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COURSE FEATURE

Back to the future

Scott MacCallum visits Moortown Golf Club, which hosted the first Ryder Cup match on this side of the Atlantic, and discovers a restoration project which is returning the course to its best

Six months from now the world of sport will have turned its attention away from the Olympics and will be focused firmly on Medinah Country Club in Chicago, and the Ryder Cup. Golf fans, general sports fans, even non-sports fans, will be kept enthralled as fortunes sway throughout the three days and 28 matches, but among the most interested observers will be the members of Moortown Golf Club which played host to the first Ryder Cup on this side of the Atlantic in 1929.

The tournament which surrounds the most recent playings of the Ryder Cup wasn't quite the same at Moortown in Leeds, West Yorkshire, that May, but getting a sense of the times would have been interestingly impressed that the American team containing such legends as Gene Sarazen, Walter Hagen, Herman Smith and Jim Duggan was beaten 7-5 to level the series at one all. The British team, containing, among others Henry Cotton, Abe Mitchell, George Duncan and the Whitcombe brothers, came from 2-3-1 down in the 1920s to win the Stages 1-5 to 2-5.

Prior to settling down in front of the TV to watch the latest chapter in the Ryder Cup saga, the Moortown members decide to play a few holes they will do so on a course which has been modified and modernised, yet retained the style created by Lord Dufferin, Alistair MacKenzie, who heard his skills in the UK and Australia before heading to the US and designing Augusta National and Cypress Point.

The Club has worked closely with architect Ken Moodie, a man

who has studied MacKenzie thoroughly - travelling far and wide to experience golf courses first hand and reading everything the great man wrote on the subject of golf course design. He has also worked at other MacKenzie courses including Moortown's near neighbour, Albury, proving that knowledge is good use.

Ken was originally brought in by Moortown in 2004, along with landscape architect, former Ryder Cup player and now BBC television commentator, Ken Brown, and woodland management expert, John Nicholson, with the brief of improving the challenge for the better golfer. Over time that brief has expanded and the current work includes an extensive bunker renovation and the remodeling of

"In war times, I don't think that the course would have changed much since MacKenzie last visited for the Ryder Cup in 1929" Ken Moodie, Architect



SCOTT MACCALLUM VISITS MOORTOWN GOLF CLUB IN LEEDS TO DISCOVER WHY THE CLUB HAS RETURNED TO A COURSE STYLE THAT WAS CREATED BY ALISTAIR MACKENZIE, THANKS TO ARCHITECT KEN MOODIE

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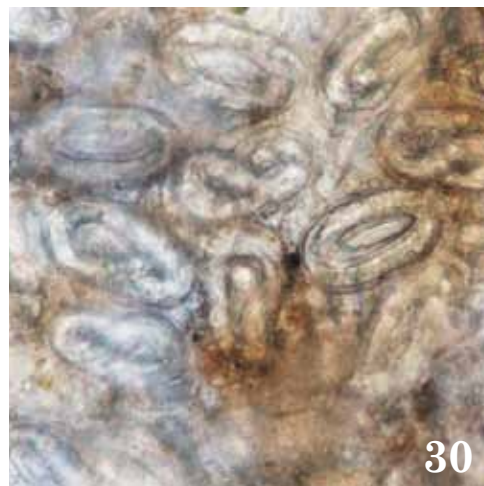
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