

The North Wales Tour

September 10th/12th 2024

September 10th 2024 – Pwllheli Golf Club

A good turnout of 13 JBGS members arrived at a wet and windy Pwllheli Golf Club on Tuesday morning for a Society team/individual stableford to kick off the North Wales tour.

Due to the odd number of players, there were 2 x teams of 4 players, while the captain's team (following agreement with the club) fielded a team of 5, whereby 2 of our recently injured golfers (Peter Stanbrook and Tony Gill) eased their way back into play by playing alternate holes to contribute to the team score.

James Braid visited North Wales and Pwllheli's nine-hole course in 1908, where the original land had been doubled and an 18-hole course was in prospect for this go-ahead holiday town.

The course was opened by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George and the Cambrian Times wrote an amazingly lengthy article on the day, the course, the MP's arrival, the golf match and Lloyd George's speech in praise of golf and Pwllheli.

In the words of Braid himself, the course should provide good and interesting golf and an attraction to the place.

Braid's course remained intact until 1926, when more land became available and five of his holes disappeared, but one of them was reinstated to create a longer dogleg 10th hole. The course has been described as having nine true links holes, seven lush parkland and two heathland.

Regarding play on the day, the three hardy groups, teed off in wet, breezy conditions and found the course in good condition albeit the greens were slow and bumpy due to recent hollow coring and top dressing.

None of this detracted from a remarkably interesting course which looked and played even better when the rain stopped and the sun came out after 6 or 7 holes of play.

From a competition perspective, Robert Arbourne won the individual competition with a fine 36 points, while the dream team of Alison Stanbrook, Alison Darlington, Angela Grant, and K.J. Redman won the team prize (2 best scores from 4) with an impressive 77 points.

September 11th 2024 – Nefyn & District Golf Club

For the 2nd day of the North Wales Tour, we made our way across to Nefyn & District Golf Club on the Llyn Peninsula.

James Braid's connection to Nefyn & District Golf Club is a little more tenuous than the society usually experiences.

However, it is understood, that James Braid and J.H. Taylor both had a hand in the course's development in the 1920s and 30s, with the latter describing it as, 'situated on one of the most beautiful sites I have ever seen.'

Nefyn is a golf course that can be enjoyed by golfers of every standard because in the case of so many of its holes, it invites the golfer to create the challenge – in a phrase, "you can do it the easy way or the hard way, the risk or reward is of one's own making!"

The society had booked to play all 27 holes at the club, albeit a number had only committed to playing 9 holes on the old "Point Course".

Hindsight is a wonderful thing and those opting for just 9 holes proved to be the wisest of our contingent, as we were welcomed with 40 mph winds and a threat of heavy rain!

Due to these conditions, it was decided that a 4-ball scramble, would be the most enjoyable format, and so it proved.

The Point Course was quirky, but tremendous fun to play. A bonus was that the rain stayed away for the morning!

Of the 3 x teams of 4, the triumphant group comprised of Paul Melding, Peter Stanbrook, Steve Lawson and Alison Darlington.

All groups retired to the clubhouse and enjoyed a light lunch, while contemplating who was going to brave the elements on the 18-hole championship course in the afternoon, with heavy rain forecast.

After much deliberation, 2 x teams ventured out. The captain assisted by K.J. Redman, Paul Melding and Steve Lawson, were followed out by Mark Horner, Steve Darlington, Steve Jones, and Robert Arbourne, to play another scramble format competition.

For a couple of hours, while the wind continued to howl, the rain stayed away, and the society members were able to enjoy fantastic views and play along a dramatic coastline. However, just as everyone dared think they may get away with missing the rain, a deluge hit all concerned, and play was abandoned after 9 holes, with Messrs Horner, Darlington, Jones and Arbourne being declared the winners.

After drying out, the society enjoyed a fine meal at the clubhouse and the captain, after presenting the prizes, took the opportunity to thank the society members for supporting the meetings throughout the year, particularly the regional meetings, which are supported so well by the “stalwarts”!

The captain reiterated the point, that the annual events do not just happen, and take a lot of organising and a lot of time, whether it be a group of 8 or 38. With that in mind, the captain gave a heartfelt thank you to Alison Stanbrook for all her efforts as Members’ Secretary.

In conclusion, the captain reminded everyone that we had one more fixture the following day - a match v Porthmadog Golf Club. The captain posed a question to the members – “Will we end the season with a win? “

September 12th 2024 – Porthmadog Golf Club

For the final day of the North Wales Tour, we travelled across to Porthmadog Golf Club for a mid-morning tee time.

The course was a nine-hole course laid out in 1906, close to the sea. The Cambrian News charts the club’s origin as the 29th December 1905 and as early as 1907 members were voting for an 18-hole course. The nine-hole course was tight and compact, and though it was lengthened in 1909, the desire for a full course was strong.

By 1908 Pwllheli along the road, had already utilised Braid’s services in converting nine to eighteen holes and no doubt Porthmadog would not wish to be outdone by its neighbour.

Apparently the club has no record of his visit, it is assumed, or handed down, that Braid created the second nine, using more linksland. The entry in Nisbet, 1911, published in April, says “nine holes to be extended to eighteen”, suggesting a visit had been made early that year, or possibly late 1910. At any rate the North Wales Observer, 11th August 1911, notes “there are now eighteen in the Golf Links”.

Since then, in 1919-1920 two holes were lost to the sea and from the back 12th tee, rarely used, the straight line to the green would be over the sea. Apparently from that green you can clearly see two old greens from the original course.

In lengthening, the course had to move partly inland. The 1st 5 holes were moved, leaving thirteen in linksland, then two more, leaving eleven in original territory, and relieving pressure on this compact, bouncy undulating, gorse strip of old-world golfing land.

Our numbers for the day were down to 12, as we arrived to a warm welcome from the Porthmadog members.

Following introductions to our opponents we gathered around the 1st tee in anticipation of a close match against our opponents.

Four of the six matches were mixed pairings at the request of the home club, and this made for a very enjoyable (albeit competitive) round of golf.

Regarding the weather, the wind had dropped considerably, and the rain amounted to light passing showers which made the whole occasion very pleasant.

The course itself was in fine condition with the back nine in particular being a joy to play.

On completion of each match, the participants enjoyed lively conversation in the clubhouse, before sitting down to enjoy an excellent carvery followed by an equally delicious dessert.

Following lunch all the participants reconvened in the club lounge, where we were given a warm welcome by the Seniors Organiser Dave Smith and each Braid Society member was given a copy of the history of Porthmadog Golf Club which supplemented the ball and ball marker we were each given on arrival.

In response, the Society Captain thanked the club for agreeing to the fixture and congratulated Porthmadog Golf Club on a convincing 5.5 – 0.5 points victory.

The day concluded with the presentation to the Porthmadog Golf Club team members of tot glasses, whisky tumblers to Dave Smith for arranging the fixture, a copy of James Braid's 400 courses for the club and the proceeds from the bunnet collection for their junior section.

After saying our goodbyes to everyone, The JBGS set off in their respective directions to make their way home with another regional tour successfully completed!

Summary:

Although the weather was not the best, it was another successful trip and once again a heartfelt thank you goes to all the JBGS members who attended.

Special mention must go to Angela Grant, Tony Gill, Steve and Alison Darlington and K.J. Redman who made the long journey from Brora and St. Andrews respectively. Also, a big thanks to Peter and Alison Stanbrook, who travelled from Farnham and Steve Lawson and his wife Denise who travelled from Nantwich. Last but not least, the Welsh contingent of Paul Melding, Mark Horner, Steve Jones, and Robert Arbourne.

Thank you everyone, without your support the society would cease to exist!

We now move into the close season where the committee will be busy arranging and finalising the fixtures for 2025.

I look forward to seeing everyone soon.

Regards, Barrie.