

# The Gowffer's Tattle

LEITH RULES GOLF SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Illustration 1:  
First international golf  
Match: Duke of York and  
Paterson against two  
English nobles

**tuck** (tuk,  
t k)

*transitive verb*

SCOT. **to beat**  
**or tap (a drum)**

*Etymology: ME tuk-  
ken < NormFr toker,  
toquer, var. of OFr  
toucher, to touch*

*noun*  
**a beat or tap,  
as on a drum**

## JOHN RATTRAY, DUNCAN FORBES AND THE FATHERS OF GOLF

### Part I: The Bonnie Prince

Golf historians and lay enthusiasts alike agree that it is not possible to trace this game to the very first time a ball, clod, or rock was swept across a field with a stick to find a rabbit run. But as a formal game with consistent rules, the beginnings of golf are clear: It all started when some Edinburgh gentlemen decided to make a habit of playing golf at Leith Links.

King James VII, grandfather to Bonnie Prince Charlie, teamed up with a common cobbler named John Paterson against two English nobles in the world's first "international" golf match which took place on Leith Links in 1681. (illustration 1)

Unbeknownst to the English team, the unrefined cobbler was an accomplished golfer, regarded locally as a champion. The Scottish team went on to win the match which decided the outcome of a dispute the said match was

intended to settle, and to show his appreciation the future king (for he was then only the Duke of York) rewarded the cobbler handsomely. Paterson used his reward to erect a block of



Illustration 2  
Bonnie Prince Charlie

tenements on Canongate which he aptly named "Golfer's Land."

Seven years later, as king (but not for long) James VII was driven out of Britain. Reputedly this had nothing to do with any poor sports from the famous golf match; he was simply of the

"wrong" faith for the times. William of Orange came into power as regent until James Francis Stuart would come of age to succeed his father to the throne, but the regent was a popular Protestant and a favourite of the Parliament, which wanted William and Mary to stay in power. James Francis Stuart bided his time in France and married Princess Clementina Maria, who gave birth to a boy she grandly christened Charles Edward Louis John Casimir Silvester Maria Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie (illustration 2).

By right of succession, Prince Charles Edward had claim to the throne when William and Mary died without issue (as well as Mary's sister, Queen Anne, who also died childless) but it was decided in Parliament that the successor would be chosen by ballot. The supporters of Prince Charlie lost by one vote against those of George the son of Sophia, a great grand-daughter of King James VI. The fact

(cont. page two)

## SPRING AND SUMMER EVENTS

This summer there was a challenge on 28 April between LRGS and Musselburgh Old Golf Club, held at Musselburgh; Musselburgh won 4½ - 1½. Musselburgh and LRGS played again on 4 July with LRGS victorious 3-1. The following day on 5 July the match between Bruntsfield Short Hole and LRGS at Leith Links favoured the visitors, with Bruntsfield

winning 2½ - 1½. On 26 July LRGS were victorious by 3-2 in the return match at Bruntsfield Links. For the full story on all of these challenge matches, see the website.

Also this summer was the Leith Festival Gala Day in which LRGS was represented with a mini-nearest the pin event. Nine year old Daniel Hood won the young

persons' category and Neil Inglis took the adult prize.

On 6 July the Challenge Medal saw six groups take part for a new prize donated generously by LRGS President Douglas Foulis.

On 7 July the famous Hickory Open was a success; Georgian Antiques and Bruntsfield Short Hole qualified for the final with Bruntsfield taking victory.

(cont. from page 1) that this decision went against the rules of succession didn't go down well with the supporters of the bonnie prince, but the leanings of the times were to keep a Protestant in power. Nevertheless, Charles Edward resolved to take his rightful place and in 1744 he drummed up backing from France in the form of a fleet of 7,000 soldiers. They set sail to help the young prince restore the Stuart dynasty but the fleet was lost in a squall on the Dunkirk coast where most of them drowned. Despite this unfortunate setback, the hope in Scotland of restoring the throne to the young Stuart prince was gaining momentum. Against growing support for the "Jacobite cause," nobles in Edinburgh met often over a game of golf at Leith

Links which was also the ground where troops were mustered and archery practice took place. Amongst the quarry of gentlemen golfers were John Rattray, physician and brother to the Laird of Craighall Rattray, and Duncan Forbes, President of the Court of Session. These and other prominent lords were seen on the Links playing golf so often that they were included in a satirical-epic poem written in 1743 by Thomas Mathison, a few lines reading: We'll cure you of a summer's cold/Or of a winter's cough/Or mak ye young even though you're old/So come and play at goff./They're at it in the early bricht./They're at it till it's nearly nicht./ They've barely time their nebs tae dicht... And so it goes on, naming in comic verse several players who

would compete the following year in the first ever golf competition. Rattray for skill/And Corse, for strength renowned/Stewart and Lesly/ Beat the sandy ground... But in order to organise a legitimate competition, the "Gentlemen Golfers of Leith," as they called themselves, petitioned the Edinburgh Town Council for a trophy to be played for annually. The city responded with a stipulation that rules be drawn up to ensure that the annual event would be fair and consistent, thus the first ever formal rules of golf were penned. The city of Edinburgh ratified the rules and had a silver club fashioned for the prize, the equivalent of the silver arrow prize for the Royal Company of Archers of which John (continues below)



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## MEET THE MEMBERS

The featured LRGS member for this 2nd issue is our very own Pat Denzler.

It is difficult to feature founding members and know the right order in which to present them; we highlighted Philip Knowles who is the author of two books on golf, has sold to golf enthusiasts worldwide, and donated the trophy for the Hickory Open in issue # 1.

Pat is LRGS Secretary; she chairs every meeting, including the AGM, makes sure everything goes smoothly at every event, chases up peo-

ple who need to be chased up, keeps the society running...

In fact, one can get away with claiming that Pat has contributed the most in terms of time and effort in making Leith Rules Golf a name in the 21st century.

Although not the first person to come up with the idea, Pat has been the driving force behind keeping the society going.

On 23 October the newsletter editor had the opportunity of interviewing Pat at her beautiful home in Edinburgh. Here is that interview in full:

**Do you know whose idea it was to start LRGS?** Pat: Yes, towards the end of 2001, Tim Bell asked if I would come and chair a meeting in Leith at the Cricket Pavilion. He had brought together a number of local people to consider whether visitors would come and play golf on Leith Links; I went along as at that time I was President of Leith Chamber and had recently sold our business in Leith. Representatives from a range of different organisations came and Tim outlined there might be some funding for (Continues page 3)

Rattray was also a member (four times winner of their silver bowl and twice silver arrow winner); less than a month later the first golf tournament took place on Leith Links amid great fanfare, proclaimed to all with tuck of drum. Both Rattray and Forbes were registered among the 11 competitors, but Forbes withdrew and Rattray took the prize, which made him winner of both the silver arrow and silver club that year. The following year, in 1745 he defended his title as "Captain of the Golf" —which gave him authority to settle golf

disputes and supervise the course—by winning the trophy for a second time. A tradition was established whereby each winner would add a silver trinket to the trophy in the form of a golf ball. The game had indeed taken its rightful place in high society. (Illust.3)

Elsewhere, the bonnie prince had yet to take his rightful place on the throne of Britain. Charles Edward arrived in Scotland shortly after the second annual golf tournament, and spent the summer rallying troops in the highlands before taking up residence at Holyrood-

house. While King George's Hanoverian army advanced from the south, more Jacobite troops were gathered and assembled on the Links and wherever the lay of the land would accommodate them. The inevitable clash took place at dawn on 21 September with a surprise attack from the Jacobites. Within a quarter of an hour, the raid was over; Bonnie Prince Charlie gained the upper hand and made plans to cross over to England the following month.

Part II of this exciting true saga continues next issue!



Illustration 3: Tuck of drum ceremony advertising the tournament courtesy of the artist.

PAT DENZLER TALKS ABOUT HOW LRGS BECAME ESTABLISHED AND DEVELOPED



President Douglas Foulis presents the very first member of LRGS, Rev. Ian Gilmore, with a colour version of the logo.

a feasibility study to consider the possibilities of playing golf on the Links. John Dixon of Georgian

Antiques was there and, as I looked across the room to him, I remember saying, "Why don't we just run with it - try it and see?" We agreed we would learn as much from actually setting it up and running it especially as the following year the Open was due at Muirfield in Gullane. John generously offered to provide hickory clubs for the trial.

**What did you all do at the first meeting when you did decide to run with it?** Pat: Tim was very good at bringing together interested parties. We were helped hugely by having Graham Croucher from the Edinburgh Culture and Leisure Department, and help from many members of the local community. Cornelius

Waugh at the Cricket Club was very helpful as well as John Dixon who not only provided clubs but brought in a host of golfing contacts including Archie Baird, Philip Knowles and Jim Forson.

**How did the founding members get to know one another?** Pat: The first major event was arranged for July 2002 at the time of the Open tournament at Muirfield. The City helped us with permission to open the Links for 10 days of Golf and arranged grass cutting and publicity. Archie Baird and Philip Knowles paced out 5 holes named after the original 1744 holes. With funding help we were able to commission waistcoats with the Leith Rules Golf logo, sand boxes, and flags. Working with the City of

Edinburgh Parks Department and Craigentenny Golf Club, tees, greens and holes were prepared and the course marked out.

**It was basically a snowball effect, wasn't it?** Pat: It was indeed. Tim Bell was very good at persuading local Leithers to steward and support the events. Each new supporter would draw in another one or two. Jim Forson was very good too at organising the golf competition and, as a member of the British Golf Collectors Society he had other contacts which helped us get committee members and a treasurer.

**How did the idea for the Hickory Open come about?**

Pat: Jim Forson really helped bring that to fruition and also John Dixon. It was Jim who had the idea of running a Hickory tourna-

ment - Initially over two days on a Saturday and Sunday. We found however that even though we had good entries and he worked out a very nice scheme, golfers weren't prepared to commit to two days; Saturday proved the more popular day and it is now a one-day tournament. Jim was Hickory Organiser and gave a great running commentary on the game with a full report for our inaugural general meeting. He helped us for the first couple of years but work commitments meant he had to stand down. Before moving on, he introduced Philip Knowles who persuaded Douglas Foulis, a past Captain of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, to join us as our president and an outstanding president he is.

We have enjoyed great support from these golfing contacts.

**Do you think history needs to rectify its omission of the beginnings of golf at Leith, or do you think St. Andrews deserves the title?**

Pat: Oh, Leith is quite different from St. Andrew's. I think it's very significant that Leith has a place in history as home to the first recorded rules written for play in Leith in 1744 and recorded in the City of Edinburgh Council Meeting Minutes. It was probably many of the same golfers who were going over to Fife, and playing golf there too; they were the archers; the nobility of the time. Only the wealthy would (Continues back page)



"They were the archers; the nobility of the time."



Present at the launch were Pat Denzler, Lorna Moon, Jim Colville, Douglas Foulis, David Kay, Gus Gilchrist, Dan Orr, Czeslaw Kruk, Gordon Moir, Graham Wilson, Irene Valentine, David Valentine, Tim Bell, Alan Minto, Lionel Freedman, Philip Knowles, Margaret Moffet, David Blakeley, Janet Blakeley, Cornelius Waugh and members of the press and media.

NEW STAGE PLAY TO FEATURE GOLF HISTORY

Yes, it's true. It's official. The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers will finally come to the stage.

Author and playwright Lorna Moon moved to Edinburgh in January 2001 to write a book set in 13th century Scotland; her manuscript came into the hands of a few LRGS members who passed the book around and discussed whether the author might be persuaded to write a play or historical novel featuring the history and development

of the first rules of golf. She was up for it, and gave a brief presentation to the LRGS board in October 2006.

On 29 October 2007 LRGS became the proud recipient of a grant from Awards For All. We held a press launch at the Cricket Club where the autumn weather helped to provide a lovely Links backdrop for the Edinburgh Evening News photographer's many photos of which one got into the paper with a caption reading: "AUTHOR



Lorna Moon is shown a hickory golf club from the 1920s by Leith Rules Golf Society president Douglas Foulis. The American has been commissioned by the club to write a play on how the first rules of the game were invented on Leith Links." Leitheatre have generously offered to enact parts as they are written and hopefully they or another group will see the play performed for the 2008 or 2009 Fringe.

have had time to play sport, and they were probably related or knew each other. St. Andrew's has a different history. Leith didn't have the space and so the golfers moved to Musselburgh and then on to Muirfield. St. Andrew's had the good fortune to have plenty of space for the game to grow and establish itself there. It has claimed the title the home of golf as the whole town really seems to be a part of the golf legacy.

**Do you think that the society will look much different in 10 years time?**

Pat: I would hope that it will have moved on and become quite significant; that there will be a major event each year on March 7th, the anniversary of the signing of the rules. I hope too that the Hickory Open will be a regular event in the calendar of the British Golf Collectors Society, and that there will be a gazebo or interpretive display on the Links of the golf story in Leith. The cairn at the west of the Links is very good. It sets out the history well, but actually having a statue of a golfer, say John Rattray, the first captain would I think be terrific. He was such an important figure, a member of the Royal College of Physicians – he became physician to Bonnie Prince Charlie and was captured at Culloden but returned to play and win again on the Links. The Rattray family takes an interest in what we are doing in Leith today. It's a terrific bonus to find members of the family and makes it very exciting as we look for other ideas to bring greater recognition to Leith's part in the history of golf. I think and hope the society will be bigger, better, that we can be self-funding and have more members who are really interested in all the golfing and social activities.

**What is the connection between LRGS and the Honourable Company of Edinburgh golfers?**

Pat: The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers represent the continuing history of the golfers of Leith. The original golfers moved from Leith to Musselburgh in 1836 and on to Muirfield in Gullane in 1892. Leith Rules Golf Society aims to increase the recognition of Leith Links as home to the earliest recorded rules of golf and one of the game's prominent early locations so our focus is on Leith and what happened there. We are interested too in the greater social history of Leith and what was happening at that time in Leith. The Honourable Company of Edinburgh golfers now located at Muirfield hold the continuous written minutes of the club including the beginnings in Leith.

**Why is the setting down of rules so significant?** Pat: Golf revolves around the rules. The 13 rules written for play in Leith were the

foundation of the rules of golf. They have been developed and refined to today's rules of golf given to every new member of a golf club. Golf is also a tremendous game for networking. The game is designed in such a way that a professional can play with an amateur and there is a means of handicapping to enable both to enjoy a good game against each other—quite unusual in sport. You can't take a professional football or a cricket team and play an amateur team—it doesn't really work. It's this interplay between the professionals and the amateurs that's unique and the networking aspect is fantastic. The whole social side is very, very important in golf and the early golfers recognised this by meeting in a local tavern and building their own clubhouse.

**Has the membership fluctuated much since the beginning and if so, how do you account for those fluctuations?**

Pat: Initially we were very fortunate – we opened in the summer of 2002 when Muirfield hosted the Open. Many people, knowing Leith's part in the history of golf, played a few holes and joined the society, including golf visitors from overseas. We hoped they too would renew regularly but realise now that the overseas members usually only join for a year to receive a membership certificate, perhaps a trophy for the wall, and don't rejoin. They're not going to renew annually. But local people interested in golf or in the history of Leith show considerable interest especially now with significant developments taking place here in the Links area. Through membership there is an opportunity to take part in representing Leith Rules Golf in hickory challenge matches against other hickory-playing clubs and to get regular updates on what is happening. We are developing regular mailings and a newsletter and I think, we should be able to achieve a good, solid membership of about a hundred interested people either in the history of golf on the Links or in playing golf with hickory clubs.

**How did the Cricket Club get involved?** Pat: The Cricket Club was very generous in offering the pavilion as a place to meet. We did wonder when we held the first tournament where we would have the starters hut and whether we would have to set up a tent and soon realised that the western end of the pavilion would be ideal as the "club hut." Also, the club has a licence, and the golfers could become temporary members of the Cricket Club in order to enjoy the benefits of a place to meet and a traditional glass of beer or ale and the option of pie and beans after a match. We were also offered the Cricket Club as a place to hold our

meetings and a great location when other teams came to play. It has become an essential part of the whole concept, and because it's actually on the Links right in the middle of where the original holes were played it makes a perfect meeting point.

**What do the members do between events?**

Perhaps not quite enough, but since two of our early members joined the committee, there has been much more activity and regular mailings to members. Alastair Chalmers updates our website regularly and keeps our members informed, while Brian Graham arranges team matches against other clubs including a match against Bruntsfield Short Hole, and one against Musselburgh Old Course. These are played with hickory clubs on the Leith Links course and return matches at the local clubs with conventional golf clubs. We hold an anniversary celebration on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March the anniversary of the signing of the rules and we hold our AGM in January with an invited speaker. As well as the July events we have held a "Nearest the Pin" competition during the Leith Festival in June 2006 and this year. We are thrilled to have a journalist who is preparing a newsletter to mail out twice a year to keep our members informed, and having just received an Awards-For-All Grant, we invited members to a press launch to celebrate. We try to keep in touch and keep the members excited and interested in what is happening.

#### WEBSITE:

[www.leith-rules-golf.co.uk](http://www.leith-rules-golf.co.uk) or write to Leith Rules Golf Society c/o 14 Pirniefield Terrace Edinburgh EH6 7PW

