



“Honeyman’s role in the evolution and maintenance of St. Andrews may not be known to many.”

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Have you heard of David Honeyman?

More than likely, everyone in this business knows about Old Tom Morris and is aware of his many contributions to golf course design and maintenance and to the game of golf in general. Equally as likely, if the results of my highly scientific survey are to be believed, most probably have not heard of David Honeyman.

I say this with a high degree of confidence due to the rigorous nature of the survey and the sample size of at least four respondents. The intricately designed methodology of the survey required me to ask my industry colleagues, usually in passing or as an afterthought, if they’d ever heard of Honeyman.

The surveys were conducted either on the phone or in person. It usually went something like this:

Me: OK, man. Good talking to you.

Colleague: Yep, you too. Talk to you later.

Me: Oh yeah... meant to ask you... have you ever heard of David Honeyman?

Colleague: Who?

Me: You know, Old Tom’s assistant.

Colleague: You’re a dork.

Me: I know.

Colleague: Good, don’t forget it.

Honeyman served as Old Tom’s foreman at St. Andrews for nearly 30 years. In today’s parlance, he would be the assistant superintendent. However, Honeyman’s role in the evolution and maintenance of St. Andrews may not be known to many.

Honeyman was Tom’s right-hand man. He likely headed up the daily maintenance operations for extended periods of time, as Tom was frequently gone due to his design and consulting duties around Scotland.

In fact, according to David Malcolm and Peter E. Crabtree in their excellent book

Tom Morris of St. Andrews: The Colossus of Golf 1821-1908, Tom’s frequent absence was blamed for, in the prevailing opinion of the time, deteriorating conditions on the Old Course. It became a source of conflict between him and the Green Committee of The Royal and Ancient. As a result, the committee ultimately issued an order that all course maintenance directives were to be given to Honeyman to carry out.

They go on to state that while Morris and Honeyman were both made aware of and agreed to this arrangement, the extent to which it was honored by the them is debatable. Given Morris’ standing as the Custodian of the Links and Honeyman’s fierce loyalty to Old Tom, it’s probably

fair to assume that it was, at least at times, “followed” with a wink and a nod.

Honeyman also played a role in the evolution of the three golf courses that came to compose St. Andrews during his tenure. He would’ve been, under Old Tom’s direction, highly involved in the maintenance of and changes to the Old Course.

According to Malcolm and Crabtree, he played an important role in the construction of the New Course, which opened for play in 1895.

Honeyman also likely would’ve been involved in the construction of the Jubilee Course in 1897 and is widely credited with suggesting in 1902 that it would be possible to extend the course from the original 12 holes to 18. First conceived as a short course intended for ladies and beginners, it was extended in 1906 to ease the pressure on the Old and New Courses.

Honeyman’s untimely (and bizarre) death in 1903 would’ve prevented him from seeing the end result. While accounts differ, a newspaper report from June 1903 states that he died after accidentally drinking a glass of ammonia.

Morris was clearly the genius behind establishing St. Andrews’ stellar reputation, but Honeyman’s renowned loyalty, conscientiousness and skills as both a golfer and greenkeeper were undoubtedly invaluable to Old Tom.

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