



The Bunnet

Official newsletter of the
James Braid Golfing Society

President : Peter Thomson

Issue No. 4

Summer 1999

From Under the Bunnet

Since the last issue of *The Bunnet* our President, Peter Thomson, has not only led his International Select to a famous victory over the might of the Americans in the President's Cup in Australia but has confirmed that he will lead the team again to defend the title in America next year.

It was typical of Peter Thomson's leadership qualities that he insisted his players travel together on the team bus rather than in the courtesy cars that the "superstars" now take so readily for granted, and which was the favoured mode of transport for the Americans.

It was a decision that revived memories of the 1971 Ryder Cup in St Louis when a young Tony Jacklin, who was then playing full time in the States, opted to be driven in a well-wisher's Rolls Royce rather than travel on the team coach. Captain, Eric Brown, was not amused and told a cocky Tony Jacklin in no uncertain terms "Ah dinna want you travellin' in a Rolls Royce when the rest of us are travellin' in buses!"

The bus was good enough for our President's team and no doubt it will be good enough again when Peter Thomson pulls his team together for the next encounter at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club at Lake Mansas, Virginia, in October next year.

Another JBGS member is on team Captain duties in a few weeks time. Ben Crenshaw leads the American Ryder Cup team for the match against their European counterparts at the Country Club, Brookline, Massachusetts from September 24 - 26. The Americans have never had a more popular player to captain their side than "Gentle Ben" Crenshaw whose ready smile and grace have made him a favourite with the galleries for the past 25 years.

The Society continues to thrive and expand in numbers. We have made new and valued friendships during 1999, none more so than at Walton Heath, where James Braid was professional for close to fifty years. It is hoped that the very successful match the Society had against a team of Walton Heath members in May will become a regular fixture.

We are greatly indebted to Bill Wood for organising the event and to Walton Heath professional, Ken Macpherson, for his invaluable help in making the outing such a success.

Ken Macpherson has had a long association with the Braid family and with Walton Heath, having been professional there now for 25 years. Over many years Ken has fastidiously maintained the Braid family grave where James Braid was buried after his death in 1950. George Payne quite rightly paid tribute to Ken's efforts on behalf of the family at the Walton Heath meeting.

Members also enjoyed a match and made new friends among members of the Tyrrells Wood Golf Club immediately after the match against Walton Heath.

A personal thank you here to George Payne for standing in for me at both events while I was dutifully carrying the JBGS banner down in the Indian Ocean. Well! someone had to do it!

The occasion was what has now become an annual match between members of the Society at Le Paradis Golf Club on the

island of Mauritius for the Captain's Putter. It can be safely said that nowhere has the James Braid Society more enthusiastic members than on this island paradise fifteen hundred miles off the coast of South Africa.

For the second year running a match among JBGS members was also played at the Gymkhana Golf Club on the island, an old and very traditional golf club of which James Braid would have thoroughly approved. Plans are already in hand for next year's encounters on the island and any members interested in travelling to Mauritius in the spring of next year should contact the Secretary at the earliest possible date.

Contact numbers as follows:-

Telephone: 44+(0)1408 621252 Fax: 44+(0) 1408 621181

E-mail: braidatbrora@btinternet.com

Plans are afoot for a match against the oldest golf club in the United States, the Saint Andrew's Golf Club at Yonkers in New York where there is a James Braid connection although Braid himself never travelled to the United States. Three holes on the Saint Andrew's course were designed by Braid from topographical maps. Jack Nicklaus has since made further refinements but the original Braid holes can still be seen.

Again those interested in travelling to the United States to play in what will undoubtedly be a splendid Braid celebration should contact the Secretary at the above numbers as soon as possible.

This year's Autumn meeting has undergone a few changes from the original plan. It had been hoped to repeat the very enjoyable match of last year against the Golf House Club at Elie. However, the club has had to change its AGM and finds it impossible to hold the match on the day scheduled. The club's secretary, Sandy Sneddon, has informed us, however, that this year's problem is unlikely to recur and that he hopes it will be possible to repeat the match in future years.

The match against the Lundin Golf Club goes ahead as planned with alternative times reserved at Scotsraig Golf Club for those who are not taking part in the match. This year's President's Putter will be played for at the Arbroath Golf Links near Carnoustie on Saturday, September 4 and the following day a match is scheduled between JBGS and a team of Royal & Ancient Golf Club members over the Eden Course at St Andrews.

It promises to be a wonderful weekend of golf and golfing fellowship.

Malcolm L. Campbell, Captain



JBGS member, Ben Crenshaw, will captain the US Ryder Cup team at Brookline in September.



The Secretary's Quilling

Announcement was made in the last issue of "The Bunnet" of a prestigious award made to a select band of die-hard individuals, for either "skill on the links" (self-explanatory); "endurance", by travelling distances of Marco Polo proportions to attend a Society event or "foolhardiness", for a well meaning, but inevitably doomed, attempt to assist the Secretary and Captain in their organisational efforts.

It is obviously unnecessary to report that there was no award for "skill".

Bill Wood, to whom great thanks are owed for proposing the match against his own select team of Walton Heath members and organising an unforgettable experience, was the worthy first recipient of that splendid piece of the finest tweed neckwear. His "foolhardiness" in believing Society members are capable of responding to any form of organisation was evidenced by innumerable incidents.

To quote a couple: the Secretary was greeted at the clubhouse with the message that Mr. John Moreton and British Rail had entered a dispute over published timetables, which did not co-incide with Mr. Moreton's alarm clock. This was clearly an unfortunate oversight on the part of British Rail.

Mr. Jim Bannerman, on the other hand, arrived in excellent time, immaculately dressed in blazer and Society tie, complete with 14 tools of the trade in a Slazenger bag. At the back of his mind he had a nagging feeling that he had

forgotten something. Over coffee, and with appropriate prompting, he realised that the day would swing somewhat better had he brought a pair of spikes, sweater, golf trousers, waterproofs, shirt, glove, cap and all those little essentials packed in the hold-all that was sitting in the boot of his wife's car at Blackheath Golf Club. Members, stewards and pro-shop made acceptable contributions to the "Bannerman Appeal".

Two awards were made for travel. First to Terry Bergdall, who stopped over en-route from New York to his home in Lusaka. Second to Walter Kames, whose journey from Munich was completely uneventful until landing at Heathrow, where six consecutive taxi-drivers declined any payment for transporting him to his locations. With admirable foresight, Walter had changed into full golfing attire on the plane, including a splendid pair of plus-two's, and arrived on the first tee from the back of a black cab, in the style of Walter Hagen in his heyday.

The Secretary's Tie Club was pleased to welcome three new members!

I am delighted to report the Quaich which the Society presented to the members of Walton Heath Golf Club is to become a trophy for the junior section of the Walton Heath Club. This was announced by Bill Wood who will invite the winner to play as a guest for the James Braid Golfing Society in what will now become an annual match against Walton Heath members.

Stephen Toon

Secretary



The President's 'President's Cup'

Internationals : 20.5 U.S. : 11.5

Warm congratulations to our President, Peter Thomson, for an outstanding victory in The Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne last December. His team of Internationals, from seven different countries, were facing Jack Nicklaus's "Dream Team", featuring Davis Love III; Fred Couples; Tiger Woods; Mark O'Meara; David Duval and Lee Jansen.

Our President engendered a great team spirit by using traditional team tactics, such as insisting that all his players travel together on the team bus, declining the limousines utilised by the Americans. Greg Norman and the rest were required to apply for a bus pass! Their Captain suspended their habitual jet-set lifestyle for a few days of serious hard work.

This was the U.S.A.'s biggest defeat in

history and a crowning career achievement for Peter Thomson, who commented afterwards: "It's quite an emotional moment, I can tell you. This role of being a captain of a team like this is quite different from actually playing, where you are rather concerned with your own feelings. This win is something above that. It's a great honour to be invited to be a Captain and it's the biggest thing I've ever done."

It's hardly surprising that the five-times Open Champion has been asked to lead the International Team to defend the trophy at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Club at Lake Manassas, Virginia, from October 20 - 22, next year. He was insistant he would only accept the Captaincy again if the players wanted him to carry on.

There was of course unanimous support.



The Captain presents Randy Myer (right), Captain of the Saint Andrew's Golf Club, New York, with the James Braid mashie at Carnoustie before the 1999 Open.



Condolences

All members of the James Braid Golfing Society join in sending their condolences to member George F. Sutherland and his wife Morag on the sudden and tragic death of their 18-year-old daughter, Sarah. Our thoughts are with them in their hour of darkness.

Walton Heath Roundup

Our 1998 season closed at Elie, birthplace of James Braid, with a match against the Golf House Club. Our 1999 season opened at Walton Heath, home of James Braid for almost 50 years until his death in 1950, with a match against Walton Heath members for the Braid Quaid.

Walton Heath is one of the greatest heathland courses in the UK. It was developed by the Chairman of the South Eastern Railway, Cosmo Bonsor, and designed by Herbert Fowler and its opening in the spring of 1904 was celebrated with an exhibition match between The Great Triumvirate: Harry Vardon; John Henry Taylor and James Braid.

Bonsor had invited Braid to sign as the new club's professional and he was persuaded to leave his position at Romford, in Essex.

Over the years, Walton Heath has staged numerous major international

events, among them the memorable match in 1937 between the reigning Open Champion, Henry Cotton and the current US Open Champion, Densmore Shute (cf. photograph in Issue 2 of "The Bunnet");

The PGA Matchplay Tournament was first played in 1903 and won by James Braid, who went on to win again in 1905; 1907 and 1911. Walton Heath hosted this tournament 22 times during its great history.

President of The James Braid Golfing Society, Peter Thomson, emulated Braid, not only by winning the Open five times, but also by winning the PGA Matchplay Tournament four times - in 1954 at St. Andrews and three times at Walton Heath in 1961, 1966 and 1967. For many years this tournament was considered second only to the Open in prestige.

In more recent times, The European Open was staged on several occasions at Walton Heath, including 1980, when Tom Kite celebrated a great

victory. A further link with the Society is the fact that Founder Member, Ben Crenshaw played his debut Ryder Cup at Walton Heath a memory that will surely be with him this year when he captains the United States Ryder Cup Team against Europe at Brookline.

The Society was privileged to commence its competitive year at such an historic venue and to follow in the footsteps of its most illustrious and best-loved friend.



George Payne with his son Stuart who is the great, great, great grandson of James Braid, pictured beside the grave where James Braid is buried.

A Golfing Pilgrimage

JBGS Member Alan Stuart reflects on his visit to Walton Heath

The two days that Craig Loftus and myself, along with a number of other members from "a' the airts", including by way of Lusaka and Bavaria, spent at Walton Heath, were amongst the most memorable of our experience.

Great fellowship from the hosts, a marvellously warm and welcoming clubhouse staffed by excellent employees, a



Walton Heath protagonists. From the left: Bill Wood, Alan Stuart, Terry Bergdall and John Thornhill.

great challenging course in tiptop condition and a reasonable personal performance.

It don't get much better folks. More memories like this and the JBGS will be in danger of being registered as a Class A drug!

A mention must be made of the Club's professional, Ken Macpherson. Since 1904 only three men have held the position of professional at Walton Heath - James Braid

(1904-1950), Harry Busson (1950-1974) and Ken who celebrates 25 years with the Club this year. It is quite a record and I am sure JB himself would fully approve of his successor, who in addition to his golf club duties also tends James Braid's grave with deep affection.

Walton Heath is aptly named for its courses flow over more than 200 acres of superb heathland turf. Its firm fairways are lined by heather and gorse with wonderfully true greens lying in wait.

My favourite holes were the 10th and the 16th, with the 17th being the best of a grand bunch of par threes.

Walton Heath is the only golf club in my experience where no part of the course can be seen from the clubhouse. **Challenge:** Half a dozen golf balls to the first person to come up with another.

George Payne, deputising for the Captain at Walton Heath, spoke warmly of the Society's visit at the post-match dinner. He was generous in his praise for the greenkeeping staff for presenting the course in such wonderful condition and to the house staff for their hospitality.

He paid special tribute to professional Ken Macpherson for his generous help to JBGS in organising the match and for all he had done for the Braid family in maintaining the family grave of James Braid.

He outlined a little of James Braid's life and achievements, many of which are outstanding even today.



Walton Heath professional Ken Macpherson. No need for a 'bunnet' on this caption



Founding Meeting winners at Brora. George Sutherland (left) winner of the Captain's Bunnet; Jean Hall, winner of the Curate's Egg and John Hunter who won the James Braid Trophy.

Plans Complete for Autumn Meeting

Plans are now complete for the Society's Autumn Meeting which will be held from Friday 3rd September to Sunday 5th September.

Following the success of our match against the Golf House Club Elie last year it had been hoped to repeat the fixture at this year's Autumn Meeting. However, the Golf House Club has had to change its annual general meeting because of their Captain's attendance at the Walker Cup and consequently their Hangover Cup will be held on the day on which we had hoped to hold our match

Golf House Club Secretary, Sandy Sneddon, in informing us of the clash of dates explained that the problem is unlikely to recur and it was certainly hoped to repeat the match in future years.

"We wish the Society well and look forward to many more meetings in the future," he said.

The match against the Lundin Golf Club will be played on Friday 3rd September and we expect to field a team of 12 players. For those who will not be playing in the match tee times have been reserved at Scotsraig Golf Club, another fine James Braid layout at Tayport, for an individual stableford competition.

Players in both events will meet for dinner in the evening at Lundin Golf Club.

On Saturday we will play for the President's Putter at the Arbroath Golf Links, a lesser known Braid course on the Tay Estuary not far from Carnoustie.

The Presentation Dinner will be held in the Old Manor Hotel, Lundin Links, in the evening.

On Sunday a match has been arranged between JBGS and a team of Royal & Ancient Golf Club members over the Eden Course at St Andrews to bring the Autumn Meeting to a close.

Members wishing to take part in any or all of these events must return the enclosed entry form with the requisite fees as soon as possible.

Finegan's Awake!

There was an unusually rare sighting of the Greater Spotted Finegan in early summer when the Vice-Captain was spotted crafting an elegant four through the Valley of Sin on the Old Course at St Andrews shortly before the Open Championship. He was spied by the Secretary who reports that the VC was in bright form, although complaining bitterly that advancing years had been the reason for a rather shabby 68 when he felt he could have been four shots better.

The Captain had the pleasure of playing with Jim at Elie where the VC not only split every fairway from the tee at a constant distance of 212 yards and 6.3 inches but had to regularly lean back, albeit now a little stiffly, to see the flight of the ball as it so closely covered the pin.

It is good to report that Jim is in good health and still managing to play eighteen holes a day, despite continuing protestations from his legs which he would like to trade in for newer ones.



Mario Desvaux from Le Paradis Golf Club, sporting a natty Braid bunnet despite the 90 degree heat, won the Captain's Putter at the match in Mauritius in the Spring. The Society currently has seven enthusiastic members on the island who have now introduced an annual match at the Cymkhana Club, on the island, in addition to the event at Le Paradis. Mario is the director of golf and sport at Le Paradis Hotel.

In Praise of Golf

*Fools in flannels round the wicket
Dedicate their lives to cricket*

*Soccer stars ignore the ball
To have a hug-in free for all*

*Toffs what have to Eton went
Find that rugby is their bent*

*Then the contemplative lout
Punctures worms on hooks for trout*

*Nouveau riche, the most unpleasant
Buy the right to blast for pheasant*

*Princes on their ponies pound
Whacking polo-balls around*

*Horses are the sport of kings
(Along with several other things)*

*Gentlemen to blondes defer
But golf's the sport they much prefer*

Norman Warnock,
Elie Fife



DAE YE KEN THIS?

Between 1894 and 1912 Braid played in 18 Open Championships and finished in the top ten 18 times; top six 17 times; 14 consecutive top 5 finishes (1899-1912); 5 wins; 3 seconds and 3 thirds.