

From the Archives – 24th August

George Gadd – Golf Professional at Roehampton Club 100 years ago

1923 was a busy golfing year in the life of George Gadd. According to the Pall Mall Gazette, he was appointed by Roehampton Club as Head Golf Professional during his reign as Welsh Golf Champion in June 1914. He was caricatured by HF Crowther Smith in the Sketch newspaper in May 1921 as one of the personalities at the Club in which Roehampton Club was described as 'a playground of outdoor sporting society'.



In March 1923, George took part in the first tournament of its kind in a 36-hole scratch open competition in which professionals were paired with lady golfers. Those taking part were invited to play at the London Country Club in Hendon attracting six former Open Championship winners including George Duncan (Hanger Hill), Ted Ray (Oxhey), Alex Herd (Coombe Hill), JH Taylor (Mid-Surrey), Harry Vardon (South Herts) and Jack White (Sunningdale).

In addition to the champions, George Gadd was eligible to play as a professional player attached to a club within a radius of 20 miles from the centre of London. The handsome Silver Challenge Trophy valued at £500 (in excess of £38,600 in today's money) for the event was presented by the owners of the Bystander magazine. The format for the Competition required the Professionals to play from plus four with the Ladies using their Ladies Union Handicap but limited to 18.

The leading score of 77 for the first eighteen holes was posted by former Open Champion Alex Herd with his partner Miss Crowther (playing off 5). George Gadd and his partner Miss Beadell (playing off 3) were two shots behind on 79. Following the second round the competition was won with an aggregate score of 158 by WB Smith of

Hadley Wood and his partner Mrs Battersby. George and his partner ended up in second place following a play off with two other pairings unable to better their eighteen hole play-off score of 80.

Later that month George took part in the qualifying event at Purley Golf Club for the right to play in the final stages of the £1000 PGA Tournament at Lytham St Annes. At the end of the first round, the Frenchman Arnaud Massey led the field with a score of 70 leaving George Gadd six shots behind. His total aggregate score at the end of the second day of 149 was enough for him to qualify to play at Lytham St Annes.

In May, George played in another 36-hole Professional Invitation Tournament at Letchworth Golf Club where he finished eight shots behind the winner Aubrey Boomer but one shot ahead of Harry Vardon. In June, George travelled to Scotland to play alongside unattached



"THE BYSTANDER" TROPHY
On view at the London Country Club, Hendon



golfer WM Winton at Troon in the qualifying stages of the British Open Championship from an entry list of 222 players.

His aggregate score of 156 was comfortable enough to qualify for the Championship. Among the favoured players who did not qualify were Gene Sarazen, Harry Vardon and Arnaud Massey. In the Championship proper after 36-holes, George found himself drawn to play with American golfer Walter Hagen who was one shot off the lead. Hagen went on to finish second overall to AH Havers (Coombe Hill). George Gadd finished with a creditable score of 309 overall leaving him in the top thirty players.

Two days later the newspapers announced that the Open Championship winner was going to partner George Gadd in a foursomes match to be played at Gleneagles against Jim Barnes (former US Champion) and Jim Kirkwood (well-known Australian at this time and ex-holder of the commonwealth title. The match was played over 36 holes and ended up all square after a gruelling encounter.

The players stayed on at the venue to compete in another qualifying event with prize money of a thousand guineas presented by the Glasgow Herald. George Gadd finished five shots off the lead after the first round and ended up qualifying for the match play stage of the competition where he played Nottinghamshire golfer Tom Williamson. In a close encounter, George lost by one hole.

The year ended well for our former golf professional when he and Charles Johns of Purley Downs Golf Club both returned scores of 73 in the Croydon and District Alliance Tournament at the West Kent Course in Bickley equalling the course record.

Steve Riedlinger, Club Archivist

