

Andrew
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 20.4.83

Dear Mrs. Alford

Thank you very much for your letter of 11th April - received 15th - and for taking the trouble to explain the reason why there was so little about the Ladies Section in the March R.D.C. News-Letter. Yes, I read about Cathie Grant's success at the Ford International Tournament. She herself wrote me a long letter describing her experiences. She said that the 36 representatives of their countries, who qualified from, I think 46,000 entries, were all determined to try to get back next autumn. I certainly hope that Cathie will again be one of the representatives of Scotland! It was a pity about her 3 putting at the last 3 holes of her single against Wales, but, as she said, at least she did not lose any of her 3 matches. // Putting is such a matter of confidence! What helped me most was advice from my brother's friends, "Mr. X", who used to write for "Golf Monthly". On the shorter putts, say 5 feet or under, one is apt to take the usual "back swing" & then quit on the follow through; the result is that the ball also quits on the line as it nears the hole. His advice was "the shorter the putt, the shorter the back swing". But follow the ball to the hole, on the line of the putt, with the club head, keeping it square to the line.

Don't look up too soon. My brother says that one of the old professionals used to say "it's not 'ank'".
 Fernie Anderson's "pendulum swing" I also found useful, & personally, I found that humming a little tune, in waltz time, helped to make a rhythmical putt. //

I believe that some Americans are very successful ⁽²⁾ with a kind of "stab" at the ball.

Everyone has to work out for oneself the best grip & stance. Personally again, I found that to stand with one's toes turned out obviated that tendency to "sway" after the ball - I think this was the Arnold Palmer stance.

One thing that is fatal is to move to pick the ball out of the hole before it has come to rest. Ok! the number of times it has popped out again in one's face!

Another useful hint from Mr X is to stand with one's eye right above the ball.

Yet, in spite of all those precautions, there are days when there seems to be a "gremlin" in the hole which rejects the most perfectly executed putt, and it's them that one loses confidence. Less frequently, there is the opposite of a gremlin that pulls the ball into the hole unexpectedly.

Our "dog's" course here is on chalk, & the holes are notorious for having a "ramp", which deflects the ball to one side or the other. I think it is made when the greenkeeper ~~picks~~ pulls his "hole-maker" out of the ground.

Youngsters mostly seem to spend practice ~~time~~ ^{time} on long wooden club shots, but really it pays better to devote most of the practice to "chipping & putting." The ambition to achieve length so often results in shots incurring "trouble" off the fairway, ^{or perhaps a lost ball,} with some shots wasted ^{by} (by average players) in regaining good position for the shot onto the green; whereas a steady "down the fairway" series of shots only costs one more per hole.

It is good news to hear that the Ladies' events

Also that it was not necessary that, in order to have the same weather conditions that no one should start before 4.0 p.m.

medals etc.

are so well supported now. When we last played an entry of 16 was almost a record; more often it was 11 or 12. I think that my sister & I introduced the scheme that for medals, bogey and stablefords one could chose one's own partner, but for "Trophies" partners should be drawn. I don't know if this method is still in operation?

I am also glad to hear that there are some very promising girls, who are being taken round the big course by adults in order to get handicaps. Is Margaret Macdonald, Sanders's daughter, one of them.

The Dornoch course, though short by most professional standards, does take a bit of knowledge - especially how to approach those plateau greens - especially those with bunkers in the face of them.

We found that the approach was different for long hitters & for the medium ones. When a very good, (but rather overbearing) member of the Gogs visited Dornoch one year, she complained that there were too many "blind" approaches. So we told her that one had to "know" the course.

As regards another holiday at Dornoch, I am afraid that the possibility is rather like that of getting the Ladies' quarters in the clubhouse improved, it would need an enormous windfall. There is a firm called "Darnant" which does a large mail order business. I am constantly getting catalogues, with statements of 7 "lucky numbers," which, in a draw, may entitle one to a "prize" - mostly offers of expensive cars, or cash, up to £50,000, in value. Recently I was told that one of my members had qualified to

receive such a prize, & I had great hopes, but alas, when the "prize" arrived with the goods ordered, it was one of the 4 subsidiary ones - an (alleged) gold necklace. However, with it came information of two more "lucky numbers" - which had qualified, apparently - to receive one of the same prizes! And since then get another! It seems strange, but I suppose that they would not have been sent unless it was allowable to have another shot. As far as I could make out, it meant ordering £15 worth of more goods, but it seemed worth trying. The notices always say that a reply must be made within 14 days, but this is a bit deceiy, as the notices are never dated themselves, and even 1st class mail is apt to be delayed.

If unlucky, I fear that my next "appearance" at Dornoch may be when my ashes are taken up to join my sister's in Procnymn Cemetery.

// In the 1930s, we used to reckon that 5 weeks in Scotland - 2 at a Hockey Camp at Ballater, and 3 at Dornoch in rooms - cost us £35. This included, as a rule, a length of Pine Tweed. Now that amount would barely pay for one day at one of the Hotels.

I have a Dornoch "Guide Book for 19", giving the names of 29 people who kept "rooms" with or without "attendance". (I think that Willie Skinner took photo-copies of some of the pages). But most of these were abandoned in 1945 after World War II, because during the period of rationing it seemed impossible for Dornoch shops (such as the butchers) to honour the temporary ration cards. While the Hotels served meals at almost every meal, all that could be offered for other visitors was black puddings or such like "offal". I remember that in 1948, when we stayed with Mrs. Robshaw at

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Oresteps, her butcher said that it was not worth while cutting the teropence worth (or possibly 2oz) of corned beef to which our temporary ration cards entitled us. And we had been counting on this for sandwiches for the journey south!

I read a book or an article recently - I can't remember its name or its author - which stated that when Dornoch first became patronised by visitors, they were all well-off, & took houses of residents. Few stayed in the only Hotel - the Sutherland Arms, & apparently none in rooms. As usual, this "information" was very inaccurate. In the years before World War I, there was a group of families, who met year after year, & most of them were in rooms. One family stayed at the "Station Hotel", and one or two leased houses for 8 weeks or so, taking their own servants and ~~own~~ "bed & table linen".

I have a "Guide to Dornoch", published in 1906; written by John Sutherland, House Agent and Accountant and Secretary of the Royal Dornoch Golf Club.

It gives a list of 34 "Furnished House" for letting, one or two mention "Cooking with Attendance".

All (practically) mention "Bathroom with ^{hot} ~~hot~~ cold". And practically all finish with the number of minutes needed to reach the "links". There must have been some pretty foot-walkers in those days (no cars of course) as

practically all the houses on the road above the City - now called, I think, Bughfield Rd, but then "The Terrace" give times of 6 mins. - "Oresteps" and "St Andrew's" 3 mins.

There are also advertised 21 "Apartments", only 7 of which had bathrooms.

In 1903, 1907 to 1911, & again in 1913, we stayed at Mrs

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Campbell's in High St. She also kept a 'Tea-rooms'.
No bathroom - just a 'kipp bath'!

In 1906 we were at Mrs. John Bell's, in Castle St.,
which was over the shop of D J (?) Macleod, jeweller etc.
The names of many shop-keepers are the same -
Collespie's A. J. Weir, John Grant (butcher) W. A.
Macdonald, R. R. Johnstone and W. S. Frazer, in High
Street, have only very recently changed their names.

The professional was T. D. Linnick, who 'hand-made' the
clubs he sold. I still have a putter, bought actually, I
think, in 1913, and a 'med-iron' (= # No 4).

Of course, there were no 'stainless steel' clubs in
those days - one had to polish them with 'sand-paper'.

The 'Club house' for the 'Upper Course' was what
afterwards became the professional's shop - now
demolished. The lower course (the 'Ladies') had
recently been extended from 12 to 18 holes -
most of them rather flat & uninteresting, stretching
towards the sea & back again.

In 1909 my sister & I had whooping-cough, &
were no longer allowed to associate with our friends
on the beach, so took to playing golf there, to be
well out of the way. (Years later, two sets of visitors
had a bet that there never had been a second 18 hole
course at Dunrobin, & appealed to us to settle the
argument. One was most annoyed because she lost
10 shillings on the bet.)

Before W.W.I. my sister & I used to have
Lis-somers with Frank Buxit & Jimi Mackintosh
on the 'Lower Links'. The 'Ladies' Club house, I
think, still stands, as a greenkeepers' tool house etc.,
just by the 6th hole of the 'Strive Course'.

The 1st time we ever played on the Upper Course was
in 1910, when one morning we were told to play
there, as the men were to go on the Lower Course.

The Buxits took Aberdeen as their Summer
residence in 1908, I think. Before that it

had been one of the two Private Hotels.

The "Guide Book" mentions 2 Private Hotels and 3 "public hotels" besides the two "Private" ones.

In 1903 the one which we knew for years after 1906, as "The Station Hotel", had not been built. I can't remember another "Private Hotel", nor the 3rd "Public One": The Castle, Burghfield, (then Northfield) & the Royal Golf, then the Orange, were all still in private hands. There are photos of all these in the Guide Book; what is particularly striking is the absence of any trees or hedges surrounding them.

We stayed in many different ^{houses} places in Dornoch, & visited friends in others, so a good many still have "associations" attached to them.

During World War I, of course, we could not get there, but went back, after 7 years absence, to stay with the Buists at Aberdeen. One day in 1920 we went to see Angus Pirie of Rogart, who was at his loom in a little place almost opposite to Aul Dang, Sander Macdonald's house now. When we asked Mr Pirie if he remembered us, he said "Fine. Wee Grotties ye were then, winned about after your mother!"

He used to design his own tweeds, giving them names like "Waves of the Sea". As a matter of fact, it was more often that our nurse accompanied us. After spending the morning, in fine weather on the beach, we used to arrange to go for picnics within walking distance - the Earl's Cross woods, or the "Sawmill Woods", or sometimes in a field off the Poles Road. or on the beach again. Nearly all the families had nurser or "Mannas", who carried provisions & a kettle. (I'm afraid that

we did not offer to bear any of the burdens, but we did have to find drinking water for making the tea, & gather sticks for making a fire - no Thermos flasks in those days!

I think that it was in 1910 that we hired bicycles, & increased the range of favourite spots for picnics - the Evelyn burn, Littleferry, and a spot almost opposite the old Buchanan School, with a wonderful view of ^{Dun} Creich & the Firth.

Only ~~two~~ ^{two} families had cars, the Buists and the Buchanans. I remember a drive, in 1909, by Rogart & Lang, where we had tea at the Inverstin Hotel, with such marvellous scenes that one did not want anything else.

I think that the 1920's were the years during which the Wethered family were regular visitors to Dornoch, staying in A.J. Ryle's home. ~~I remember~~, I remember one year that we were looking forward to seeing her - possibly 1930 - but she was not visible because of chicken-pox from which her father had caught shingles - the first time I'd heard of the connection between the two. I had shingles myself in 1948, & gave chicken-pox to two children at our school, before it was diagnosed.

In 1930 an aunt offered to pay for a holiday for us, & naturally we plumped for Dornoch, & had about 10 days at the old Sutherland Arms Hotel.

The next 6 years we stayed with Mrs Budge at Ajmere Cottage in the Sutherland Road. Very active years - once it was so warm that we even bathed before breakfast! There was usually a week-end after our Hockey camp ended, before she could take us on 1st Sept, so we spent it at the Roslyn Hotel, in Cosite St.

Mrs. Budge couldn't take us after 1936, so we went to All Darg; then to Mrs. Grant, the joiner's wife let 2 bedrooms & a sitting-room. All these rooms faced north, & were very cold. The sunny ones were the kitchen & the staircase. My brother was there in 1937. My sister & I had to share a double bed, with very inadequate sheets. So Mrs. Macrae lent me a camp bed, which offended Mrs. G. deeply - she would not provide any bedding for it, but luckily I had my camp blankets.

In 1939 the only rooms we could hear of were in Carnoig St, but we never got there, because about 24 August, my brother, who was by that time Military Assistant to Gen Ironside at the War Office warned us that the agreement signed between Germany & Russia meant that war was inevitable, so we went straight home from the Hockey Camp.

No going to Darnoch again all through W.W.II, but in 1946, 1947 & 1948, we stayed with Mrs. Robichaud at Oversteps. She had lived there since her marriage about 1898, & introduced us to several of the "residents". Until then our friends had mostly been from the "annual visitors", who, I fear, spoke of the residents rather patronisingly as "the locals", but owing to new friends made among them my sister & I really did begin to feel that we were not "members" but "belonged".

In 1949 Mrs Robichaud had to quit Oversteps & had said that she could put us up in 'The Cottage' in the grounds. But almost at the last minute she had to cancel this. Mrs. Bremner, who taught at Embo School, managed to secure rooms for us at a Mrs. Fraser's, in 'Castle St'. Later she again & became a Mrs. Mackay (Or else it was the other way round.)

The arrangement was that we only paid her - think 3 guineas a week each. She did the cooking, & we did the shopping for her, & a certain amount of housework. That year, the weekly charge at the newly opened Broughfield Hotel was 8 guineas.

In 1950 we decided to try a Hotel, and were at the Castle for part of the time. But was not so convenient when we had to spend the last 10 days or so at what was then "the annexe, Sule Skerry, at the west end of Castle St. - a ground floor room. There was only one bathroom etc - for 8 "guests"? & they complained if it was used during the night, as they said it woke them up. We did have our cycles, but it was very inconvenient to have no sitting room for writing materials etc.

So next year 1951, we decided to try the Royal Golf, which was being run by a Mr. Markay & his former long-driver husband. They seemed to have little idea of the requirements of golfers, - they expected everyone to turn up to meals at the stated times - Lunch is at 1.0 p.m. - dinner is at 7.30. We don't pay our staff for overtime, and the staff also said "We are not paid for overtime."

Well, you know that if one gets a slow round in the morning, it is not always possible to be back by 1.0 p.m. Our sheets were never changed all the time we were there!

We went there again in 1952. Rationing was still in force, & the guests felt that they did not really get enough to eat.

In 1953 the Markays said that they could not take us until Sept. 1st, so we applied to Burghfield, where the Curries were much more friendly (though service at meals was terribly slow. Gordon was then still at the Academy, & Niell, I think, had just finished his compulsory military service course, or perhaps was about to go on it. There was one waitress. The dining-room was what is now the bar, & the tables were squashed together, so that other people's elbows were almost in one's plate. However, Mrs Currie was such a dear & the whole atmosphere so different that we decided that in future we'd always try to stay there.

through that year we did have to transfer to the Royal Golf as we had booked there. Mrs Mackay was as sour as before; she seemed to have favourites among the guests & my sister & I were not included!

Then from 1954 to 1976 we stayed at the Burghfield, & it is more difficult to remember which events happened in which years.

Room No 7 was always reserved for us - it had a lovely view, & at night we could see the Turret near lighthouse flashing.

After the new dining-room was built, there was much more space, & usually Mr Currie arranged that we should have a table by the window, after the "change over" in mid-August. As time went on, few visitors stayed for more than a fortnight, instead of the former month 6 weeks, or even 8 weeks. Again the same families used to come for several years in succession. - for instance Lord Johnston & his wife, & a family from Salisbury called Fletcher. (Mr Fletcher's name is on the "Winners" Board for one year. I forget which).

We had annual 4-somes with residents - the Grant twins, and Mr Skinner & Mrs J. G. Macdonald, or sometimes Mrs Mally Macrae.

I usually played with residents in Mr Burt's "Mixed 4-somes", having asked Tosh Macintosh of the Post Office to find us partners. One year he said: "I'll just have to play with you myself." I remember that he always pulled with a No 2 or 3 iron. At that time the rules allowed one to pull with the flag in the hole, ^(not held) which I much preferred, but which surprised our opponents. I know that on

a rough green, such as we get on the links in winter, (12)
it is best to putt with an iron - I use my no 4. But
on the lovely smooth Donnoch greens a putter is
preferable.

I have an idea that time I played with you
in one of the Ladies' competitions I wasn't feeling
well, & did not finish each hole, and could not face
going upstairs to the lounge, but sat in the seat
outside the Club house. But I can't remember
if this really did happen, or what the matter
was. Have you any recollection of it?

Please would you be so kind to thank the
Treasurer for her letter, the fixture card, & the receipt
for my subⁿ. I really should write to her myself
but, as usual, my pen has run away with me when
thinking about Donnoch!

I see that I haven't mentioned the subscriptions
in the Guide Book.

Members of the Club

Gentlemen. Entrance fee 21/- Annual Subⁿ 10/-
Locker rent 3/-
Ladies Entrance Fee 5/- Annual Subⁿ 5/-
Locker rent 2/6

Visitors

Gentlemen 1 week 7/-, 2 weeks 15/- 3 weeks £10
4 weeks £11-5/- 2/0 a week thereafter
Locker included.

Ladies 5/- a week for the first month; 2/0 a week
; Locker included.

Daily Visitors. Gentlemen 1/6, Ladies 1/-
Caddies Fees. Old Course 1/- per round. New course 8d per round.

One year my father paid £1.0. for the whole family of 6
for 6 weeks!

With which staggering information I had really better to cut-
With best wishes to all members in a successful season in your matches, and
really good weather.
Yrs sincerely E. A. Macleod



Mrs. Margaret Alford

Tigh Ruaraidh

Well Street

DORNOCH

Sutherland

Scotland

IV 25 3 LU