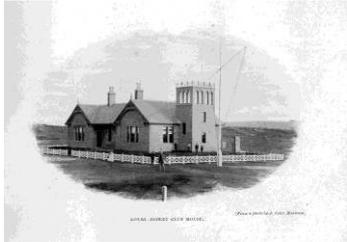




# Royal Montrose Golf Club



It is widely believed the game of golf evolved on the lands, between the sea and the more fertile hinterland, known as the **Links**. The East coast of Scotland was ideally suited to this development, and uniquely there are many towns and cities along the length of the **east coast of Scotland** who have links courses, upon which multiple golf clubs play, such as Aberdeen, **Montrose**, Arbroath, Carnoustie, Monifieth, St Andrews, and Leven etc.



Within these towns and cities many golf clubs were formed as a result of the many trades being plied, such as the Mechanics, the Weavers Club, the Flex dressers Club, the Half Holiday Club, etc. Over the years, as a result of amalgamations, these clubs have been reduced to the three clubs which exist in Montrose today; The Royal Montrose, the Mercantile and the Caledonia Golf Clubs.

Golf was first recorded in Montrose in **1562** when six year old schoolboy James Melville recorded in his diary that “Our maister war taught to handle the bow for archerie, the glub for goff....A happy and golden tyme indeid”, making Montrose the **5<sup>th</sup> oldest golf course in the world**

In **1628** the famous Marquis of Montrose became the first golfer to engage a caddie, paying him four shillings, and in **1629** the Marquis spent his honeymoon in Montrose playing golf.

Over the years many battles unfolded between the golfers, and the local Town Council over the links lands, as the council wished to use the land for housing and leasing to farmers, in order to gain more income.

However it wasn't until **1810** the first Golf Club was formed under the name of **Montrose Golf Club** to fight the Council, which is the **9<sup>th</sup> oldest golf club**. For the first 90 years the club took responsibility for funding “the green”: the improvements to and redesigns of the golf course which they made available free of charge to generations of local golfers.

In early **1800's** during the **Montrose's Races** assembly the first recorded **night match** lit by lanterns, created a sensation as Aberdeen's Lord Kennedy took on local golfer James Cruickshank of Langley Park for **£500 per hole**, the equivalent of £35,000 today. The match was widely reported as far afield as London and New York.

The club acquired its first Gold Medal in **1818**, and until 1830, the club honoured the medal winner by automatically making him Club Captain until the medal was competed for again

In **1829** Montrose soundly defeated a team from the Honourable Company of Edinburgh golfers in a grand match which generated great national interest.

In **1830** the club published its first rule book, an important contribution to the evolution of the Rules of Golf which included the first to ban a stymie from stroke play competitions

One of the world's first **Junior golf clubs** was formed at Montrose Academy in **1832** with members competing in the first junior tournament on record for a medal donated by David Duncan



In **1845** following an appeal by the future Prime Minister William Gladstone, the club was granted its **Royal Patronage** by Prince Albert only the **3<sup>rd</sup> Royal club** to have such an honour after the Royal Perth Golfing Society in 1833, and the Royal and Ancient in 1834.

In **1857** the Royal Albert competed in the famous **Grand National Tournament** which was a precursor to the first Open Championship held at Prestwick in 1860.

Montrose hosted the first national tournament ever played outside St Andrews in **1860**, predating the Open Championship at Prestwick by two weeks

In **1864** nine gentlemen met in the Crown Hotel to form the Montrose Victoria Golf Club. A silver medal was ordered and first competed for nine days later.

In **1866** – Royal Albert staged the only **25-hole tournament** ever held, with a prize fund exceeding that of the Open at Prestwick. The tournament was played over a course that exceeded 8,000 yards (it remains the longest ever played for professional tournament). The winner was amateur William Doleman of Glasgow on 112 against a strong field that included Open champions James Anderson, Andrew Strath, Willie Park, and Tom Morris.

Montrose native and Royal Albert member Robert Clark wrote and published "**Golf: A Royal and Ancient Game**", in **1875** the first and most celebrated history of the sport.

In **1881** the first edition of the **Golfer's manual** is written by the Rev Robert Forgan. It becomes the first commercially successful instruction book, going through eight editions

In **1886** The Royal Albert Golf Club was one of 24 clubs who contributed towards the purchase of the **British Amateur Championship Trophy** and were involved in the management of the event, until it was taken over by the R & A in 1921.

In **1887** – Montrosian, **Alex Findlay**, who was taught the game by Robert Dow and caddied for Royal Albert members in his youth, emigrated to Nebraska and became "the grandfather of golf in USA" after creating its first golf course consisting of 6 holes and promoted golf widely. He went on to be affiliated with over 210 clubs worldwide and was an honorary member of almost every golf club in the USA

The new Montrose Circular Course was opened in **1888** with a star studded professional tournament won by Willie Fernie

The Montrose Ladies Golf Club was formed in **1889** which played golf over the South Links of Montrose and in 1891 in the **Duffer's Golf Club papers**, written by Royal Albert member Valentine Stone, it was included in the first literary account of ladies golf on record.

In **1893** the last of many professional challenge matches between great friends and rivals Montrose's **Bob Dow** and St Andrew's **Old Tom Morris** was held. Whilst in their sixties the match was covered extensively in the "**Times of London**"



Alex Findlay in **1908** persuaded **Charles (Chay) Burgess** who succeeded Robert Dow as Royal Albert professional to emigrate to the USA where he became the professional at the Woodland Golf Club, Newton, Massachusetts for over 30 years, and coached celebrity members including Babe Ruth, Al Jolson, and Bing Crosby.

He most famously coached Woodland member **Francis Ouimet** to be the first amateur to win the **US Open in 1913** at Brookline, beating Harry Vardon & Ted Ray in a playoff. This ex caddie's victory did more than any other factor to establish golf in USA, and he became known as "the father of amateur golf in USA". He went on in 1951 to become the first American to be Captain of the R & A and his story was depicted in the book and film "**The Greatest Game Ever Played**"

In **1919** the new Medal course designed by Harry Colt opened. Initially being controversial with the new "high" holes on the bents which became a major issue in the town's election



In **1927** – On 16<sup>th</sup> June 1927 a new ladies golf club was founded to play on the North Links the **North Links Ladies Golf Club**, distinct from the Montrose Ladies golf Club who played mainly on the nine hole South links. Originally meeting in the former Royal Albert clubhouse by **1929** they had raised sufficient funds to build their own clubhouse and by 1935 had an impressive seventy six members and thirty juniors.

In **1986** - The Royal Albert Golf Club and the Montrose Victoria Golf Club merged and also welcomed the North Links Ladies Golf Club to form the **Royal Montrose Golf Club** we have today.

In **1999 & 2007** The Royal Montrose Golf Club were delighted to be one of the three local clubs to facilitate the R & A with the **Local Final Open Qualifying** for the Open Championship over Montrose Medal course, when held at nearby Carnoustie

In **2010** - Royal Montrose Golf Club was delighted to celebrate its **200<sup>th</sup> anniversary** with a number of social and golfing events throughout the year, culminating in the club welcoming representatives from numerous **Royal Golf Clubs worldwide** to Montrose for a week of celebration in September



We were also honoured in July of 2010 when our patron **HRH Prince Andrew, Duke of York** visited the club and unveiled a plaque.

Whilst in Montrose the Prince Andrew enjoyed a round of golf over the Montrose Medal course which he commented that "**it is a golf ground unequalled**"

*In 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Royal Montrose Golf Club was delighted to be the host club for the Sky Sports TV PGA Euro Pro tournaments for young professionals, held over the Montrose Medal course.*

*“Man, it’s a gran’ game, the gowf. It’s a gran’ game, an’ ye can play till ye’re an auld man, and its more exciting than onything ‘cept curling! Wi’ yer clubs and yer ba’ – just a wee ba’ ye ken – and yer caddie, and a man that yer just itching to beat, an’ the gran’ air coming over the hill wi’ the smell o’ the gorse an’ the sea, an’ the green just studded wi’ daises – the modest crimson tip’t floo’r – like stars, glinting at ye’, an’ lying dead on the green, an’ yer opponent awa in a bunker wi’ a broken club. Man, it’s a gran game the gowf.”*

*:- Anonymous Scottish contributor to a South American paper, reprinted in the Montrose Review in 1892.*