



MOORTOWN GOLF CLUB

Alwoodley, Leeds, England

Venue of the 1929 Ryder Cup



The Moortown Golf Club

Originally designed by Dr Alister MacKenzie, who also designed Augusta National, Cypress Point, Royal Melbourne and many other championship courses throughout the world, Moortown hosted the first Ryder Cup match on British soil, in 1929. Since then the Club has hosted many professional and amateur tournaments and winners at Moortown include Nick Faldo, Bernard Gallagher and Sir Michael Bonallack, former Captain of the R & A.

Today Moortown Golf Club prides itself on the warm welcome afforded to local, national and international visitors alike. Although steeped in history, epitomised by the traditional atmosphere of the Clubhouse, the Club provides a range of modern facilities including our magnificent warm-up facility which visiting golfers can enjoy prior to their round.



History

Moortown Golf Club was formed in 1909 and the present clubhouse was opened in 1915 and by the mid-1920s the course assumed the layout, which was to exist without major alterations for over sixty years. Even in those early days Moortown's popularity among professionals was growing through the Yorkshire Evening News Professional Tournament, but it was the staging of The Ryder Cup in 1929 which focused the attention of international media on the Club.

There is no doubt that this event was a major factor in establishing Moortown's world-wide reputation as a Championship golf course together with the course design of Dr Alister MacKenzie. The founders invited Dr MacKenzie to visit the site which he did in October 1908, coming to the conclusion that it would make a fine course and offering to aid the founders in its design.

The Official Opening

The international media were invited to Moortown's opening with an exhibition match between the Open Champion James Braid and the legendary Harry Vardon. This was scheduled for 21st May 1910 but had to be cancelled because of the death of King Edward VII and was re-scheduled for the 24th September 1910. The proceedings for that momentous occasion are worth setting out. Moortown could not have selected two finer and more famous players to play at the opening. The Club offered a prize of two guineas for the best gross score and one guinea for each of the winners.

Course Design

The founders were fortunate that in 1908 Dr MacKenzie was in the district having nearly completed the layout at Alwoodley, which was already very popular. He joined the deliberations at Moortown, and was soon to realise that here was golfing country par excellence. Features of the original course at Moortown which received much comment were the bunkers, being perfect examples of artificial hazards imitating natural seaside contours. Secondly was the change in green design, where Dr. MacKenzie adopted the larger, undulating seaside greens. His epitaph is the course which he designed. Dr MacKenzie often chaired many of the early meetings, was elected a Vice-President in 1909, and in 1913 he was Captain. As the Club leased more land, and the holes re-shaped, he continued as constructional adviser and Vice-President.



Dr Alister MacKenzie

Dr Alister MacKenzie is unquestionably one of the world's foremost golf course designers. Examples of his work are amongst the best in the world and he was to lay out many world famous courses both here and in the United States, including the world famous Augusta. His book "Golf Architecture" has become a standard text for budding golf course architects. Dr MacKenzie has proved that it is entirely possible to construct a course that will provide interesting yet not unreasonable problems for every golfer according to their skill. Every year the Club receives many enquiries but some of the most recurring are questions relating to the life and work of Dr MacKenzie and his influence on Moortown's development.

Mackenzie Courses

Dr Alister MacKenzie's first course design was at Alwoodley in Yorkshire, followed by Moortown, Sandmoor, Sitwell Park and the Eden Course at St Andrews.*

In 1926 his famous "World Tour," expanded his reputation around the world. He took the long way, through the Suez Canal to Australia, where in a period of two months, he advised 19 principal clubs, from which visit arose such magnificent courses as the Royal Melbourne and Royal Queensland, and in New Zealand, the courses at Titirangi and Queenstown. He designed the two courses at the Jockey Club at Buenos Aires and Mar De Plato in Argentina. In 1927 before returning to California to design the Cypress Point course on the Monterey Peninsula, he was called to remodel Lahinch, and other courses in Ireland.*

Whilst in America with Robert Hunter, they built the Valley Club at Montecito, the Meadow Club on Mt Tamalpais, and did redesign work on the famed course at Pebble Beach.

Many of his courses still remain among the top 100, Cypress Point, Pasatiempo, Crystal Downs, Royal Melbourne and the home of the Masters, Augusta National. (Source – Alister MacKenzie "The Spirit of St Andrews" (1995))





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