



Golf historian Tom Tew (left) points out a feature in the club head held by Tom McCulloch, watched by Dornoch Heritage Society chairman Peter Wild (right).

New display will show how golf clubs were made in Dornoch 80 years ago

A FASCINATING new feature for this year's display in Dornoch Heritage Society's HistoryLinks exhibition is the re-creation of the clubmaker's shed operated by Royal Dornoch professional Danny McCulloch 80 years ago.

Thanks to the gift of his tools and recollections by his son, retired schoolmaster Tom McCulloch, and the golfing history knowledge of Tom Tew of Skelbo Street, the "shed" and its authentic contents will be a delight for all lovers of the game.

Royal Dornoch pro from 1922 to 1948, Dornoch native Mr McCulloch not only constructed first-class clubs from persimmon wooden heads and hickory shafts but also made golf balls, the famous "gutties", before the modern ball.

At a preview of this year's exhibition last week, his son said: "I think it's great that all of these tools are

being preserved and put on show. Mr Tew has made an excellent representation of what my father's shed looked like, at the back of the pro's shop on the golf course. He worked mainly in the winter on club-making, when there were no visitors about, to bolster his sales in the season."

A "really good" club would cost about 18s 6d in those days, when a man's weekly wage might be as low as £3, with most about 12s 6d. Split shafts would be mended with horse glue, which was melted on the little stove in what was Donald Ross's former workshop. "The place was very cold in the winter, so the stove had a dual purpose," said Mr McCulloch.

Mr Tew, who has a collection of old golf clubs and other memorabilia of the game, said he was delighted to discover that Tom still had his father's tools. "So I was able to persuade him that there was a huge amount of interest in this

side of the game and they should be put on display."

Because of the age of some of the tools, Mr Tew says it is certain they would have been used by the golf course architect Donald Ross, who left Dornoch as a 19-year-old greenkeeper to seek a new life in America. He became the world-famous designer of around 600 courses, to make his fortune.

On show are 100-year-old metal compasses, old planes and saws, heads and shafts, to demonstrate how the clubmaker could tailor-make the product for his customer, lightweight for a lady or child, heavier for a big hitter. The delicacy of cutting diagonally into the head to make sure that lead inserts for weight remained firm could be clearly seen. Wood shavings on the floor and ash clinker from the stove add to the feel of the place.

HistoryLinks is now open for the tourist season, Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm.