

# Article from Ross-shire Journal of Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April 1926

## MUIR OF ORD GOLF CLUB

### Opening of New Club House

The season of Muir of Ord Golf Club was formally opened on Thursday last, when opportunity was also taken to declare open the new golf club-house which has fast been completed. As is well known the course is being extended to eighteen holes, but although the additional holes have been formed and the greens laid it is doubtful if the full course will be ready for play before Autumn. The new clubhouse has been erected on the site of the old one. It is a commodious building, with separate rooms for ladies and gentlemen. Water has been introduced and sanitation attended to. Each member is also provided with a private box in which to hold clubs. In front of the building is a neat looking verandah, with an outlook towards the course. The weather was not propitious for golf on Thursday, there being heavy showers of rain during the afternoon and evening. Notwithstanding there was a large turnout of members and friends from Beaully and Muir of Ord. The function, which took place in front of the pavilion was gracefully performed by Mr. J.T. Garrioch, factor for Lord Lovat at Beaufort.

At the outset Mr T. Pullar submitted apologies for absence from Lord Lovat, Captain Oldfield of Achnagairn, Mr. F.G. Mackenzie of Balavil; and Captain John Stirling of Fairburn.

Mr Tom Mackenzie Schoolhouse Conon, captain of the club said that his pleasant duty was to introduce to them a gentleman they all knew very well indeed. It was a work of supererogation to ask him to do any such thing to the people of Beaully and Muir of Ord. The name of Mr Garrioch, was a household one in the North of Scotland and they knew of the good work he had done and was doing on public bodies over the North. Mr Garrioch had been a good friend to the Muir of Ord golf course. He did not know how long it had been since Mr Garrioch had been appointed president of the club, but before he (the speaker) played on the course he was president and had remained so ever since. One of the first prizes he won on the course was presented by Mr Garrioch for a foursome competition. His partner that day was their old friend of happy memory, the late Mr Birnie, Wellhouse. He still looked upon that prize with happy memory. More recently they knew that Mr Garrioch had helped them immensely with the extension of the course and with the erection of the new clubhouse. After Lord Lovat – and they were all very sorry that his lordship could not be with them that day – there was no gentleman in the neighbourhood who had done so much for the club as Mr Garrioch. When they went to see him and seek his advice he was always ready to meet them and help them. With that help they had overcome all difficulties and for that they owed him a deep debt of gratitude. They trusted in the near future to be able to play over the eighteen hole course, and when they did they hoped it would be the best course in the North of Scotland. He asked everyone to put their shoulders to the wheel and help the club as the president had done. He trusted Mr Garrioch would remain president of the club for many years to come. He was always willing to do his best for them when help was needed. He had great pleasure in calling upon Mr Garrioch to open the new club house. (Loud applause).

Mr Garrioch immediately unlocked the door of the club house and formally declared it open. The assembled crowd repaired inside and inspected the building.

In a delightful speech full of reminscences, Mr Garrioch thanked Mr Mackenzie for his all too flattering remarks he had made about him. In the first place he would like to say how sorry Lord Lovat was that he was unable to be there that day. The previous day Lord Lovat and he had discussed the Muir of Ord golf course and he thought he was within the mark in saying that so far as golf was concerned Lord Lovat's ambition was that the Muir of Ord Golf course should be second to none in the north. (Applause). He did not intend to deal with the history of golf. It started somewhere back in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. At one time the Scotch Parliament had put a ban upon both golf and football, because they became so popular that men could not be got to continue the practice of archery, but left it for golf. Notwithstanding this ban golf had come back into its own again, and they all knew the progress it had made in recent years. There were two distinct points about golf. It was purely a Scottish game and it was a game where peasant met King. Everyone was on equal terms on the green. That coupled with its Scottish origin said a great deal for golf. Referring to the Muir of Ord golf club Mr Garrioch said that he thought it was now between 40 and 50 years since it was started, and it was interesting to note that if it was not the best course it was the oldest course in the North of Scotland with the exception of Dornoch. All the other clubs in the North – Brora, Tain, Alness, Dingwall, Strathpeffer, Inverness, Nairn, Lossiemouth and the rest were mere golf courses of yesterday compared to Muir of Ord. Upwards of 50 years ago the late Mr Machardy, Chief Constable of Inverness, came from Sutherlandshire, where he had also been Chief Constable. When he came south he was the first to start golf. At his instigation the Muir of Ord golf course was started. For many years it was run by Inverness people. The late Mr Steele, agent for the Bank of Scotland, was the secretary and treasurer; Mr Machardy was the captain, and the late Mr Shaw, County Clerk of Inverness-shire, and many other eminent men of that time were members and played regularly. The two most prominent of those days who were still alive, were Mr John Birnie, Inverness and Mr William Anderson, Procurator Fiscal for Inverness-shire. The two great Muir of Ord golfers then were the late Mr Macintosh, Inland Revenue, and Mr Innes of the Ord Distillery. Then there was of course that great sportsman, one of the greatest they had ever known – the late Mr Birnie, Wellhouse. He was a member from the Beaully side. They all knew how keen he was and how straight he was, and would be surprised when he told them that he knew two men who objected to play with Mr Birnie. They were the late Bailie Johnathan Ross, Dingwall, a brother of Colonel George Ross, Edinburgh, whom they still had with them, and one of the few stockbrokers that Inverness ever produced, Mr Hugh Thomson. They used to play regularly on the Muir course on a Saturday afternoon. The conversation was something like this :- “ We don't fancy Birnie.” I said “I am surprised at that.” Mr Thomson continued :- “No we cannot put up with him. He is far too keen. Take Ross and I, we don't care whether we take 4 or 44 for a hole as long as we have a smoke and a chat.” (Laughter). The people who came from Dingwall to the course included the late Dr Bruce and the members of his family, Professor Mackerron now of Aberdeen; Mr Middleton, Mr W.J. Duncan, County Clerk; Mr James Cumming, County Councillor. Another notable player was a man who regularly visited the Strathpeffer Spa. He played over the Muir often. That was the late Sheriff Thom, of “laughing waistcoat fame.” An incident in which Sheriff Thom featured was well remembered by older members of the club. Sheriff Thom, who was a gentleman looked upon as doing himself well, engaged in a game with a local player, whose name would not be mentioned, but who was an ardent teetotaller. Perhaps he was over-awed playing with the redoubtable Sheriff, but at any rate he started to duff his tee shots and generally speaking played a very poor game. The Sheriff showed his sympathy by remarking :- “Look here friend, if you have been out dining and if you have done yourself fairly well you should always, when playing golf the next morning, start with the short clubs,

not the long ones.” (Laughter). The friend’s feelings from the point of view of a teetotaler can be better imagined than described. Those men, continued Mr Garrioch, were some of the outstanding men who played over the course, which was a going concern, before any of the other courses in the North were thought of. Proceeding Mr Garrioch said he desired to take that opportunity of congratulating everyone and thanking everyone who had assisted in making the bazaar held last year such a high success, and which had raised so much money. The committee, including Mr T. Mackenzie, Mr John Fraser, Mr A Fowler, and Mr T Pullar, deserved their best thanks. To Mr Pullar the golf course and the club house were like children to him, and he had no doubt that under Mr Pullar’s care the club would grow and prosper. (Applause). He (Mr Garrioch) no doubt had omitted some names that he should have mentioned, but as the minister said :- “We thank all those we have mentioned, and those whom we have not mentioned, we thank them all.” (Laughter). He had great pleasure declaring the club house open and expressed the hope that it would be a great comfort and joy to the members, and that it would add to the amenities of the golf course for years to come, both for the present and future generations. He concluded by thanking them for giving him the opportunity of opening the new club house. (Applause).

Mr John Fraser, banker, said they owed a deep debt of gratitude to Mr Garrioch for so kindly coming that day to open the club house. The members of the club had reason to congratulate themselves on the erection of the new club house and also in the forward state in which they found their new course. They were indebted to Lord Lovat for his generous help given towards the realisation of their ambitions. They owed him profound thanks for having given them the ground on which to play for so many years at such a nominal rent. His assistance both in land and money for the making of the new course had been very generous indeed. (Applause). They thanked Mr Garrioch for his genial presence and for his account of incidents in the club’s history. It was interesting to them all to know that their course was the oldest in the North next to Dornoch. The club had always endeavoured to keep the course up to the highest standards and as they had done in the past, so they would do in the future. (Applause).

Mr Garrioch returned thanks in a word. He would have great pleasure in telling Lord Lovat what Mr Fraser had said.

A delightful tea was then served by the lady members of the club.

Colonel A.F. Mackenzie of Ord in a very humorous speech thanked the ladies for their tea, and took the opportunity of congratulating the club on securing such a handsome and up to date club house.

A mixed foursomes competition then played for six prizes, with the following result – Thos Mackenzie & Mrs Campbell 51-7 – 44; Wm Macdonald & Mrs Donald 54-5 – 49; A Ross & Miss J. Mackay 59-9 – 50; Colin Urquhart & Mrs K. Mackay 55-5 – 50; G. Cameron & Mrs MacCallum 52-2 – 50; R.D. Campbell & Miss Manson 50 scratch – 50; G. Galloway & Mrs Macintosh 55-3 – 52; Mr Wilson & Miss J. Macdonald 53 scratch – 53; J. Campbell & Miss Macintosh 55-1 – 54; W. Forbes & Miss Mackay 64-9 – 55; A. Fowler & Miss Mackenzie 61-6 – 55; T Ross & Mrs Fowler 57 scratch – 57; J. Fraser & Mrs Forbes 63-6 – 57; Alex. Mackenzie & Miss Campbell 64-4 – 60; C.J. Ross & Miss Forbes 67-7 – 60; W.E.O. Rutherford & Miss A. Mackay 66-3 – 63.

The prizes were handed to the successful competitors by Mrs MacCallum, Beaully.

On the motion of the captain the following donors of prizes were thanked, viz :- Col. Mackenzie of Ord, Mr T. Mackenzie, Mr Wm. Macdonald, Mr Fowler, Mr Rutherford and Mrs Cameron.

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The first monthly competition for gentlemen took place on Saturday in fine weather. The greens were in good playable order, the new greenkeeper, Mr Wm. Gray, having devoted much attention to them and expects to have the old course in tip-top condition when play begins to be general. Owing to other attractions there was a small turnout of players. The best score returned was made by Mr Christopher Urquhart with 52 scratch.