

CLUB HISTORY

AFTER many attempts in 1890 by Mr J Moore it was in November 1891 that the Whitby Golf Club was formed by a number of Whitby gentlemen and registered on the 4th December 1891. The principal promoters were Major A Simpson, Lieutenant Colonel A O Marwood, Mr H Weighill, Mr J Moore and Mr L Greenwell. The club was not based in Whitby but at Goathland, a moorland village nine miles away. The privilege to play there was granted by the Duchy of Lancaster, Lords of the Manor and the commoners of Goathland. The course, consisting of 6 holes, was mapped out on the village common with every hole having a special feature. It was certainly unique with long drives required and golfers played at their own risk in every respect. The Club issued membership tickets on the express understanding that it took no liability for accidents. This caution was necessary because the golfers played alongside the road as well as across it several times and in and out among the houses. Care had to be taken at the No 1 "Church" hole or the No 4 tee to ensure the church clock was not on the point of striking when making a stroke. When play was delayed because of 'danger', mainly people in the way, the golfer could observe the various gardens and at one hole one could call at the Post Office to collect any letters!



Mr Weighill and Mr Moore were the secretaries and once the course was planned negotiations were commenced to make accommodation for members visiting the links. The Club Room adjoining the Goathland Hotel was opened in the summer of 1892.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Club was held at the Crown Hotel Whitby in January 1892, when the vicar of Goathland, Reverend E B Hare occupied the chair. According to the Whitby Gazette of the 8th January 1892 an election of officers took place and the following were successful.

Mr Harold L Greenwell of The Carrs and London - Captain, Mr Thomas W Simpson - Treasurer and Secretary, other committee members were Reverend B Hare, Mr H Kirkby, Mr J Moore and Mr W H S Pyman. It was further stated that, "at present, there are but two or three, at the most, of players in Whitby and District and efficient players are needed who will be able to make up a game when needed by visiting friends". Most of the members in the next few years were Whitby business men who came to Goathland to play on Wednesday afternoons and at the weekends and local youths acted as caddies at 6d a round.

The first match was played on the links on 21st January 1892 over 18 holes when a monthly medal was the competition. Unfortunately heavy rain in the afternoon heightened the scores. The winner was Mr J Moore with a score of 130. Other scores were Mr T W Simpson 160, Mr A O Marwood 166, Mr R Linton 166, Mr A C Simpson 189, Reverend E B Hare 231 and Mr R W White 257.

In the second monthly medal the winner was Mr J Moore 114 - 8 net 106, while other scores showed a marked improvement on the first competition.

There was further improvement in the April competition when the winners were Mr R B L Johnston (Handicap 25) and Mr E V Austen (handicap 35) both had a net 95. The third monthly medal also resulted in very high scores owing to the quantity of snow that covered the links in many places! It was then stated that the links were now in capital playing order and the new club room adjacent to the Goathland Hotel was rapidly approaching completion.

During the next few years the Whitby Club continued to play golf at Goathland and membership rose to 41. However on the 8th February 1895 there was a fully attended meeting at the Angel Hotel Whitby of all classes of residents interested in a proposal to establish golf links at Upgang. After lengthy discussions on the merits of such a plan it was agreed to go ahead with the following proposal.

“The Whitby course was to commence at the left hand side of the railway near the White House Inn going towards Upgang and playing straight for Straggleton House Farm and then back again finishing at the right hand side of the railway near the White House. The course would cover a distance of about one and a half miles and would consist of 9 holes”. It was also stated that, *“there is a very large ravine to carry as well as several ponds and other obstacles which will make the course one of the most startling in this out of the way district for miles around”.* If the Golf Club was properly started at Upgang Sir George Elliot would be willing to give a generous subscription, and several other prominent gentlemen also promised to subscribe.

The laying out of the course commenced on 28th March 1895, the work being entrusted to Mr H K Williamson. The proprietors of the White House Inn offered part of the property as a temporary Club House. Apparently the owner of the land for the Golf Links, Mr Pyman and the tenant Mr Lawson raised no objection to the scheme.

While the club had paid an annual rent of £8 at Goathland, but had spent further funds on improvements, the rent of the Whitby course would be £20 with a further £5 rent to Mr Thompson for use of neighbouring land. Incidental expenses in regard to hedges being taken down and places made even would amount to about £160.

The new Whitby Links were officially opened by Mr E W Beckett MP on the 22nd May 1895, and there was a match between Mr Kay, the well known Seaton Carew professional and Mr Vardon, the well known Ilkley professional, played over two rounds (ie 18 holes). It was won by Mr Kay, and the prizes of £5 and £3 were donated by the club.

There was a very good attendance of ladies, gentlemen, members of the club and others, and the links presented quite a gay and animated scene when for the first time for a week the sun condescended to shine. Much arduous work had been performed by the Committee - Mr W H S Pyman, J P, Mr J Moore (Captain), Mr R B L Johnson (Secretary), Messrs J Meares, H S Taylor, W S Gray, Dr G Mitchell, T N Preston and R W White.

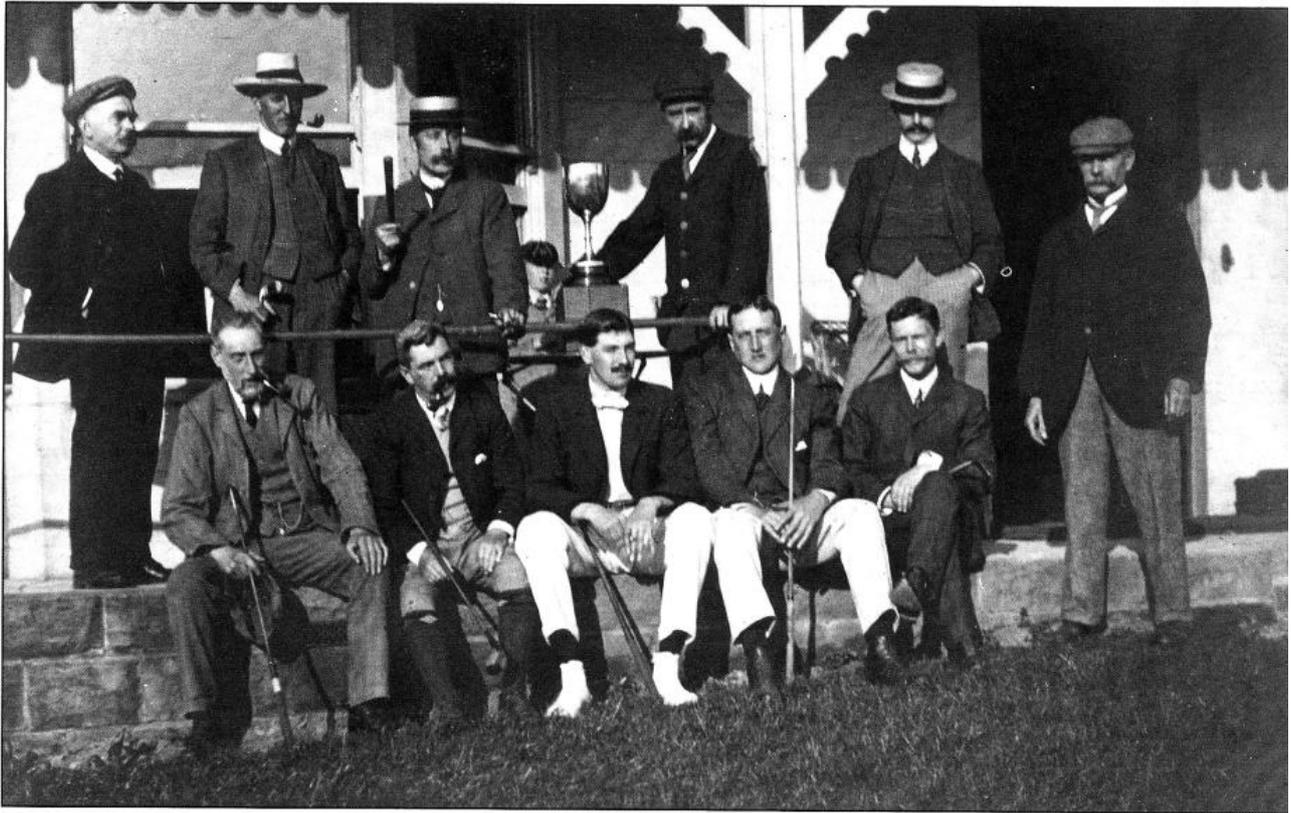
It was anticipated that the provision of the links would be the means of increasing the number of visitors to Whitby and the club already had 100 members. A report in the Whitby Gazette of 18th October 1895 stated that between 500 and 600 visitors had played on the Whitby course since its opening. They all, without exception had expressed their gratification at the formation of such a sporting little course so close to the town. Further improvements to the links would take place during the winter and it was hoped to build an annex to the White House for the accommodation of members and visitors. It also stated that the next competitions were for the Ladies Medal on Tuesday 22nd October 1895 (postponed from the previous week because of bad weather) and the Gentlemen's Medal on Wednesday 23rd October 1895.

At the 11th Annual General Meeting held in January 1903 it was suggested that the course could be enlarged by renting a further three fields from Mr W H S Pyman at £30 per annum.

Under the revision of rules it was proposed that the rule 13 stating that lady members shall not play the course after 12 noon be rescinded and they would be debarred from playing on

trophy competition days. There were about 25 lady members. Locker rents were reduced to one shilling for members who had been on the books for 5 years - other members to pay 5 shillings.

According to the Whitby Times of 5th February 1904 it was announced that the purchase by the club of nine acres of land known as "Thompsons Land" had been completed and conveyed to the Trustees. It was announced that following several requests for a bridge across the ravine Mr A Gladstone JP had kindly offered £120 for this and subscriptions were invited to defray further costs and immediately £54 was promised.



Cup Competition, Whitby Golf Club, July 11th, 1906

The first twenty years of the Clubs existence and growth are especially interesting and that is why more details have been given in the previous pages. However, the club continued to flourish with increased membership, and several more valuable trophies donated.



In 1921 the course was extended to 15 holes while it became a full 18 hole course on the 7th May 1930. The club house was still sited at the White House Hotel and the landlord Mr Falkingbridge and his family were very keen supporters.



In 1948 the Club House was transferred to the centre of the Course, and it was then possible to commence play from four different tees which eased queuing at the first tee.

As often happens on seaside courses when there are cliffs to the beach, coastal erosion invades the course and several adjustments have been necessary over the years - especially to the 6th and 9th holes. Following the Beeching Plan of the 1950's the Scarborough to Middlesborough Railway Line, which ran through part of the course, was axed. Consequently the large iron and stone railway bridge which crossed the Upgang Ravine by the cliff holes was demolished. This was unfortunate in one way, as the club's wooden bridge over the ravine, and quite adjacent, was pronounced unsafe and also had to be demolished. For nearly two years



On the third tee, with the old railway bridge in the background

golfers had to climb up and down steep, sometimes very slippery and narrow paths. In 1962 the present wooden bridge was erected and opened, and recently the paths on either side of the bridge have been improved and steps erected to ease the pulling of caddy cars.

Over the years there have been several alterations, improvements and extensions to the club house and the outbuildings have been improved and utilised and now form the Mens Locker Room, equipment sheds, caddy car storage etc. The Ladies Locker Room is situated on the first floor and although many improvements have been made, the ladies still have to negotiate a flight of steps, not easy when carrying golf equipment.

In the 1970's improvements and alterations to the first floor were undertaken so that the steward and his family could be in residence. Also, a member's lounge was built over the dining room, and from the windows there are marvellous views over the course, the coast and town.

For many years the Professional's shop was a timber hut near the club house but in 1990 a new and large stone building was erected on the site - much to the delight of the present Professional Mr Andrew Brook.

Over the years club membership has increased considerably. The mens and ladies run their own competitions but there are several mixed competitions held annually. Other sections are organised for Juniors, EGGS (Elderly Gentlemens Golfing Society), Rabbits, while RAF Fylingdales also play several competitions. Friendly and Alliance matches with other clubs are

arranged while the ladies enter a Scratch Team, and an "A" Team in the Yorkshire County league as well as playing Friendly and Alliance matches. Open days are also arranged.

Although the course is short by some standards it still presents a most enjoyable challenge. The wind off the North Sea can be fickle - often changing direction during a round, especially on the 6th and 18th holes where the men rive across Upgang Ravine. Two new holes were added to the course in 1993, and another three in 2005. This was necessary owing to the loss of land to coastal erosion, and to reduce the instance of balls damaging property on nearby housing estates.

The course is very popular with visitors and parties, and several Pro-am competitions have been held while the Professional runs his own competitions in the summer on Bank Holiday Mondays. The club is proud that a member of the Royal Family HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales paid a social visit to the Club on the 8th June 1978 when he visited Whitby and he used the 3rd Fairway as a helicopter pad.

Thus through the foresight and efforts of a few gentlemen in the last years of the 19th century Whitby Golf Club was founded and has survived over 100 years of a most turbulent period of history.

It started life at Goathland and after only a few years moved to Whitby itself. It has developed from a six hole to a full eighteen hole course and more land has now been obtained to ensure that it will retain that level as the sea and weather erode the cliffs. It has survived the ravages of two World Wars and seen the membership rise from a handful of men to over six hundred members in many categories.

One wonders what those gentlemen in the 1890's would think of the monies available and the regulations to contend with if they were ' starting now. Let us all continue to support those efforts started in 1891 to develop the Club and the game of golf so that in a hundred years from now when someone looks back they can write about our work and style in the last years of the Twentieth Century.