

Champions and Celebrities

Pollok Golf Club has attracted many famous professionals, especially with the Open in Scotland. Indeed, between 1893 to 1926, nine Open Champions played the course, some on several occasions. The first, in 1901, were the famous **Triumvirate**; followed in 1921, by **Duncan & Mitchell**. Also in 1921 the **first American Professional golf team** visited Pollok on their way to Gleneagles for the first biennial match between Britain and USA, later to be the Ryder Cup. In 1922 **Walter Hagen** visited us, followed by the '**Walker Cup Probables**' in 1926. At that time prize money at the Open and other tournaments was so low, nothing like to-days enormous sums, golf professionals were more than happy to play exhibition matches and cover their expenses.

In 1901 we had our most famous visitors, **James Braid, Harry Vardon, and J H Taylor**, the famous '**Triumvirate**' -

DAY, JUNE 18, 1901

INTERNATIONAL GOLFERS.

EXHIBITION GAMES OVER POLLOK CLUB LINKS.

Yesterday afternoon J. H. Taylor, Harry Vardon, A. Herd, and J. Braid paid a visit to the course of the Pollok Club, Glasgow, and played two exhibition games, one in the afternoon and the other in the evening. Only members and their friends were admitted to the course, which is a private one, and the spectators being thus limited in numbers, the play was witnessed under comfortable conditions. The game was one of 36 holes, and the matches assumed an international character, Taylor and Vardon, representing England, opposing Herd and Braid, representing Scotland.

A lugh wind prevailed and at times troubled the players. Notwithstanding this drawback all four gave a very fine display of golf, and were repeatedly applauded for their skill. In the first round, going out, Vardon at the sixth hole drove into the wood, and had to hit his ball; but he made amends for the mistake by reaching the tenth hole in two—one of the finest bits of play witnessed during the afternoon.

The following were the scores in the first round:—

Braid—Out, 39; in, 34—total, 73.
Herd—Out, 49; in, 38—total, 78.
Vardon—Out, 40; in, 36—total, 76.
Taylor—Out, 45; in, 37—total, 80.

Braid's score of 73 equals the record of the club established several years ago by James Douglas, who is now in America.

In the second round the scores were:—

Vardon—Out, 40; in, 34—total, 74.
Taylor—Out, 52; in, 38—total, 80.
Herd—Out, 38; in, 38—total, 76.
Braid—Out, 45; in, 38—total, 81.

Britain's greatest golfers — played an international exhibition match at the recently opened Pollok Golf Club. James Braid, the Open Champion, and 'Sandy' Herd representing Scotland challenged the English pair of Harry Vardon and J H Taylor. A great occasion for Pollok, many members and their guests were attracted to watch brilliant golf played over two rounds in the afternoon and early evening of Monday 17th June 1901.

They were indeed famous golfers, the '**Triumvirate**' - Braid, Taylor and Vardon between them won the Open championship sixteen times from 1894 to 1914. Playing many exhibition matches throughout Britain, they earned purses of around £50, far removed from the enormous sums of to-day's top professionals and the latter day '**Triumvirate**' of Nicklaus, Watson and Player. These British golfers were a major force in establishing the game in the United States, indeed dominated the game in America until 1913, when the amateur Francis Ouimet famously beat Harry Vardon at the Boston Country Club to win the US Open. Ouimet was the first native born American to win the US Open

Champions and Celebrities

Daily Record and Daily Mail - Tuesday 18th June 1901

How did these golfers find their way to Pollok? - certainly not on the 45 bus!!

Having just won his first Open at Muirfield in 1901, James Braid joined

J H Taylor, Harry Vardon and Fernie to play an exhibition match over the Machrie course in Islay. This popular three day event, over 12th to 14th June, attracted a large crowd, among them several enterprising Pollok members, who saw the opportunity of inviting these players to Pollok. Along with Past Captain Andrew Dunlop a telegram



was sent to the Club. Our minutes of Friday 14th June read – *'Have arranged exhibition match two rounds Pollok Monday afternoon and evening. Vardon Taylor Braid and Herd. Consideration twenty five pounds that Pollok members here will meantime guarantee. Call Committee meeting, suggest advise members, newspapers and postcard members etc'*. The Committee agreed the Exhibition match would further the interests of the Club and all expenses form a charge against the revenue of the Club. The Secretary was instructed to issue postcards to the members'.

Top - Sandy Herd & J H Taylor
Seated - James Braid & Harry Vardon

Such was the postal services in 1901, members received their post cards promptly on Monday morning, even without a first class stamp or post code!!

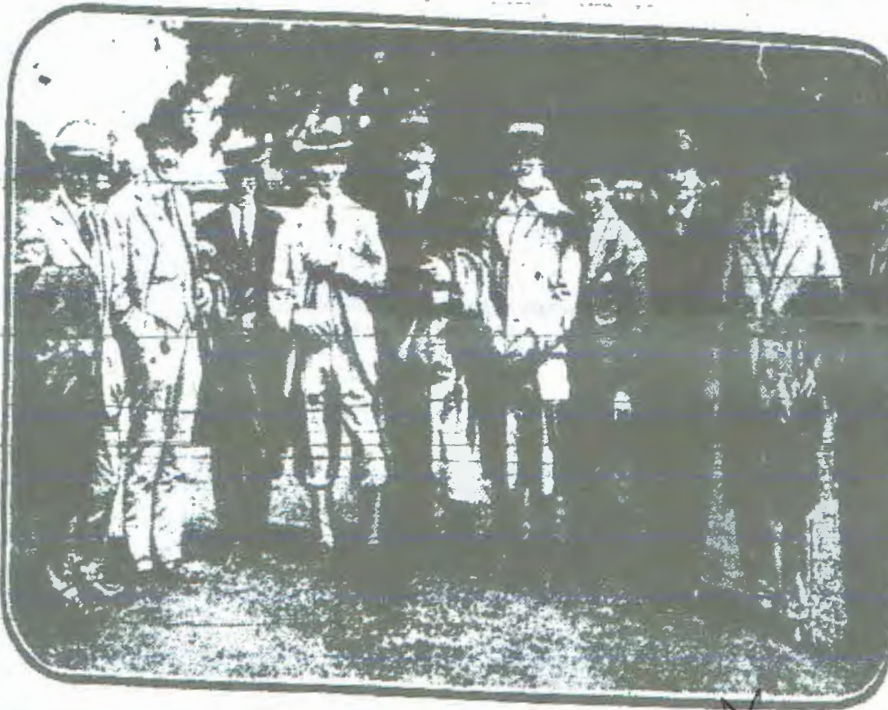
Despite the high wind all four players gave an excellent display of golf, playing with hickories and the 'guttie' ball, the rubber cored Haskell ball was not introduced until late 1901. With attendance restricted only to members and their guests, everyone could watch comfortably and repeatedly applauded the golfers. Over the course of 5,400 yards, Braid equalled the record of 73 strokes, held at that time by James Douglas, the club professional, who later emigrated to USA. Members studied form closely, especially the famous 'Vardon' grip and his golf ball the 'Vardon Flyer'. Much as our members do to-day, all the professionals occasionally found the woods. The 18th Home hole at 360 yards, was successfully birdied in 3 by both Herd and Taylor, no mean achievement, up the hill, using hickories and a 'guttie'. Not easy even to-day at 390 yards, up the same hill, using our high tech drivers with heads as

Champions and Celebrities

big as Fife and 'fly forever' golf balls. Playing four ball 'better ball' Scotland led by four holes in the first round increasing by five holes in the second, winning the match by nine holes with seven to play. The individual scores were Vardon 76/74; Herd 78/74; Braid 73/81; Taylor 80/80.

Our next famous Champions, in 1921, were **George Duncan** and his rival **Abe Mitchell** who visited Pollok before the Open at St Andrews. That day was greatly brightened by the unexpected visit of the team of seven American professionals on their way to Gleneagles, where they played ~~the second~~ match ^{the first} against a team of British golfers, who won by 9-3. This game was the first of the biennial competitions later to become the Ryder Cup in 1927. So Pollok had the distinction of a visit by the first team of American professional golfers. No doubt taking the chance to assess Duncan's and Mitchell's game.

AMERICAN GOLF PROFESSIONALS IN GLASGOW.



The appearance of George Duncan, open golf champion and Abe Mitchell, in exhibition games at Pollok Course, Glasgow, yesterday, attracted a number of the American professionals, who have come over to take part in the Gleneagles tournament next week, and the championship at St. Andrews. In the above group (L. to R.) are: - Chas. H. Holmer, Jack Hutcheson, Fred McLeod, Mr. Mark (captain, Pollok Golf Club), J. H. Taylor, Tom Kerrigan, Wilfred Reid, H. Neilson Emmet French (team captain), and Mr. W. Park ("All Square").

frank d. mitchell

*between
BRITAIN 6
d USA 3*

both pictures available

Love your picture

Champions and Celebrities

After World War 1 the Vardon, Taylor, Braid Triumvirate were now older, Mitchell and Duncan became heirs apparent, though they also had lost some of their prime years. The exhibition match at Pollok over two rounds was represented by the professionals - George Duncan and Abe Mitchell and three amateurs - J L C Jenkins, the ex Amateur Champion from Troon, and two of our own members J H Irons and Dr J S Kennedy.



George Duncan holing out at Pollok GC 1921, Dr Kennedy holds the flag

In the best of weather a good crowd of club members and guests enjoyed the very best of golf. The professionals, especially Abe Mitchell, hit some great shots outdistancing the amateurs by at least 20 and occasionally 60 yards. In the first match Duncan & Mitchell beat Irons and Jenkins by one hole. In the afternoon Jenkins and Mitchell won against Duncan and Kennedy.

George Duncan was renowned as a very fast player with a mercurial temperament, his autobiography was entitled 'Golf at the Gallop' - *'if you are going to miss them miss them fast!'* One of Aberdeenshire's most famous sporting sons, he learnt his golf on the Kings Links, and is now remembered at Old Meldrum. When offered a place with Aberdeen football club, Duncan was nearly lost to golf. Aged 27, in 1910, he became a serious challenger by finishing third to Braid in the Open at St Andrews. Joining the Royal Flying Corps in World War 1 he lost his peak years but not his skill, tying with Abe Mitchell for the unofficial Open in 1919. A year later he triumphed at Deal to win £100, the first three-figure in the history of the Open.

Abe Mitchell had a different background, working as a gardener he developed strong muscles and wrists, later becoming the longest hitter of his day. Considered to be a worrier and unsuited to strokeplay, he was a much stronger at matchplay, winning the Championship three times. Such was the strength and respect for his matchplay, his likeness adorns the current Ryder Cup. Living near the Royal Ashdown Forest Club he became keen on golf as a boy, winning several amateur competitions. His professional career started in 1913, aged 26 years, to be interrupted in 1914 when he joined the Royal Artillery. In 1919 he was appointed professional to North Forland and coach to Lord Northcliff of the Daily Mail. Mitchell was an outstandingly good player, finishing well in many Opens but never won.

Champions and Celebrities

The Glasgow Herald Gleneagles tournament was one of the first major sponsorships. At One Thousand Guineas the prize money was much greater than the Open and attracted a large number of professionals many having played in the Open. In 1921 the visiting American professionals also took part.

While most would go by rail, this notice advertised 'Flying to Gleneagles'.

Glasgow Herald - 4th June 1921

INTERNATIONAL GOLF

AT

GLENEAGLES.

"THE GLASGOW HERALD" TOURNAMENT

MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY and SATURDAY

beginning JUNE 1921

WHICH THERE WILL BE COMPETITION BY THE BEST OF

THE WORLD'S PLAYERS.

FLYING

FROM

GLASGOW TO GOLF

AT

GLENEAGLES.

FOR FULL PARTICULARS APPLY

WEST OF SCOTLAND AVIATION COY.

PHONE-4 KOSING PARK

NOTICE

BRAID-VARDON MATCHES

ALTERATION OF TIME.

STUBBINS & SONS, POLLOK

PROFESSIONALS AT POLLOK

George Duncan and Walter Hagen fulfilled an engagement at Pollok yesterday. It was originally intended that two rounds should be played, but owing to the heavy rain in the early part of the day a start was delayed till the afternoon. A four-ball foursome was played, Duncan being partnered by Mr J. I. O. Jenkins, the ex-Amateur champion, and Hagen by Mr J. A. C. Morrison, a leading club player. The greens were a trifle heavy owing to the rain, but they looked the picture of perfection. The golf all round was of a good standard, and play was followed by an interested company of members. The professionals were asked to hole out for scoring purposes. On the outward journey Duncan was twice out of bounds at the second and eighth—and coming home he had a 6 at the twelfth, where he was in trouble among the trees. Mr Jenkins, playing a very sound game, had a 3 at the ninth, where he holed a mashie putt, and he ran down a ten yards putt on the fifteenth green for a 3. Both amateurs halved the eighth in 4's against Hagen's 5 and Duncan's 6. Mr Jenkins and Duncan won by 4 and 2. The figures of the professionals were:—

Duncan—Out—	4	5	5	3	4	3	4	6	3	—37—
In—	4	4	6	2	4	5	5	4	5	—37—74
Hagen—Out—	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	—38
In—	3	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	—36—74

The individual figures of Mr Jenkins were:—

Out.....	5	4	4	5	4	4	6	4	3	—59
In.....	4	5	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	—36—74

McKINNON WOOD CUP

The competition for this trophy takes place at Lethambill on Wednesday, June 15, and is open to

In 1923 Walter Hagen was our next distinguished Champion at Pollok. A flamboyant character and, in 1922, the first American to win the Open. Hagen returned to Scotland in June to defend his title at Old Troon, now Royal Troon. At that time the qualifying days were Tuesday and Wednesday, with the Championship over 36 holes each day on Thursday & Friday. This heavy schedule allowed the professionals to return to their clubs over the weekend and make some money.

An exhibition match was arranged with Hagen and George Duncan, a past Open champion along with J I C Jenkins, a former Amateur champion and J A C Morrison a leading club player. Originally arranged for two

From the ARCHIVES – POLLOK GOLF CLUB, Glasgow.

Champions and Celebrities

Glasgow Herald 9th June 1923

rounds, heavy rain delayed the start and only one round could be played. A large number of members and guests came to watch the American and enjoy excellent golf. Four-ball foursomes were played, Duncan being partnered by Jenkins who beat Hagen and Morrison by 4 and 2. Both Duncan and Hagen were asked to hole out and each were round in 74. That year at Troon, Hagen, having been second in the qualifying rounds with James Braid lying fifth and Gene Sarazen failing to qualify, he stumbled towards the end allowing Arthur Havers of Coombe Hill to win with 296 shots against Hagen's 297

While Hagen won four Opens, two US Opens and was twice Captain of the American Ryder Cup team, his success was overshadowed by his flamboyant character. 'The Haig' – 'never wanted to be a millionaire but just live like one!' A regular visitor to Britain, he greatly enlivened professional golf playing many exhibition matches often with Joe Kirkwood, a talented professional and trickshot player. Hagen had links with Gibson the Kinghorn clubmaker, who ran a tournament with £200 prizes whenever the Open was held in Scotland.

That week in 1923, preceding the Open at Troon, was typical of the number of exhibition matches. At Western Gailes George Duncan & Abe Mitchell beat Walter Hagen & Gene Sarazen; on the next day Hagen & Sarazen played at the Alexandra club, now the Glasgow club. Exhibition matches were also played at the newly extended and restructured courses at Cowglen and Bonnyton. After the Open, the Glasgow Herald sponsored their fourth professional tournament at Gleneagles with prize money totalling 1,000 guineas attracting a large field; the first prize at £200 was considerably larger than £100 for the Open.

Champions and Celebrities

The 'Walker Cup Probables' - four Scottish nominees – were our next distinguished visitors preparing for the Walker Cup at St Andrews in 1926.

AMATEURS AND PROS. IN WALKER CUP TRIAL AT POLLOK



The match was played for the Walker Cup match with Amateurs W. W. Mackenzie, W. S. Torrance, John Wilson and Harry Vardon, and Professionals Taylor, Vardon, Ray and Herd, at Pollok on Saturday. Mackenzie, Herd, Torrance (left) and Ray are seen (l. to r.) in this photograph. The professionals won the match, but in the other W. S. Torrance and Vardon drew with Vardon and Taylor.

Daily record & Daily Mail 15th March 1926

AT JOHN WILSON'S FINE GOLF.

PROS AND AMATEURS AT POLLOK

The British teams selected to meet the Americans in the competition for the Walker Cup are likely to play in the future under better conditions than they have done in the past. This prediction may confidently be made as the result of the practice games which took place on Saturday, when Messrs. John Wilson, Prestwick, St. Nicholas; W. W. Mackenzie, Edinburgh; W. S. Torrance, Edinburgh, and J. Gordon, Glasgow, Scotsburg, the Scottish nominees, met Harry Vardon, J. H. Taylor, Alex. Herd and B. Ray on the course of the Pollok club.

The match was arranged by the Scottish Golf Union, and Messrs. Rowan, Glasgow, with whom the professionals, along with James Braid and George Duncan, are fulfilling an engagement. The original intention was to play singles; but this was departed from at the request of the professionals, who thought four-man teams would better meet the object in view.

Speaking at the close, Taylor said he was sure his brother professionals, as well as himself, would place their services at the disposal of the authorities to develop the best golfing talent in the world.

PROS. TWO UP.

Ray and Herd started first, against

BRITISH SUCCESS ONLY!

About 5000 persons International tourna: Britain and France: Herd, Edinburgh, U They witnessed some outstanding, being, least one surprise: Brown, of Hamilton, Britain won the othe: The Hamiltonian, against the decisio seemed little ground and it was later anno would meet again. Saturday—once more of Mr. David Smith.

Yvan Laffineur, a who has been descr Carpentier, proved prize pocket Laffineur was not he was a 100 per cen "bonnie fechter" more than he be Frenchman was oft vantage of opportu many telling blow which he kept his Brown in the lead.

REPORT

The fight, a white Scottish feather-w, engaged was sho winning in the secod Brown in the lead.

The practice match at Pollok against four professionals – Vardon, Taylor, Herd (the Triumvirate) and Ted Ray - all former Open Champions, was initiated by the Scottish Golf Union with the generous help of the Messrs Rowan, members of the club. The professionals, along with James Braid and George Duncan, had just completed a week demonstration and tuition for Rowans of Buchanan Street, Glasgow.

Daily Record & Daily Mail 15th March 1926

Champions and Celebrities

The Edinburgh amateurs were Willis Mackenzie and W B Torrance, both members of Mortonhall who knew each others game well. The other two were John Wilson from Prestwick St Nicholas and Gordon Simpson from Scotsraig. Willis Mackenzie gained great distinction in the 1920s, winning two Scottish Amateur Championships and playing in the first two Walker Cup matches. The professionals agreed that four-ball foursomes would give the amateurs the best match practice. Ray and Herd with a best ball of 64 (for 17 holes) beat Willis Mackenzie and W B Torrance by 2 and one with a best ball of 66. Vardon and Taylor halved with John Wilson and Gordon Simpson each with a best ball of 71. Ideal weather, with a touch of Spring, attracted a large number of members and guests to see the distinguished visitors playing excellent golf. Sadly this practice round wasn't sufficient, at St Andrews that year USA won by 6 ½ games to 5 ½ to retain the Walker Cup.

Speaking at the close, Taylor said *'he was sure his brother professionals, as well as himself, would place their services at the disposal of the authorities to develop the best golfing talent in the world'*.

Other distinguished Champions and Celebrities include **Gene Sarazen, Sandy Lyle, Douglas Bader and Billy Graham**

Jake Davidson
Jan 2006.