It is time to bring in new members to these Executive roles, which are not arduous, but crucial to the ongoing purpose and influencing the future development of The Dover Society. We need you and look forward to speaking with you.