



The Bunnet

Official newsletter of the
James Braid Golfing Society

President : Peter Thomson

Issue No. 1

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Captain's Report

As in the birth of anything, a new publication brings with it a certain excitement tinged with a little perplexity, reminiscent perhaps of standing on the tee at the Road Hole at St. Andrews having nursed the draw to perfection thus far, but knowing in your heart of hearts that the slice cannot be all that far away.

So it is with this the first issue of "The Bunnet", a publication hardly destined to rock the Rupert Murdoch empire to its foundations, but one which those of us who are members of the James Braid Golfing Society can, with hope, take to our hearts - if not our heads - with rather more approbation and prospect even of a little more in the way of real information.

"The Bunnet" we are sure will break much new ground, just indeed as James Braid did himself to such great effect in the course of his long and distinguished course building career.

The object is to keep you in touch with our Society and what is planned to sustain our aims of honouring the name of James Braid and his great contribution to the game of golf, enjoying the company of fellow travellers and helping to encourage youngsters starting out on their golfing life to appreciate the essential difference between golfers and mere hitters of golf balls.

Already we have had two meetings. "The Bunnet" is proud to report that both were at full international level and accounts of the action on and off the course appear elsewhere in this issue.

Our President, Peter Thomson, effectively launched the James Braid Golfing Society at the first of these two events, with 'a bit of a ripper' off the first at Brora in a match against a team representing the Shivas Irons Society from the United States.



The President setting the tone. Five times Open Champions, it seems, never lose the knack.



Confirming our editorial radicalism the more eagle-eyed among you will spot that there is no full, blow-by-blow account of the Ryder Cup in this issue. "The Bunnet" breaks new ground in being the only golf-related publication in the inner solar system to avoid eulogising over what some members may join with your humble scribe in believing turned out to be as much a victory for commercial opportunism in Spain as it was for dear old Samuel Ryder's efforts to bring golf on both sides of the Atlantic a little closer, but that's another matter.

Mention of the Ryder Cup does allow us, however, to offer sincerest congratulations to fellow member, Ben Crenshaw, on his nomination as Captain of the United States Ryder Cup team for 1999. There is no-one who has earned or deserves the honour more. His real understanding of the history and great traditions of the game will be a solid bulwark against any forces more interested in short-term commercial gain than the long-term interest of the game of golf.

But back to "The Bunnet". It was the great amateur Harold Hilton who in 1911, as an aside to winning the Amateur at Prestwick that year incidentally, launched the first issue of Golf Monthly which remains the world's oldest golf magazine in continuous production. In that issue he said it was "customary in a new publication for the editor to outline his policy" but that he would break from tradition and "let the publication speak for itself".

Having for a time been a very humble successor many years later to Mr Hilton in that same editor's chair I can do no better on behalf of the Society than echo in this first issue his profound, and very wise, sentiments.

"The Bunnet" is here for you. It is here of course principally to keep you informed of what is happening in our Society of fellow travellers, and that we will do. It is also here as a forum for you to air whatever views you might feel compelled to air, or any contributions you as members wish to make. If you have something to say to fellow members, the letters column, and indeed the columns of the entire publication, are open to you and subject only to the conventional laws of libel.

Perhaps, for the benefit of members who are not, shall we say, of the Scottish persuasion, it may be salient to point out that a "bunnet" is the Scottish vernacular for the bonnet or cap that was so very much a part of the image of James Braid. Our Society has adopted the Braid cap as its emblem and a constant reminder of the man whose values it is our commitment to uphold.

It stands as a powerful symbol for those who believe that the game of golf is the single force that can genuinely bring together all threads of society in common purpose. A modest garment it may be to some, but to borrow and only slightly corrupt the words of Frederick the Great, "a crown is merely a 'bunnet' that lets the rain in."

Malcolm L. Campbell, Captain.



Inaugural Match

"James Braid established golf courses to be canvases on which each player may become an artist"

Jimmy Stewart,
SIS member Brora, 3rd August, 1997

Good fellowship and good golf was the keynote of the Society's first match when members of the Shivas Irons Society were entertained at Brora on a fine August day. The storms which had ravaged part of northeast Scotland had blown away and a gentle breeze greeted the teams as our President drove the first historic shot.

Having honed their games at North Berwick, Gullane and St. Andrews the visitors were in good form. Fortunately sufficient home players, including course record holder and regular club champion, Jim Miller, represented the host team and local knowledge was pitted against true gravity in what proved to be a close and absorbing contest. The disciples of Shivas Irons

discounting of the lowest JBGS score and a result in which the teams were separated by just two points in favour of the visitors.

Scores do not really matter on occasions like this but, as a matter of interest, the average score for both teams was more than 32 points. If we must discuss scores, the highlight of the day was Steve Cohen's 41 points - 76 gross and the best round of his life. What an appropriate time and place for the Shivas Irons President to excel - a just reward for his organisational skills in getting his team to Brora and his belief in the Society's philosophy.

A new tradition was established by having the speeches before dinner and Peter Thomson spoke eloquently about James Braid. Malcolm Campbell welcomed the visitors and presented them with a copy of *The Book*. Responding, Stephen Cohen was equally eloquent and gracious and further presentations were made. We then fell with a will to the excellent meal the Links Hotel's chef had prepared, punctuated not by a sorbet, but a few words from Andy Nusbaum about Shivas.

An avowed aim of our society is to give support to junior golf and our historian passed among the revellers with "The Bunnet". As a result of the generosity of all present the junior golfers of Brora benefited by around £250 (some of it in dollars!). Hugh Baillie faithfully promised to hand this over the next morning when the juniors were due to play a competition, in which the bulk of the field was made up of lads under 14 years old.

Everyone present acknowledged the efforts of our Secretary, Stephen Toon in making the arrangements and we wish him well in his new position as Secretary of The Dukes Course in St. Andrews. As this course was designed by our President there is already a link with our society. Stephen will continue as our Secretary, for which we are, of course, most grateful. Finally, a special thank you to Robert and Dawn for hosting the evening at the Links Hotel and to all concerned for, what Steve Cohen described as "a joyful day with wonderful people".

John Moreton



An array of bunnets. The Secretary looks on as the Captain tries to recruit a new member.

Inaugural match against Shivas Irons Society, July 3, 1997.

were delighted with the course and its setting and performed in a manner in which their patron would have been proud.

Sadly, Bill Minsker was taken ill shortly after starting and had to retire but happily recovered sufficiently to enjoy the evening's celebrations. This led to the

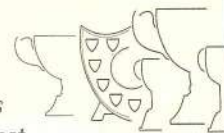


Among the Honours

Our President Peter Thomson's contribution to the international golf scene over five decades was recognised by the NEC World Series of Golf on the eve of their annual tournament in August at the Firestone Country Club when they handed over the 1997 Ambassador of Golf Award to our five-times Open Champion.

The Ambassador of Golf Award has been presented annually since 1981 to a man or woman "who has fostered the ideals of the game on an international level and whose concern for others extends beyond the golf course".

Peter Thomson is the 17th person honoured as Ambassador of Golf. Other recipients have been Chi Chi Rodriguez, Bing Crosby, Byron Nelson, Gene Sarazen, Gerald Ford, Bob Hope, Dinah Shore, Joe Dey, Frank Chirkinian, Barbara Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Nancy Lopez, Roberto de Vincenzo, George Bush, Michael Bonallack and Deane Beman. It is an honour well deserved!



Secretary's Report

It is commonly said that the late 20th century is the "Age of Communication". Information technology is developing at a frightening pace: mobile 'phones, video links and the world-wide-web are beginning to dominate our lives. However, there is a clear difference between communication and the transfer of information. True communication involves personal contact and leads to understanding and friendship. It is hoped that "The Bunnet" will assist in communication between members and lead to the meeting of old friends and the establishment of new friendships.

Membership at the time of writing, comprises around 60 Founder Members and 40 Members. Two matches have taken place at Brora which were relatively spontaneous affairs, fixed at short notice against touring clubs from the United States. The general consensus was that our overseas visitors were jolly good chaps and these fixtures will be maintained on an annual or biannual basis. In fact, a U.S. Tour has been mooted for 1999.

Our membership is geographically widespread, with representatives from Scotland, England, Ireland,

Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, U.S.A., Canada, Australia, Mauritius, Singapore and Malaysia. With this in mind, it is important that we set a diary of events as far in advance as possible.

It is proposed to hold three general meetings in the year: Spring Meeting at a venue in England; Founding Meeting in summer at Brora and an Autumn Meeting in the East Neuk of Fife, birthplace of James Braid. It is also hoped that members will come forward and organise regional meetings and matches in their own areas.

Our membership also covers a very broad spectrum of those who love playing the game: administrators; artists; writers; professionals; barristers, greenkeepers, historians, architects and artisans. All are great communicators and I hope that all of you will use "the Bunnet" as a medium of communication within our Society.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Stephen Toon, *Secretary*.



Apple Tree Gang back wi' the Cows

The members of the Saint Andrew's Golf Club from New York could have been forgiven for thinking that things had gone round full circle when they arrived, in the company of their friends from the Siwanoy Country Club, to play the assembled stalwarts of the JBGS at Brora. Once again the members of the oldest golf club in America, formed in the famous cow patch at Yonkers in 1888, found themselves on more than nodding terms with the cattle on the Sutherland links.

Brora of course still grazes a few beefy bovines as well as a few head of sheep to preserve the traditional turf and create a very good reason for putting up the electric fences that the odd Yonkers man unwittingly backed into.

However, there were no serious casualties and there were no reports of complaints from sheep and cows about the standard of golf and since the Saint Andrews Club played spectacular golf it was left to the JBGS chaps to speculate that they had been outclassed on their own cow patch by the guys with all the experience in that particular department.

The match was graced with one of those very special Sutherland days in September when the sun shone and the sea was a millpond. A blissful day in fact which saw JBGS member, US attorney and former US Secret Service operative - if that's the right word - Norm Schmeltzer, showing just how these guys work when he turned out to play for the Americans. Hard to beat this American national thing!

Anyway it was a great match. The result didn't matter too much to the

The JBGS Captain pulled himself upright long enough to explain to the visitors from Saint Andrew's something of the aims and objects of the James Braid Golfing Society before secretary Stephen Toon took the usual Bunnet collection in aid of junior golf at the Brora Club.

Saint Andrew's Captain, Randy Myer was fulsome in his praise of the course and generous in his thanks to the members of the JBGS. He presented the Society with a magnificent picture of the original



Ready for battle.
Secretary
Steve Toon, under
the bunnet, with
partners in the
match between the
Society and visitors
from the Saint
Andrew's Club and
Siwanoy C.C.



JBGS squad, they said, because taking part was what mattered, despite the fact that they lost.

Over a glass of what may or may not have been fresh cool milk afterwards in the James Braid room of the Royal Marine Hotel a few mementoes were exchanged to mark what had been a memorable day on this great old links.

Apple Tree Gang who founded the Saint Andrew's Club at Yonkers on November 14, 1888 when James Braid was a mere 18 years old.

This splendid gift now hangs with pride on the wall of the James Braid room and will be a permanent reminder of a wonderful occasion.

The Shooter in the Old Tin Hut

I am sad to say that I never had the honour of meeting James Braid but I have been fortunate to hear much about the great man from a source that regarded him very highly indeed. The late Sir Henry Cotton, three times a winner of the Open Championship, had a huge regard for Braid and often used to talk of him with affection, as he did too, of course, of the other members of the Triumvirate, J. H. Taylor and Harry Vardon.

Sir Henry was no stranger to controversy and I have on tape his comments on the late Ben Hogan when I asked him if he believed, as so many did and indeed still do, that the late Ben Hogan was the finest striker of a golf ball there had ever been.

"No," said Sir Henry unequivocally, "Hogan was barely adequate!"

He qualified that assertion by saying that Hogan was possibly the "finest competitor of all time" but he gave to Harry Vardon his award as the finest striker of them all. It would have been hard to argue with him since Cotton played with everyone from Jones and Sarazen to Palmer and many of the stars still around today.

However, I recall the Hogan comment merely to emphasise Sir Henry's keen and critical eye when it came to assessing the merits of the individual. That is why when he described James Braid as "one of the wonders of the golfing world" he did not then make the assertion lightly.

I recalled that comment when I came across recently an extract that Sir Henry wrote about James Braid half a century ago and which, I think, will be of interest to members who may not have seen it.

It comes from his book "This Game of Golf" published in 1948, the year he won his last Open title at Muirfield.

"Despite his years, (Braid was then 78) his recent golfing exploits seem to increase his fame, for the older he gets the easier it seems to become for him to get round 'in his age'. He beats his age by an ever-increasing margin: at 78 he celebrated his birthday with a 74. I write in 1948 and he still plays a round every day it is fine, on occasions going round twice - and he was born in 1870!

"Like J. H. Taylor and Harry Vardon, Jimmy, as I grew to call him as I gained my position in the golfing world, was of another era, and I knew his golf only when he was past his prime; yet it could easily be seen how great he must have been. What strikes me about "Old Jimmy" is that although he travelled less outside the British Isles than any champion (he has never crossed the Atlantic) he is as well-

known the world over as any golfing figure, to everyone, except possibly to the person in the following story."

Sir Henry then recalled the tale of the American who went to Walton Heath for the first time, and with no-one in the clubhouse to play with the secretary suggested taking out Braid whom he could find in the starter's box which, from any aspect was simply a tin hut.

"It clearly did not register with the visitor, who Braid was," recounted Sir Henry. "but they played and Jimmy gave him 'the works', much to the American's



James Braid with Henry Cotton.
The Maestro considered Braid one of the "golfing wonders of the world".

surprise. When asked later how he liked the course he said he had enjoyed it very much, but was amazed at 'the golf the old fellow in the tin hut put up', adding that he must have been some 'shooter' in his young days."

Ten years before Sir Henry wrote that lovely account, James Braid had been the referee in the famous match at Walton Heath when Cotton and Reg Whitcombe played S. F. Brews and Bobby Locke over 72 holes and Cotton hit a famous shot 280 yards over the wildest country on the dog-leg 12th, and followed it up with a stone dead, match-winning chip and run from forty yards.

As they left the green for the next tee Cotton recalled the Braid comment: "The drive was a grand 'un, but the shot on that hole, was the run up."

Food for thought, perhaps?

Malcolm Campbell.



DIARY

CONFIRMED DATES FOR 1998

FRIDAY 26 JUNE, 1998

Founding Meeting
Brora Golf Club
Match vs The Shivas Irons Society,
Carmel, California.

SATURDAY 27th JUNE, 1998

The James Braid Open
Brora Golf Club
For the Captain's Bunnet - 36 hole
medal competition sponsored by the
Royal Marine Hotel.

SUNDAY 28th JUNE

Golspie Golf Club
The Captain's Pink Ball Competition
(yes, that's correct)
incorporating 18-hole individual
stableford competition.

TUESDAY 9th JUNE, 1998

Spring Meeting
Peterborough Milton G.C.
For the Braid Quaich

SEPTEMBER 4th to 6th

Autumn Meeting
East Neuk of Fife (tba)
For the President's Putter

CONFIRMED DATES FOR 1999

MAY 14th to 16th 1999.

Spring Meeting
Tyrells Wood Golf Club
For the Braid Quaich

TO BE CONFIRMED FOR 1999

Proposed James Braid Golfing
Society tour to the USA

Alliss has the Key

Founder member Peter Alliss has reported to "Bunnet" headquarters that he is now fully recovered after keyhole surgery to his knee. He asked your Captain to confirm to members that it now no longer "locks"!

Ben to lead '99 Ryder Cup team

There could have been no more popular appointment than that of Ben Crenshaw as the United States Ryder Cup Captain for 1999.

Ben, a Founder Member of the JBCS takes over from his friend and fellow Texan, Tom Kite, for

the matches at The Country Club, Brookline, Massachusetts.

It will be interesting to see what style of captaincy he brings to the event bearing in mind his perhaps more sympathetic view to the original ideals as set out by Samuel Ryder in comparison with the harsh commercialism so evident at Valderrama.

FUTURE MEETINGS We would welcome suggestions from members regarding venues for meetings at other Braid courses in the British Isles, bearing in mind our aim of playing the "village courses" or, at least, the lesser known ones. The size of the group will not be important as we all share a common ideal - to enjoy each other's company on a Braid course.