

Let's hear it for the Nine Holers

I have a great affection for nine hole golf courses. I learned my own golf on one, and not just any one. Established in 1855 Cupar Golf Club is the oldest existing nine hole golf course in the world.

Built on the side of a hill and only around 2500 yards long it was a great place to start the game... At least I thought so at the time. While I became adept at playing shots with the ball either above or below my feet and punching in little chipped approaches to the par 4s I was horrified to discover when playing away from home that I might need 3 or 4 irons on par-4s!

Many happy summer holidays were spent going round and round Cupar, often playing four or five times in a day, always trying to beat my personal best score. I recall that 50 was a real physiological barrier. I once stood on the tee of the short downhill par-4 9th having played a mere 40 shots but took another 10 more to hole out. I was distraught.

However, once I had that particular monkey off my back - "The Best Player in the World not to have broken 50 round Cupar" my scores tumbled and it was not too many years before I was aiming for level fours. I do believe my PB does stand at 36. Not bad for someone whose handicap has never bettered the teens.

I also recall a super story told by the speaker at an Open Championship dinner about 12 years ago. He said that he was trying to get his own course accepted onto the Open Championship Rota and that 49 pieces of correspondence had been exchanged between himself and the R&A - 48 from him and one from St Andrews, but he was no nearer a satisfactory answer. He could only conclude that the R&A had something against nine hole courses.

It was a great joke, but like so many great jokes it had a grain of truth in it. Nine hole courses are seen as the poor relation.

I suspect that members of nine holers are thought of by others to be merely waiting until they're accepted at proper, grown up, 18 hole courses or, by a freak of geography, are unfortunate enough not to live in an area with any full size courses.

Nine hole courses deserve more credit. There are some superb nine hole tests of golf in this country and many towns and villages would be without golf at all if it wasn't for their nine hole course.

This month we feature two nine hole courses - Tolladine and Fingle Glen. Both are superb golf courses expertly maintained.

And they need to be. With twice as much traffic nine holers require supremely skilled greenkeepers and many are fortunate enough to have just that.

Let's give credit where credit is due to the courses and the people who look after them.



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INTERNATIONAL



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