



With jigger and baffy: tales of dental golf

In the 1970s Albert W. Grimson, who was a dental practitioner in the East End of Glasgow, compiled an album about the history of the Western Dental Golf Club – "Fore!word". A.R. Whitelaw, who has been studying the album, relates the story of the club, starting with an evocative quotation from the album.

"Friday the 14th May 1920 was one of those beautiful Spring days; so welcome after a long dreich winter. The sun shone and with a jaunty step I made my way northwards from Carlton Place across the Suspension Bridge. I carried a week-end bag and a set of golf clubs. Golf bags were light and slim in those days with only a small ball pocket and no hood. I examined the clubs which were all hickory shafted (steel shafts did not appear until 1929). They consisted of a driver, a baffy (a sort of No.4 wood), a mid-iron, a jigger (a No.4 iron with a rather narrow face), a mashie-niblick and a putter.

We had spent an hour or so in the work-room polishing the wrought iron heads with emery cloth and treating the leather grips with a touch of castor oil; all set for the week-end. The golf balls were Silver Kings, Birdie Colonels and Dunlop Maxflys. My errand was to deposit them in the Left Luggage Office at St Enoch's Railway Station for my boss, Dr James Mason Noble. He was due to catch the 5.05 pm train for Turnberry and the first post-war meeting of the Glasgow Odontological Society Golf Section and the golfing members of the West of Scotland Branch of the BDA.

What a delightful way, I thought, to spend a week-end!!"

This golden memory of Albert Grimson's¹ sets the scene for a fascinating story. Golf was a pastime enjoyed by West of Scotland dentists from the end of the nineteenth century.. The first organised golfing section was that of the Glasgow Odontological Society. Mr James Miller, of Helensburgh, a keen golfer and man of many talents, had taken up membership of the British Dental Association and of the Glasgow Odontological Society in 1907. At a meeting of the Glasgow Odontological Society held in the Dental Hospital in March 1908, his proposal that a golf section be formed was seconded by Mr Robert Austin and adopted unanimously. A committee consisting of James Mason Noble, Robert Austin, James G. S. Angus, James Douglas Brownlie and James Miller as Secretary was elected and commenced arranging a calendar of golf fixtures. All competitions were open to members of either the Glasgow Odontological Society or of the British Dental Association. This programme, which continued until 1925, consisted of the Odontological Hole Tournament and a Spring and Autumn weekend at Turnberry. The annual subscription to the golfing section was two shillings and sixpence and prize money was contributed by members of the committee. Prizes always took the form of golf balls and sweep money.

In 1913 members subscribed to the purchase of the Odontological Rose Bowl, which was put up for competition annually in a Hole Tournament. Dr Alexander Naismith was another golf enthusiast of this period who practised at 4 Woodside Crescent, Glasgow.

He presented the Naismith Cup in 1919 for annual competition at the Turnberry weekends; the winner being the player who returned the lowest aggregate score for the Saturday morning rounds of the Spring and Autumn meetings. These conditions governing the award of these trophies have remained unaltered to the present day.

When activities were resumed after the 1914–18 war, Mr Miller resigned as secretary and was followed by Mr William Patrick who practised at Newton Street, Charing Cross, and then by Mr Bert Hay of Golfhill Drive, Dennistoun, who continued until the founding of the Western Dental Golf Club in 1925. Mr James Miller was elected an honorary member of the Club in 1947 as was Mr Bert Hay in 1955.

Early in 1921 an invitation was extended to the BDA golfers in Edinburgh, who later formed the East of Scotland Dental Golfing Society, to play a match in Glasgow at Killermont. This was gladly accepted and, in the following year, was styled as Glasgow versus Edinburgh in the form of a 12-a-side match played at Barnton on June 5, 1922. With the exception of the Second World War years, this has been an annual event to the present day. The weather on the first occasion was just dreadful – incessant downpour as the players trudged valiantly round becoming wetter with each hole played. They had no grand waterproof clothing, caddy cars or golf umbrellas. However, one and all completed the course and at the post-match dinner all sorts of weird and wonderful borrowed garments were on display. This match became affectionately known in later years as "The Wet Revue"² and the result was Edinburgh 8 ½ and Glasgow 3 ½.



The Brownlie-Logan Bowl, which has been won 39 times by the West and 26 times by the East, with six ties.

The Brownlie-Logan Bowl is the trophy which is played for in the East-West matches and was presented to the West and East of Scotland branches of the British Dental Association in 1921 by two great friends, Dr J Douglas Logan of Edinburgh and J. Douglas Brownlie of Glasgow, both being presidents of their respective branches in that year. Not only were they both very keen golfers, they met frequently as co-examiners in Dental Surgery in the final LDS examination. Douglas Logan was elected to honorary membership of the Western Dental Golf Club in 1927 while John Brownlie was the first captain of the newly formed Western Dental Golf Club in 1925 and was elected to honorary membership in 1935. In 1928 it was decided that the teams would be selected from all members of their clubs and not confined to members of the BDA as before. This match for the Brownlie-Logan Bowl between the East of Scotland Dental Golfing Society and the Western Dental Golf Club is still held annually.

There had been rumblings and grumblings from 1923 onwards concerning the general arrangements and control of dental golf until a proposal was put forward at the Prize Presentation Meeting at Turnberry Hotel on October 12, 1924. Mr William Hamilton proposed that a dental golf club be formed. This proposal was seconded by Dr Tom Black and the Chairman Dr James Mason Noble put the proposal to the meeting and it was unanimously carried. Following this decision, an organising committee was formed consisting of J. Douglas Brownlie, William Patrick, Arthur J McGhie, T. Talmage Read, J. Forbes Webster, R. F. Hay, James Scott and W. H. Scott.

Thus was the Western Dental Golf Club ready to be founded, free from any ties or allegiance to any other organisation, ripe for development as will be seen from the open meeting convened by this organising committee.

Meanwhile, at the AGM of the Glasgow Odontological Society on the April 21, 1924 the following resolutions by Council were put to the meeting and unanimously accepted:

a) In view of the formation of the Western Dental Golf Club, the Golf Section of the Glasgow Odontological Society be dissolved.

b) That the Odontological Rose Bowl and the Naismith Cup be placed in the custody of the Western Dental Golf Club for Annual Competition.

At a meeting convened by Mr R. F. Hay in the Faculty Hall of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow on March 12, 1925 and attended by 22 dental surgeons from the West of Scotland the proposed constitution drafted by the organising committee formed on October 12, 1924 was examined and after discussion, James Miller moved its adoption with Percy J. Thomson seconding. The motion was carried, *nem con*, and the meeting proceeded with the election of the first committee of the newly formed Western Dental Golf Club.

Captain John Douglas Brownlie

Vice-Captain William Hardie Scott

Honorary Secretary and Arthur J. McGhie
Treasurer

Committee members William Patrick

R.F. Hay

William K. McFarlane

William Hamilton

By the election of Willie Patrick and Bert Hay, the organisation of the club's affairs would benefit from their years of previous experience. To this was added the impetus of a young and enthusiastic secretary, Arthur J. McGhie. A man of great charm and character, he had gained a commission in the Royal Scots Regiment in 1918 and had a natural gift for organisation and imaginative, constructive planning. He set the initial pattern of the club's successful activities and gave unstinted service until his retirement from office in March 1954. He was later elected to honorary membership of the club and to life membership of the committee in 1953.

The fixture card for 1925 read as follows:

Odontological Rose Bowl	- Hole Tournament entries close 15 th March
Spring Week-end	- Turnberry 20 th -22 nd April
Captain's Prize	- Erskine 21 st May
Match versus Eastern BDA	- Killermont 18 th June
Vice-Captain's Prize	- Bonnyton Moor 10 th September
Autumn Week-end	- Turnberry 9 th -11 th October

The fixture card remained unaltered from 1925 till 1939. The only departure from custom was the spring weekend of May, 1930, which was held at Dunblane Hydro. The Club speedily returned to Turnberry for the autumn weekend and the highlights of each season continued to be the two weekends at Turnberry Hotel.³



Naismith Cup

1. Albert W. Grimson qualified LDS, RFPSGlasg in 1924 and practised as a general dental practitioner in the East end of Glasgow. A keen golfer, he joined the Western Dental Golf Club in 1929 and was elected to the committee in 1932. In 1934 he became secretary and served in that capacity for 18 years. Although Club activities were cancelled for the duration of the Second World War, Albert and several of the older members kept the spirit of the club alive by meeting regularly. He resigned as secretary in 1952 and in 1954 was elected captain. He was awarded honorary membership in 1959. In the 1970s Albert compiled an album about the history of the club which included his personal recollections of events and personalities.

2. This term originally referred to a parade of about 40,000 Territorial Volunteers from the Glasgow area who paraded in torrential rain in front of Queen Victoria at Holyrood Park on August 25, 1881.

3. I wish to acknowledge the assistance given to me in preparation of this article by George Horsfield and David Reid, secretaries and by Ian Spalding, match secretary of the Western Dental Golf Club. A.W.