



Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club

A Brief
History



Kinghorn Thistle
GOLF CLUB

www.kinghornthistle.com

The Early Days of Kinghorn Golf Course

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Kinghorn golf course is a gem of a course situated on the Fife coast overlooking Edinburgh and the Lothians. Scottish golf history records show that a recently discovered letter written by John Hutton to Alexander Orrock at Wemyss in 1812 records that golf was being played on Kinghorn Links in the early 19th century and probably sometime before that. The Links land was owned by the Shanks family of Castlerig a title which goes back to Robert the Bruce in 1286. They sold the land to the Council in 1886 and it has been in public ownership ever since. This makes it one of the oldest golfing grounds in the world

and one of the most historic. (www.scottishgolfhistory.org (The Hutton Letter).

Course Design by Tom Morris (1887)

Kinghorn is one of Fife's and Scotland's oldest courses, it was founded in 1887, a 9-hole course designed by the legendary Tom Morris, the ground being recently owned by the Town Council.

The Impact of the Forth Railway Bridge (1890s)

After the opening of the iconic Forth Railway Bridge in 1890 there was an influx of members from Edinburgh to both Kinghorn Thistle and Kinghorn golf clubs. There was even a special fare for our members negotiated with the North British Railway. Records show that over 60% of the membership were from Edinburgh and the Lothians.

As a result, both Kinghorn clubs benefitted greatly from the influx of regular golfers and their families to the town. It really helped make Kinghorn an accessible destination either for playing golf or perhaps spending the day at the beach.

Course Expansion to 18 Holes (1905)

In 1905 Kinghorn Thistle was a thriving golf club with a growing membership of both local members and members who lived and worked in Edinburgh. It was at this point the Town Council purchased additional land from which an additional 9 holes were laid out by Willie Fernie of Troon.

Kinghorn During the Great War (1914-1918)

Prior to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 many new clubs were formed in and around Edinburgh and elsewhere

Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club – A Course Steeped in History



in Fife this give golfers alternatives and the Thistle Committee had to fight hard to retain the membership. During the war years the club still functioned with less competitions and the course was taken over by the military which meant a couple of holes had to be played twice.

The Legendary 1921 Open Competition

In June 1921, an Open competition at Kinghorn Golf Course attracted, among others Ted Ray, Gene Sarazan, Walter Hogan, George Duncan and many others (today's equivalent would be the likes of Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods, Rory Mclroy and Scottie Scheffler and so on!) Total prize money was £200 with £50 going to the winner.

Challenges & Resurgence (1920s–1940s)

The 20s and early 30s saw the Thistle rebuild and again start to prosper even under difficult times such as the general strike and a few years later at the outbreak of the second world war where again much of the course was used for either housing or by the military. Food was also grown on the course which greatly assisted the war effort locally. Following the war the course in conjunction with both the Thistle and Kinghorn Golf Club together with the Town Council was redeveloped and a much changed 18 holes were created.

A New Era (1950s–2010s)

The following 7 decades were good years for Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club where a steady membership playing competitive golf enabled the club to prosper into the present day. Kinghorn Thistle used the old pavilion adjacent to the first tee on the golf course until 2010 when it was demolished to make way for the new Kinghorn Golf Club clubhouse.

Kinghorn Thistle's Legacy Today

Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club are pleased to have their historical array of trophies and medals situated in the hallway of Kinghorn Golf Club.

Approaching the 140th year of the club's existence Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club remains an independent single gender golf club for male golfers of all abilities aged 16 and over with the vast majority of members being members of Kinghorn Golf Club.

Competitions

The 'Thistle' is affiliated to Fife Golf and competes in local competitions such as:

- The Fife Team Championship
- The Advertiser Trophy
- The Nairn Trophy
- The Daily Mail Foursomes
- The Belhaven Best Scottish Club Handicap Championship

The club has long standing links with Kinghorn and Burntisland Golf Clubs, with home or away matches played against each other on an annual basis.

In season 1905-06 the Kinghorn Thistle Golf Club won the Nairn Trophy for foursomes. The photo below shows the winning team



Kinghorn Thistle also has a long -standing association with the other three 'Thistle' clubs in Fife namely, St. Andrews Thistle, Earlsferry Thistle and Leven Thistle.

As an example, the Kinghorn Thistle 175 Anniversary Plate presented to the St Andrews Thistle Golf Club on the occasion of their 175th Anniversary in 1992 is presented annually to the leading qualifier in their Club Championship 1st Class.





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