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MY PILGRIMAGE TO ST. ANDREWS

It was 30 years in the making – a pilgrimage to Europe to visit the home of my ancestors.

This was the summer. My 42-year-old daughter – a language teacher who lived in Europe for two years -- joined us to serve as our driver and tour guide. This allowed Cheryl, my wife, and me to focus on our core mission – genealogy.

And it was a success. We visited the Foulis Castle near Inverness, Scotland, the ancestral home of the Clan Munro (where my first name comes from). We spent three days in St. Andrews, Scotland. Those days were, in a way, part of our genealogy effort. I left St. Andrews with a keen sense of the profession that was mine for 40 years. Really, it was an opportunity to get close to Old Tom Morris.

St. Andrews is a small town, medieval in appearance, and easy to walk. We stayed at the Albany House hotel, right across from St. Andrews University, the place where Prince William met Kate and the institution he calls his alma mater. The walk to the golf courses on one end of town was short, and on the other end the Cathedral, the St. Andrews Castle, St. Rule's Tower, the cemetery and the museums were even closer.

We spent hours at the British Golf Museum and were welcomed by the same statue of Old Tom Morris that welcomes you to GCSAA's Lawrence, Kan. headquarters. Museum admission is free on Sundays, the same day the Old Course is closed and filled with walkers enjoying it as a park. We walked the Old Course backwards and learned a lot.

For example, I understand now how it is possible for 18 holes of golf to have only 11 greens. The double greens are enormous! I paced a couple of them and roughly calculated the areas at just under an acre. Imagine

mowing straight lines over those lengths. I was expecting all fescue grasses, but I saw a lot of *Poa annua*. No surprise – it was cool and rainy and wet while we were there. The courses were a little greener than I expected, likely due to the weather. During our visit, we only experienced one day above 70 degrees.

It was fun chatting with crew members who were working and mowing on Sunday. Everyone was friendly, a common trait of the Scottish people.

We sandwiched our trip before the London Olympics and after Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebration. To celebrate Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, St. Andrews opened its third course in 1897 and named it "The

Company, no stranger to golf and the hospitality industry in Wisconsin.

We posed for pictures on the Swilcan Bridge and then headed off to learn more about Old Tom Morris.

My library has only eight books about Old Tom Morris, and three are duplicates by different publishers. The best is the most recent: David Malcolm and Peter Crabtree's magnum opus, "Tom Morris of St. Andrews – the Colossus of Golf 1821 – 1908." From reading and rereading the books and supplementing them with journal articles I found over the years, I had a lot of facts about this durable and amazing man. However, standing in his shop (his great-great granddaughter lives above the shop yet today),

...I understand now how it is possible for 18 holes of golf to have only 11 greens.

Jubilee Course." I wanted to see it for that reason, and because Gordon Moir, St. Andrews' director of greenkeeping, has his office near there. Gordon was a wonderful host, friendly and a great conversationalist. Mindful of his hectic schedule, I took a few minutes to tour his shop and to introduce him to my wife and daughter.

We took time to see The Himalayas Putting Green, which I'd read about any number of times. Tom Morris built it in 1866 and you really have to see it to believe it. I would have liked to give it a try, but to play it you have to be a member of the St. Andrews Ladies' Putting Club.

The Road Hole (17) merited two trips back and forth. We did the same with the home hole. We were surprised that the Old Course hotel was located where it is; you get a different perspective when you actually are visiting a place. It's owned by the Kohler

pausing in front of his home for so many years and seeing the house on North Street where he was born, the facts I had took on much greater meaning. I leaned on the fence along the 18th hole and watched the world go by in the same way he watched players finish their rounds of golf. We saw St. Mary's Church where his funeral was held, and we spent some quiet time at his grave, humbled to be so close to him in a physical way.

As we traveled through Scotland we'd stop at courses that were designed by Old Tom. That also amplified to me his expansive influence on the game and the talent he had and so humbly expressed.

For me, I felt a sense of closure or finality in my desire to learn as much as possible about the man who we give tribute as the father of our profession. And he was quite a man. **GCI**