

Scotland, The Best

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Traveling to the country where golf evolved is something many of us in this business have thought about. Whether your interest is course maintenance, course design, playing the game, the history of game, or all of the above, Scotland is where it all started.

Last October 26th, 'Old Joe Moris' and I took the opportunity to visit Scotland. Getting there took about eight hours which included a short stop and plane change in Iceland, then on to Glasgow. Our first contact with a Scot was the car rental agency. She had a heavy Scottish accent which amounted to a language barrier when it came to important details of renting an automobile and understanding directions. It was determined that Joe had too much hostility so she threw me the keys and off we went. I loaded all the luggage in the trunk while Joe studied the road map. Getting used to a car with the steering wheel on the opposite side of the dashboard and driving on the left side of the road demands your full attention. Joe's directions and assistance consisted of shouting, "Go, go, go!" and "Watch it, watch it!" Two and a half hours later we arrived at our destination which should have taken a little over an hour.

Our connection in Scotland was Kevin Link (great last name!). Kevin worked three summers for me while going to college and is now an assistant director at Dalkeith House in Dalkeith, Scotland. Dalkeith House was an 18th Century manor house for the Duke of Buccleugh. It was rebuilt on the remains of the original Dalkeith Castle built in the 12th Century. For the past 12 years it has served as classrooms and dormitory



The 18th green, first tee and clubhouse on the Old Course.

for U of W International Studies program. This was our home for the next 10 days along with 75 students and six professors. At times it was reminiscent of the old college days. One of the English professors was one I had 30 years ago. He looked much older.

I had originally asked Kevin about fishing in Scotland. Playing golf would be one thing but flyfishing on the Tweed River would be terrific if not also historically significant from a fisherman's perspective. The Dalkeith 'Palace,' is located on 1,000 acres and the Esk River runs right through it. Cameron Manson, the grounds caretaker, allowed only Joe and me to fish the entire river. He also set it up for us to fish Salmon on the Tweed but the rains came and the water levels rose dangerously high...what a disappointment! But, there was still golf and all that history.

Dalkeith is just six miles south of the capital city, Edinburgh (pronounced Edinbura). It's a great city rich in history with a huge, well-

respected castle that is the home of Britain's Crown Jewels. It seemed each place we stopped was a few hundred years old and was of some historical significance, pubs included. Deacon Brodie's Pub was the home and business of the man whom Robert Louis Stevenson got his idea for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Mr. Brodie committed terrible crimes at night but was a respected business man during the day. Located across the street from the pub are bricks indicating the spot where Brodie was hung in 1788.

There are around 430 golf courses in Scotland. Most all the links courses are next to the Atlantic Ocean or the North Sea, while the tree-lined courses are inland. There are so many good golf courses that it would take weeks to play them. Most of them are open year around because of fairly mild winters. Any snow that falls doesn't last for more than a couple of days.

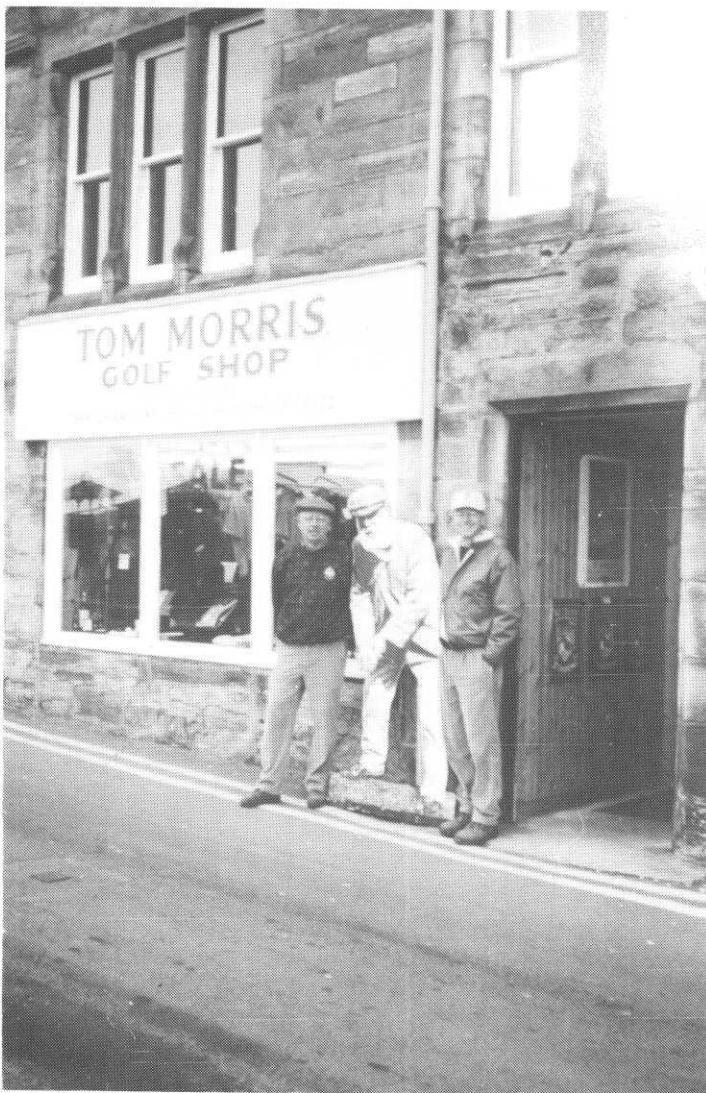
Our first day we went looking for a golf course and even with some quest-

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able map reading, we found one within 10 minutes. The first course we visited was Musselburgh Links, the old course, that was just down the road 'a wee bit.' It is a nine hole course with much history.



Tom and Moris with Old Tom Morris

Mary Queen of Scots played golf there in 1567, James the VI played while visiting in 1603 and Oliver Cromwell set up camp on the course in 1650. More recently, Willie Park Jr. won the open in 1889. Down the road another wee bit was the Royal Musselburgh Golf Club. This 18-hole course was established in 1774. Two years before we were even a country they were collecting green fees and fixing divots. We were met at the pro shop door by George, the Communique, whose job was spokesman for the course maintenance crew. His message that day was the course was too wet to play. Joe was disappointed he couldn't play but George was gracious enough to take us out on the course to meet the course manager. They were deep tining

greens and tees that day. The holes were left open because topdressing this time of the year would increase the incidence of fusarium. We compared notes on cultural practices, weather and employees. When overseeding greens, both benets and fescues are a standard mixture on many courses. Starting wages for some of the course employees is around six pounds or \$10 an hour. Next we were introduced to the president of the club and the pro. They were very anxious to learn about how we maintained our courses. We must have impressed them because their comment was "You Yanks always seem to figure things out." Yeah right, we've only been at it a little over 100 years. They've got us by at least 400 years. Finally we were shown around the clubhouse which was an 18th century mansion and invited to lunch. George did say jeans were not allowed (which was what we were wearing), but because of who we were it was fine. Presumably he meant two Superintendents from the States with no sense of tradition. This friendly treatment was typical of how we were welcomed on our visits around the country.

Gullane (pronounced Guln) is a golf course we read about before going over and one we wanted to play. There are three 18-hole links courses that stretch over a large hill and have a beautiful view of a North Sea bay, the Firth of Fourth. It is one of the final qualifying courses for the Open Championship when it's played at Muirfield. Incidentally, Gullane is right next to Muirfield. Golf has been played on these links for over 300 years. From 1897 to 1970, the British Ladies Championship was played there including Mildred "Babe" Zacharias' victory in 1947.

The day we played Gullane was sunny, around 48 degrees and windy enough to occasionally blow the ball off the tee. Fine Scottish weather! Joe was the first to land in a pot bunker but got out with one explosive blast. After landing in one I wanted to hit out backwards but Joe said no, not while in Scotland. Now all of a sudden when I'm in the bunker, he won't compromise his principles on a golf course. The rough was as difficult as we imagined and we were in it too bloody much. Something that we found interesting was the lack of distance markers. No pin placement indicators and very few 150 yard markers. Depth perception is part of the game in Scotland, the way it should be! With few exceptions, there are no golf cars. The average round took just three and a half hours and that's walking and minus the hash marks every few yards that we see on our courses to help speed up play! But what a wonderful round of golf. Is it possible to exist on a more spiritual plane after playing in that country? We enjoyed it immensely!

About an hour and a half drive north of Dalkeith along the North Sea coast is the town of St. Andrews. It's a beautiful town with probably the most famous golf course in the world. Our first order of business was to go to one of the best bakeries in Scotland. Then we walked to the 'Old Course.' Seeing the clubhouse, stepping on the first tee and crossing a stone bridge was quite an experience. We chose

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not to play but instead got a tour of the course and the new maintenance facility. The head greenskeeper, Eddie Adams, was on holiday in the states so one of his assistants showed us around and explained the operation. They maintain five courses with just 35 employees. Although they had adequate equipment, there wasn't as much as we'd thought we'd see. Maintaining their links courses doesn't necessarily require as many different types of mowers. The cutting height of greens at St. Andrews was surprising. This time of the year mowing heights were at 1/4" with 3/16" being the norm the rest of the year. During professional tournaments they walked greens at 5/32." Topdressing was done at regular intervals. Their source of sand was the beach along the edge of the course when the tide was out! Like most courses in Scotland, they used little fertilizer and minimal pesticide applications. Fairways were being core aerified while we were there. On greens and tees they use deep tining and a Toro Hydroject. A project just underway is a new irrigation system and well for all five courses. They were spending about three million pounds (five million dollars) for that system. Judging



The Old Stone Bridge, looking up 18 fairway.

from the rains that we saw while we were there, they shouldn't need it very much. A ranger on the course told us the biggest problem was slow play, meaning over four hours. He said so many of the players are used to riding golf cars (not Scots), and since there are no cars allowed, the golfer's pace slows down after about nine holes. And this course is flat!

To play St. Andrews, 'The Old Course,' the fees in dollars are as follows: green fees—\$124; If you choose

a caddie with tip—\$60; club rental—\$28. Joe and I were charged nothing on one course and half price on another. However, the pros were reluctant to give us a break on club rental. While in St. Andrews, Joe bought some Plus-2's which are knickers that go to inches below the knee, with the matching tam. Seeing him in that outfit is an excellent cure for the hiccups. We visited the Cathedral where Old Tom Morris is buried, visited castle ruins, walked through the college campus, and stopped at the bakery again before we said good-bye to St. Andrews.

Throughout our travels we found the Scots to be friendly and very helpful. They were well informed about American politics and offered their opinion on the recent presidential problems. The cities are known for how clean and safe they are. Indeed, the police don't wear guns and don't feel the need to do so. 'Old Joe Morris' and I would strangely recommend this trip where golf evolved.

Sometimes when an important event takes place in the world you will forever know where you were and what you were doing at the time. Joe and I were having breakfast at Dalkeith House in Scotland when we learned Jessie Ventura won the gubernatorial election.



Joe was just 'a wee bit' in the rough.