

Nostalgic visit

In 1975, aged 12, I was given my first real experience of live professional golf when my dad took me to Carnoustie to watch The Open. I had a wonderful day. We sat by the side of a green watching the great players play through and I filled an autograph book with names, some of which were household and some of which weren't.

I'd already started playing the game, after a fashion, and could recall Gary Player winning The Open at Royal Lytham the previous year but it would be fair to say that my appreciation for the game of golf started with that day out at Carnoustie. That appreciation has been quite significant in my life as I've spent the last 13 years working in the golf business.

With that in mind, together with the fact that my brother and his family now live in the town, you can perhaps see how much I'm looking forward to The Open's return to Carnoustie later this month.

But however delighted I am it barely registers on the clapperometer if measured against the pleasure Links Superintendent John Philp and his team will derive from it.

The Mission, that John chose to accept, when he arrived at Carnoustie from St Andrews in 1986, was to return the course to a condition that would enable the Championship to come back.

He achieved that several years ago but the frustrating additional delay was brought about by other factors outwith his control... including the lack of a quality hotel.

If you look at the cover of this issue you will see that the hotel has arrived, just in time. Together with the superb course conditioning supplied by the greenkeeping team, it should ensure that Carnoustie doesn't have such a long wait for its next Championship.

And that's exactly as it should be because the famous five who have won at Carnoustie have all been, or become, legends in the game. There was the Silver Scot, Tommy Armour; Sir Henry Cotton; the "Wee Ice Mon", Ben Hogan, whose one out of one Open record ensured Carnoustie's legendary status; Gary Player; and Tom Watson, whose play-off win against Jack Newton kicked off his magnificent Open record.

Talking with John Philp you can't help but become wrapped up in his enthusiasm for the business and the genuine love he has for his own links. He knows every blade of grass, every nuance, every problem past present and potentially future, while his thoughts on influencing golfer's strategy would be enough for a magazine all of their own.

He deserves a successful week. One where the top players play to their best and hog the top of the leader boards and the weather shows off the course to its best advantage.

The week will also see the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team in action and with 115 bunkers to attend, in addition to their divotting duties it could be as busy as it is enjoyable for those lucky enough to be on the team.

Editor:
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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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21 Many Happy Returns



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