

British Left Handed Golfers Association

A Brief Background

The Association was formed in 1959 and initially based in the south of the England. Since that time we have records of over 1250 golfers, who at one time or another have been members. We currently have 287 names on our books. During the 1960's many golfing countries started "Lefty Associations" and now every year members of BLHGA attend numerous local and international events.

The international events include the World Championships, which were held in Spain in June and the Scandinavian Tournament in May. We receive regular invitations from many countries to participate in their national championships as we invite other countries to participate in ours.

The World Championship next year in June is being held in Vancouver, Canada.

Our domestic yearly calendar consists of 10 events. This area covered is from North Yorkshire to Buckinghamshire.

The major event is our National Championship, which is a 36 hole medal. There are 2 trophies to play for, the Bob Charles and the Malcolmson. The Bob Charles is for the best gross and the winner is our Champion whilst the Malcolmson is the best net.

The Bob Charles Cup was donated by Bob himself and both he and Peter Dawson, another famous golf pro in the 1970's, are honorary members of our Association.

Other fixtures consist of 27 holes, a 9 hole, 4 ball better ball in the morning followed by an individual stableford in the afternoon.

By the end of this year you will be able to know more about the British Left Handers. Our new web site will be off and running. www.leftiesgolf.org.uk

THE BRITISH LEFT HANDED GOLFERS ASSOCIATION

HISTORY

As a result of a notice posted in a Home Counties newspaper a number of left handed golfers met and played golf. Prominent amongst these was Ben Warriss of Jewell and Warriss fame (comedians)

After a number of such meetings exclusively in the London area there was a move to form a proper society. This was resisted by some who wished to continue meeting on an informal basis. In 1959 the British Left Handed Golfers Society was formed. Later this name was changed to the British Left Handed Golfers Association, the name under which we operate today. The first Captain was Joe Druce of Gerrards Cross Golf Club and he became a Life member. The first official event was held at his home course in 1960.

Not much is known about these early days and it appears that meetings were confined to courses close to London. In 1965 the first dinner dance was held in Aldwich. Dancing was to 'Ronnie Saint and his left handers'. Ronnie Saint was a three handicap county golfer. Dinner dances were a feature of these days with 'Coaches at lam'. In 1962 the membership was 44 which grew to 112 by 1964. A number of cups were played for from 1962 and exist today.

In 1964 the society played the Irish lefties at Southport and Ainsdale losing 8 to 3. These international matches became an annual feature with the Irish invariably the victors. In 1967 the match was held at Lahinch in Ireland with the Irish winning 15-1 with two matches halved. During this visit the dead body of a young woman was found on a local beach with her boy friend waiting for her at Shannon Airport. The then Secretary John Turner, presumably in a representative capacity, was interviewed by Scotland Yard on his return to England. The dead woman was American and an American was arrested and sentenced in the USA. In the same year Taylor Bullock (Inverness) won the Scottish Left Handed Championship at Gullane by 23 strokes in windy conditions with gross scores of 73/68 = 141.

The Scottish Section appears to have been very active around this time. Inverness G.C. had 36 left handed members. Newtonmore and Kingussie Golf Clubs had large numbers of left handers. Both areas are strongholds of shinty which tends to be played left handed.

The Welsh were also very active at this time. Mike Geoghan's Captains Day attracted almost 100 competitors.

In 1972 the annual match against the Irish moved to Portpatrick. This proved such a popular venue that each year we hold three days of competitions at Portpatrick which attracts large numbers. We hold a National Championship each year for the Bob Charles Cup. Bob is an honorary life member and he donated the cup for the champion. The best net score receives the Malcolmson Cup. The Scottish championships are also held annually.

In addition there is a thriving international scene which attracts around 400 competitors from various countries. The 2008 event takes place in New Zealand.

We have 10 events each year covering an area from North Yorkshire

to Buckinghamshire. These consist of 27 holes, a 9 hole better ball in the morning followed by an individual stapleford in the afternoon. A feature is the number of right handed guests who play for visitor prizes. The association has an active membership of mixed ability and is financially secure. Any Lefty thinking of joining us is assured of a warm welcome. We like to be different.

CONTACT: /

As a result of a notice published in a Home Counties newspaper a number of left handers met and played golf. Prominent amongst those playing were John Turner (A steel industry executive) and Ben Warriss of Jewell Warriss fame (Comedians)

After a number of such ventures exclusively in the London area there was a move to form a proper society. This was resisted by some who just wished to keep meetings on an informal basis.

Eventually the British Left Handed Golfers Society was formed. This later changed it's name to The British Left Handed Golfers Association, the name under which we operate today.

In 1959 Joe Druce of Gerrards Cross Golf Club was elected Captain (Later a Life Member) and the first official event of the new society was held at his home course. This took place in 1960. John Turner took on the secretarial work. Not much is known about these early formative years but the golf appears to have been confined to courses close to London. In 1965 the first annual dinner dance was held at the Bush House Restaurant, Aldwych, London. The menu states that dancing was to 'Ronnie Saint and his Left Handers' Ronnie Saint was a three handicap member and county player. The Captain is shown as Dr Nick Nichols with 'Coaches at lam. The same band and venue was used again the following year when the Captain was a Bill Grayton. A further Dinner Dance is recorded as taking place at the Empire Rooms, London in 1965

1962 Membership	44
1963	103
1964	112

In 1962 a number of cups are recorded.

In 1964 the British, under the Captaincy of Alister Mackay, played the Irish Lefties at Southport and Ainsdale losing 8 to 3. A pattern of victory for the Irish that was invariably the outcome. In 1967 the fourth International match was played at Lahinch in Ireland with the Irish winning 15-1 with two matches halved. A feature of this visit was the finding of the dead body of a young woman on a local beach with her boyfriend waiting her arrival at Shannon Airport. John Turner, presumably in a representative capacity, was interviewed by Scotland Yard on his return to England. The dead woman was American and an American was arrested and sentenced in the USA.

In the same year Taylor Bullock (Inverness) won the Scottish Left Handers Championship at Gullane by 23 strokes in windy conditions with gross scores of 73/68 = 141

The Scottish Section seems to have been very active and well supported around this time. Inverness G.C. had 36 left handed members. Newtonmore and Kingussie also had more than the usual number of left handers. Both areas are strongholds of shinty where it is more natural to hold a club with your left hand than your right;

The Welsh were also very active at this time. The first meeting was held at Monmouthshire G.C. with Mike Geoghegan's Captains Day attracting almost 100 competitors.

By 1972 the annual match with the Irish moved to Scotland at Portpatrick and this became a regular venue. An exception was in 1973 when it was played at Ashdown Forest and the English managed a draw. In 1966 it had been played at Orsett G.C. Essex.

Also in 1972 John Turner and a friend Johnny Bell decided to sponsor a young golfing prospect, Eamon Darcy. They put £4000 into a fund with some complicated monetary arrangements. From my own memory there were allegations of exploitation in the golfing press. These were squashed when Eamon Darcy came to their defence.

The membership was very buoyant around this time with over subscription of entries for some events. The use of first and tenth tee starts being common. Right handers could take out associate membership and the ladies (non-golfing) played an active role.

It was decided to form County Societies to accommodate numbers and reduce travel costs. These included Kent, Lancashire, Beds/Bucks/Herts, West of England. Scotland and Wales already having their own set ups.

In 1967 it was proposed to introduce 'Golf by Post' This involved teams of five with the best four to count, playing a round in the following countries: Australia, England, Ireland, America and Canada. Adjustments for standard scratch were calculated. I can't find any evidence that this got off the ground.

The International scene was well established with 400 playing in the American Championships including 20 from Australia and 20 from Canada.

It is interesting to compare costs with current expense. In 1969 there was a visit to Rosses Point. Sligo. A week cost £44 for Hotel full board, prizes, receptions, entertainment and transportation. This included green fee costs of £3 for the week. In 1972 when the Irish came to Portpatrick and won again 5½ to 3½, golf and full board at the Portpatrick hotel was £12. In 1967 76 travelled from England to Lahinch, Ireland by charter flight. Cost for the week was £42 for flight London/Shannon, Transfers, full board, three sightseeing tours, medieval lunch at Bunratty Castle. There was an evening reception by Arthur Guinness & Co., and Cork Distillers with a ballad session. Green fees 2/6d per day, £1 per week.

The Scottish Championships in 1967 were played at Turnberry There were 64 entries for the Scottish Championships at Inverness The Championship in 1973 was played at Hawkstone Park with 136 entries playing over 36 holes. Prominent amongst the entry were the well know sportsmen Johnny Wardle (Yorkshire and England cricketer) and Eddie Shimwell (Sheffield and England football) The Northern Cup in 1974 had over 100 entries at West Lancs G.C.

There was some controversy at this time. The Championships was open to left handers whether members or not. Also complaints that some members only played in the Championships and failed to support any other events. Various rules were introduced to

/prevent this but appear not to have been enforced. Some existing members objected to right handers being granted associate membership and resigned.

Out first Lady member joined in 1973

Wilson Henry, former Captain and Life member donated a cup for a member who had not previously been a winner. This later became a cup played for in the west country.

The 1975 Championship obtained considerable sponsorship with member Alan Jupp donating £250.

In 1975 John Turner who had done all manner of things to promote our association vacated the position of Secretary and was made Hon. Life President. Roger Wood took over as Secretary and despite considerable business commitments did an excellent job. John Turner continued to be active in assisting in various ventures.

Around this time attendances were falling because of increasing costs not only of golf but of transportation. In 1982 as few as 20 members attended one meeting and the Captain's Day was cancelled when only 9 entries were received.

It had always been assumed that the association was wealthy. The 1976 accounts showed a surplus of only £72-18 and in 1980 it was necessary to obtain a Bank overdraft of £300 in order to purchase ties. It was not unusual to solicit loans from members for short periods. The first set of committee minutes on file is from 14th December 1976. At this time Trophy insurance was updated although winner were asked to check if this was covered already by home insurance.

In 1976 a fresh set of rules were adopted and the finances put under the control of Treasurer, Secretary, Tom Hayes and Ken Smith. Regular committee meetings were instituted as was an AGM..

In 1977 due to a seamans strike the Irish hired a boat and sailed to Portpatrick for the annual fixture.

A match for a salver was played at Hill Valley G.C. against Australia in 1979.

By 1985 membership had picked up to 200/250 (Allegedly)

In 1994, following a lengthy dispute between active members and the then Secretary Tony Kirkland led to Kirkland resigning.

The World Championships in the U.K. for the first time in 1996 was switched from Southport and Ainsdale to The Warwickshire. This attracted over 300 competitors with 60% from overseas. Celebrities included Henry Cooper, Peter Dawson and Brian Close.

General:

It was decided the Captains would be presented with a blazer and badge (What happened?)

The cost of the Captaincy became an issue but nothing appears to have been decided.

Grange Park G.C. (St.Helens) considered for visit of the Irish because of access via Liverpool.

Quaich Bowl played at West Byfleet (Surrey) since 1934. The oldest known Left Handers Trophy. In early days we were invited to take part and London based members often did.

John Turner had a 9 handicap left handed and 17 right handed
Life Members:

Bob Charles (New Zealand)

Peter Dawson (Only Left Hander to represent U.K. in Ryder Cup)

Jack Cambell (N.Ireland)

Harry Christie (N.Ireland)

Joe Druce,

Wilson H

enry

Percy Huggins

Dennis Thatcher (Husband of Prime Minister Margerat Thatcher)

Tom Hayes ? and others?