

From the Archives – 20th April

First professional golf tournament at Roehampton Club

The *Centenary Book* by Elizabeth Hennessy talks about the club resuming normality after World War One with the introduction of a successful professional golf tournament which became an annual feature. The first tournament reported in the newspapers was in 1921 when the *Daily Mirror* announced the event with a number of leading players taking part including Arnaud Massey, who had come over from France, and Angel de la Torre, the young Spanish champion.

According to the report, the event was inaugurated the previous year and was won by George Duncan who achieved the best score over thirty-six holes. The format for the event in 1921 was changed with the four players returning the lowest scores qualifying for the match play stages over eighteen holes the following day.

Other newspapers picked up on the event when the event took place on 13th April. The *Daily Herald* referred to the international flavour of the participating players mentioning J Douglas Edgar, who had won the Canadian Open Championship on the last two occasions; Edward Ray of Oxhey, present holder of the American Open Championship; George Duncan, British Open champion; and other former Open Champions including Harry Vardon, James Braid, JH Taylor, Alex Herd and J White. Total prize money for the event was announced as £200 (equivalent to approximately £12,500 in today's money), and the winner of the match play tournament would take home the Challenge Cup which was won by George Duncan in the previous year.



George Duncan

Despite the difficulties of a high wind and a hard ground, the play was sensational, for the leading scores exceeded the course record of 71 which had been established by Edward Ray and Alec Herd in the same event the previous year. A score of 70 for 18 holes was returned by no fewer than three players in the morning, and 69 was accomplished by two of the competitors in the afternoon.



JH Taylor

Of these, the finest achievement was that of James Ockendon, Raynes Park, who was within the old record figures for each round, having a score of 70 plus 69 giving him an advantage of four strokes over his nearest competitors. Fred Leach, Northwood, who tied for second place with 143, also had a 69 in the afternoon, and these two shared the record which was set in 1921. Leach tied with two others on aggregate scores, namely Frank Ball of Langley Park with scores of 70 and 73 and JH Taylor representing local club Mid-Surrey (the Royal prefix was not assigned until 1926) who had also scored 73 and 70.

The draw for the match play stage to be played the following day pitched Frank Ball to play against James Ockendon and Fred Leach to play JH Taylor. From this impressive field of leading professionals in England and Scotland and overseas, it was the veteran Mid-Surrey player, JH Taylor who won the tournament beating Fred Leach by 1 hole in the semi final and James Ockendon 5 and 4 in the final. Ockendon had a strong following of spectators watching the final, but it was the grim determination of Taylor in his 50th year that won the day.

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