



The Bunnet

Official newsletter of the
James Braid Golfing Society

President : Peter Thomson

Issue No. 2

May 1998

From Under the Bunnet

I seem to recall speculating in this column in our inaugural issue that the arrival of *The Bunnet* on the international publishing stage was hardly likely to shake the empire of one Rupert Murdoch to its very core. But what do you know, no sooner was it in print than that very core was being rocked with such energy by that blond-haired chappie from Hong Kong, that Rupert's trousers were ablaze.

The point is made here merely to confirm that the scheduled publication of Mr Paton's memoirs as Governor of Britain's last colony was purely coincidental with that of *The Bunnet* hitting the streets, and that our Secretary has been quick to point out to that nice Mr Murdoch's lawyers that any conspiracy theory can be safely rejected out of hand.

Anyway, to more important matters. I am delighted to report that feedback from the first issue of *The Bunnet*, filtering steadily into editorial cupboard HQ, has been encouragingly good. Such letter-bombs as were slipped under the cupboard door have been dealt with swiftly, and without any apparent long-term damage to either the memsab or the cat.

Indeed, such was the apparent lack of terminal disapproval among you all, that we have gone to the printer a second time in our continuing determination to try as best we can to keep you abreast of the activities of the James Braid Golfing Society and its stalwart supporters.

What has quite frankly amazed me has been the extent to which our Society has so quickly become known, and

how much genuine interest has been expressed in it. This is of course a major tribute to the esteem in which the man whose name we honour is held, not only in Britain but all around the world.

In the week before the Masters, for instance, I was privileged to attend what I think now ranks as the first overseas meeting of the Society, and it could hardly have been much further away from James Braid's Fife roots. Far out in the Indian Ocean, on the beautiful island of Mauritius, a group of our members assembled at Le Paradis Golf Club to pay tribute to James Braid in what is now likely to become an annual event.

The request on behalf of the six James Braid members resident on Mauritius to take with me on my visit "bunnets, members for the use of" was an indication of what was, as it were, afoot. There being no tropical versions of the headwear available for export, so far as I am aware, good old tweed was *de rigueur*. (see page 3)

In James Braid's day the journey far out into the Indian Ocean would likely have taken weeks, if not months, from Elie or Walton Heath. Today it takes a few hours on a Jumbo jet, which is proof, if indeed it were needed, that the world is a much smaller place than it was when the Triumvirate reigned supreme. As a result, however, this shrinking world offers opportunities for friendship and dedication to a common purpose far beyond any which Braid, even with all his vision, could have imagined. We surely all have a responsibility to make the most of them.

It is our hope that this was only the first of many overseas meetings among members of JBGS and we are actively looking at organising JBGS team visits to meet and play against other clubs abroad, as well as on the wider home front.

Finally, let me take the opportunity to say a quick thank you on your behalf to Secretary Steve Toon and the background team who have been working tirelessly on the Society's behalf, coping with an organisation growing far more rapidly than we could ever have imagined. They are doing a splendid job.

The Captain takes his bunnet off to them and I am sure you do too.

Malcolm L Campbell,
Captain.



PRESIDENT'S OTHER BUNNET

A young JBGS President fans himself with a pretty outrageous "bunnet" to celebrate going to the top of the leader board at the half way stage of the U.S. Open at Rochester, New York, in 1956. Peter was the reigning Open Champion when the picture was taken and his two-round total of 139 kept him one stroke ahead of who else but Ben Hogan.



Secretary's Report

"Slainte mhath!" It is appropriate that the season starts with a toast.

At our Spring Meeting we will play a match against Peterborough Milton Golf Club for the Braid Quaich. To illuminate those who shelter in the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, a quaich is a double-handled pewter dish known as "the cup of friendship". Generously filled with whisky, it is passed around to mark special occasions, such as the opening drive of a match against the English.

Since the publication of the last Bunnet, a further fixture has been added to our calendar - a match against North Hants Golf Club on Thursday, July 2. We are indebted to Roy Goodliffe for organising this event, with support from John Moreton.

The Founding Meeting at Brora, during the last weekend in June, is well subscribed and looks set to be a great social weekend. The Autumn Meeting is shaping

up and a match has been confirmed against Lundin Golf Club at Lundin Links on Friday, September 4.

An early start the following morning at the Duke's Golf Club is a break from the Society's tradition of playing Braid courses. However, the invitation from our President to play for the President's Putter on his own course at St Andrews seemed a good enough reason. The closing event for Sunday has yet to be confirmed but one suggestion is for a match at Gleneagles and already being pursued as the Bunnet goes to print.

However, enough talk of golf! Let me close with a quotation from the writings of our President, Peter W. Thomson.

"It must surely dawn on even the dumbest in time that golf playing, demanding as it is, is not the whole of life or even an adequate substitute for some creative, satisfying occupation. Those who try to make it so end up disappointed if not a little disillusioned."

Stephen Toon, *Secretary.*



One more thing! On the subject of quotations concerning satisfying occupations, The Bunnet is pleased to report this previously unpublished musing of our President: "Fred Couples . . . apparently."

From the President

It might be said that Jimmy Braid was born in the wrong era. His five Open Championships would hardly have kept him in ale, considering the "purse" that went with the Medal in his times. One only win in the Open these days would just about set up a family for life, allowing that he didn't go off buying aeroplanes and boats, or castles and RRs.

And if anyone from here on can pull off five wins over any sort of span, he would be eligible for a Sponsors status, along with Japanese Corporations.

That is speculation enough about Braid's (perhaps) ill-luck to be born at the wrong time, but consider his accomplishments in the field of designing courses. The mind boggles! Was the total over a lifetime, 400? Not that every one was built. Was it 200? Jack Nicklaus asks half a million pounds to put his efforts into creating a new course, Nick Faldo something less. But a man like Braid with five Open Championships behind him and the "score on the board" - a number of courses that bear testimony to his flair - would have commanded top price.

Therefore, adding numbers, the rewards would have amounted to the

National Debt in compounding interest over fifty years! Had he been around now, and as successful as he was around the turn of the century, he would have been the sport's richest winner.

Indeed, the Knight of the Realm who enticed him to London to work as club professional to the Surrey rich, might have had to bow to him, and to have left him contentedly where he was in the north.

But then history would have turned out differently, would it not? Would he like today's champions have got so rich so soon that there was so much incentive lost, and the performances dropped off, and with it his reputation.

And what about his courses? Would he have priced himself out of the market? Once the Oriental investors departed would there have been a slump in new course designing?

We can only speculate. We will never know. "Jimmy" will have to rest on his considerable laurels. And in truth we respect him more for his enormous record as it is. Will there ever be another quite like him?

Peter Thomson
President.



STOP PRESS • STOP PRESS

R & A Captain Elect

Members will be delighted with the news that fellow JBGS member John Beharrell has been nominated as Captain elect of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. It is a fitting honour for a man who has contributed so much to the game both as a player and as an administrator. He was the youngest winner of the Amateur Championship when he defeated Leslie Taylor 5 & 4 in the 1956 final at Troon and still plays off a handicap of five at his home club, Little Aston.

John is a keen historian of golf, a member of the British Golf Collectors Society and a past winner of the Scottish Hickory Championship. He was honoured by the Association of Golf Writers in 1956 for his outstanding contribution to golf in that year and is well known for the keen interest he takes in Artisan golf.

Members present at the JBGS matches at Peterborough, and at North Hants, will have the opportunity to congratulate John in person on his appointment as R & A Captain elect since he has confirmed his intention to play in both matches.

Two of Braid's Brawest

When the Sixth Earl Fitzwilliam recognised that Peterborough was a town ripe for development in the late 1930s, in order to preserve his estate at Milton Hall, he invited two local 9-hole golf clubs to amalgamate and play on his own private course. To extend the existing layout to 18 holes he called upon the services of James Braid, who then opened the course in June 1938 with an exhibition match against G.M. "Bill" White.

Bill is still going strong at 85 and regularly breaking his age. He has kindly agreed to re-enact his part in that historic occasion at the Society's meeting at Peterborough Milton Golf Club on June 9. This will also give ten members the opportunity to play a match against the club in the wake of the exhibition.

The order of play has been altered since 1938, to enable the club to build a modern clubhouse at the opposite end of the course from the thatched wooden hut which originally served that purpose. This means that we now start with a shortish par 5 of 499 yards from the back tees but on which care must be taken to avoid the out-of-bounds that runs all the way down the left, while a lake and a pond threaten on the right.

The first of four intriguing par 3s follows and these holes set the tone for the remainder of the course. Accuracy is certainly more important than length.

We then work our way down towards the Hall and back, returning in that direction on the inward nine.

The only appreciable gradient affects play on the 18th, where a huge fairway bunker may give only the longest hitters pause for thought. The holes run through mature and more recently planted trees, offering a variety of shots and some stimulating putting situations.

The greens at Peterborough are excellent throughout the year, a fact commented upon by a visitor from a very prestigious course in the south, where apparently the greens are only at

their best when the Tour makes its two annual stops there. There are no such worries at Peterborough, one of the Great Man's later designs.

The second meeting south of the border takes the Society to Braid's earliest masterpiece, the home of two of amateur golf's major tournaments, the Hampshire Hog and the Hampshire Rose and a regular venue for Open Championship qualifying even though it only measures 6257 yards.

North Hants was founded in 1904 and Braid completed work on it while being considered for his lifelong appointment at Walton Heath. Carved through the traditional pine and birch that thrives on the Bagshot Sands subsoil, the course is a challenge from the start, even though the first only measures 277 yards.

The second makes amends with a vengeance at 463 relentless yards fraught with heather and trees. And it doesn't get any easier after that. The main railway line runs alongside two of the last three holes having probably dropped you off, as it did James Braid, at Fleet Station, a bare 400 yards from the clubhouse.

Proceeding from the locker room to the first tee you pass through the lounge, yes, in your spikes, taking time to admire the memorabilia adorning the walls. Roy Goodliffe, the club's secretary and JBGS member, will guide you around these with justifiable pride.

We will be fielding a team of ten to play the club on Thursday, July 2. A number of members have already indicated their availability, including former Amateur Champion, and now Captain elect of the R. & A., John Beharrel. If you wish to join us at either of these meetings contact John Moreton on 0121 444 5347 (also fax).

Location maps for Peterborough will be available on request. Peterborough isn't hard to find, but more developed navigational skills are required to find the course!

John Moreton.



Bunnets in the Indian Ocean

The beautiful island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean was the setting for an historic meeting of members of the JBGS. This enchanting island boasts no fewer than six resident members



Bunnets Galore! The Mauritius members' team (back row) with the Captain and his team including European Tour star Tony Johnston (front right) at the first overseas meeting of the Society.

of the Society and our Captain, along with golf course artist, Graeme Baxter, a founder member who is completing a painting of Le Paradis course, together with English barrister, Douglas Herbert, another founder member who was on holiday on the island with his family, were invited to play in what was in fact the first JBGS overseas meeting. Sadly one of the Mauritius members was unable to take part because of a sudden bereavement but South African PGA Champion, Tony Johnstone, who was also staying at Le Paradis, stepped in as a substitute.

The match was played at this famous hotel on the south west of the island where the golf course, opened in 1993, continues to show major improvement every year.

General manager, Jean-Marc Lagesse, and the other Mauritian members of the JBGS were genial hosts. The Captain presented a putter for annual competition among the local members and fittingly it was won by Mario Desvaux, sports director at the hotel, and the man responsible for the development of the golf course, and much of the game on the island.

There is already talk of a team being assembled to play a match in Mauritius against the local members. The only drawback is the danger of being knocked down in the rush!

Well Trousered, Sir!

Golf in the rain is not a pleasant prospect, no matter the extent of our enthusiasm for a royal and ancient pursuit far better enjoyed under clear skies and on a running course. However, there are times when playing in the rain becomes inevitable and we reach without a single thought for the waterproof clothing that lives conveniently in the golf bag to protect us from the elements.

But have you stopped to think of the days before waterproof trousers when tweedy plus fours would have taken on a consistency and weight of frightening and decidedly uncomfortable proportions?

It seems that golfers owe yet another debt of gratitude to James Braid, for there



Walton Heath: 18th July, 1937 Densmore Shute and Henry Cotton exchange a greeting watched by James Braid, all three attired in waterproof trousers, a fashion set, according to Bernard Darwin, by James Braid himself.

is compelling evidence that it was he who introduced waterproof trousers to the game.

Bernard Darwin supplies the clue in a wonderful essay he wrote on rainy golf entitled "Heroism in the Rain".

Darwin recalled his own experiences of waiting till lunch time and "reading the illustrated papers of three months before", to see if the rain would subside before going out to face it.

"Moreover, at that time," he wrote, "James Braid had not set the fashion of wearing policeman's waterproof trousers, which has doubtless saved many lives. It was a case of soggy flannels that wreathed themselves round the legs, or knickerbockers, the knees of which felt like twin lakes."

Malcolm L. Campbell.



Taken to Writing About Golf

The game of golf has been better served than most by wonderful writers and chroniclers over the decades. Among them all the late and legendary Henry Longhurst stands beside the very best, but few who have thrilled to the words of Longhurst in the Sunday Times and in his many books will know that it was James Braid who effectively set the young Henry on the path to literary fame.

In his autobiography, *My Life and Soft Times*, Longhurst recalls how it was Braid who opened the door to his literary success.

"Writing now in the later stages of the more than agreeable life into which I had at that time just been initiated, I marvel at the good fortune which continued to dog my unworthy footsteps. The Depression was still very much with us and there had not, of course, been the golfing "explosion" which is such a feature of the sporting scene today. The Sunday Times, then sister paper to the Daily Telegraph in the Telegraph's present Fleet Street building, carried, broadly speaking, no golf other than agency reports.

"Someone suggested that a modest outlay on a man of their own might be justified and Sir Herbert Morgan, who had something to do with the Sunday Times, mentioned the matter to James Braid one day at Walton Heath. Braid said he did not know of anyone suitable, but a young fellow who used to be captain of Cambridge had, he understood, taken to writing about golf in some magazine and from these simple circumstances was born the turning point of my life."

Looking Ahead

Spring has heralded the arrival of the usual migrants returning north after winter months in warmer climes, but our Secretary also reports early sightings of rare, but equally welcome species in the far north east.

The first lesser spotted Bunnet Hunter of the year has been spied in Brora seeking out articles of a millinery nature for the season ahead. Spotted on the Bunnet trail by our ever-observant official, was founder member Dudley Warner III, from Tennessee in the United States searching for something suitable to protect napper regions from the elements.

Our Secretary reports that a suitable purchase was secured in that bastion of bunnett couture, *Hunters of Brora*, a veritable tweed mine of cranial delights to suit all tastes and to which members themselves anywhere in the region should make an instant beeline.

We are informed that the Secretary's box Brownie was pressed into service to capture the outcome of DWIII's investment and all will be revealed in the next issue.

While on the subject of fine apparel, the Society has acquired (expense no object, naturally) a splendid range of rather racy neckties which members will have the opportunity to win at future get-togethers. The Secretary will reveal more in the next issue.

Members can also look forward to two very interesting articles, one by Vice-Captain, James W. Finegan on his favourite Braid course in Wales and another by Dove Jones on the first golf course in the United States.

Letter to the Editor

Sir - Being a teacher of the game I thought fellow members might like to share this story I read or heard recently about the Great Man.

When asked to depict the one thing that made him so special as a golfer - good enough to have won five Open Championships - Braid replied quite simply: "Well, laddie, I just take good aim and hit the ball to the target."

We lesser mortals become so chained and bound to the mechanics of the golf swing that we tend to forget that there is a target - except, that is, the one we don't want to hit (trees on the right, splash, bunker in front of the green etc.).

Why can't we learn from these old Masters?

Yours etc.

Peter Ballingall.

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NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 9th June, '98

SPRING MEETING

Peterborough Milton Golf Club for the Braid Quaich