

Curragh History Archives



Curragh Golf Club

Established 1883



On 16th November 1882 The Highland Light Infantry (71st Regiment) arrived in the Curragh Camp, Co Kildare, from Edinburgh. There were several keen golfers with the Regiment, one of whose proudest possessions was its golf medal which had been instituted in 1880. It is interesting to note that this medal was first competed for at Musselburgh when it was won by Lieut. J. Mitchell-Innes.

The Irish Times 12th March 1883 carried the following announcement in its column of Army News from the Curragh: "Maj. Gen. Fraser, V.C., C.B., Commanding the Curragh Brigade, has sanctioned the formation of a garrison golfclub in connection with the officers recreation club. Lieutenant A. G. Balfour of the 71st Battalion H.L.I. stationed in the camp has being appointed Secretary. The Rules of the Club will be the same as those of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews."

The only surviving document of this period in the possession of the Curragh Golf Club is A small bound copy of these rules. In the rules of golf, as then played at St. Andrews, are reprinted; which reveals a close connection between the two clubs. This is not surprising as the first Honorary Secretary's father, John Balfour of Balbirnie, had been Captain of 'St Andrews' in 1842. In due course Lt. A. G. Balfour was also to become the first known captain of the club in 1887.

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News of the club's foundation was carried to Scotland very quickly and the following details are documented in The Golfers Handbook 1883, edited by Robert Forgan Jnr. of St. Andrews: "Est. 1883. Patron Maj.Gen.C.C.Fraser, V.C., C.B.; Secretary, Lieutenant A.G.Balfour, 71st Highland Light Infantry. The Round is about 1 3/4 miles and there are 16 holes..." This entry was the first listing of an Irish club in any foreign golf publication. (Although the Belfast Golf Club had been founded 16 months earlier, there is no mention of that club in The Golfers Handbook 1883).

Unfortunately the clubhouse location from 1883 to 1900 is unknown. In an article by Lionel Hewson in The Irish Field, September 12th 1908, the photograph on the left was included. It depicts the clubhouse at that time, a modest building with a covered veranda. In the article, Hewson reported that the clubhouse was beside a quarry. This was a hazard to be negotiated when playing the first and eighteenth holes.

Disaster struck the Curragh Golf Club at 11.30 p.m. On Saturday 7th November 1942 when the clubhouse was destroyed by fire. Luckily, many of the members' golf clubs were saved, but a valuable stock of golf balls (scarce items during the war) were lost by the ladies section. The committee immediately decided that plans should be prepared for rebuilding. The new Clubhouse was built and as last, on Sunday 13th February 1944 the it was officially opened by Col. T. McNally, President of the club.

The Annual General Meeting of 1990 decided to proceed with a complete re-modelling of the clubhouse, to meet the needs of 500 Ordinary members, 160 Lady Associates and more than 250 other categories of members. Work on the new building commenced in July 1992, with completion of work in May 1993, and officially opened on 30th May 1993 by Brig. General C. J. Crean President of the club.

The Curragh Golf Club turned out five professionals from 1944 to 1986, four of whom began in the caddie ranks. These were Bill Brady from Blackrath, now a retired honorary member of Windes Golf Club in Cheshire, England; Phil Lawlor who is an honorary member of the club; Ernie Jones, present professional of the K Club, who is also an honorary member of the Curragh and the latest well known star Lilian Behan, Winner of the 1985 British Amateur Championship. The other professional is Jonny Young, he is currently playing in all the top professional competitions in the country.

