



Origins

One of the great attractions of The Churston Golf Course is its delightful situation on top of the cliffs at the western end of Torbay, though it was not always as it is now. The present course is laid out on a long strip of typical down-land turf that stretches westward along the cliffs towards Brixham. The ground is boldly undulating in character, with no lack of natural features, and the surroundings are much more richly diversified than are usually to be found on Courses near cliffs. The variety of views to be seen from different parts of the course is truly wonderful. On the inland side we have the woods and the rich colouring of the Devon Hills. On our homeward journey along the side of the course nearest the sea we find ourselves gazing over the whole sweep of Torbay with its red and white cliffs, Torquay itself, and a succession of headlands beyond, as far as Teignmouth.

Churston Golf Club has helped to make history in its time; for it was to it that the late Ted Ray came as a professional on first leaving his native Jersey. His wages were 13s 0d per week and, apart from his professional work, he was caretaker of the clubhouse and caddy master.

In 1901 he received a rise of 5s 1d per week in return for supervising the work of the two-man green staff. His "perks" were from club making/repairing, sales of equipment and from giving golf lessons (or playing with a member) at 1s 0d per hour per head. The committee encouraged him to enter the British Open Championships in 1900, 1901 and 1902 granting him a week's leave of absence and £5 expenses for each meeting. He left Churston in 1903 and later, as Oxley Golf Club Professional made his mark in the world of golf. His performances included:

1912 Won British Open at Muirefield

1913 Runner up to J H Taylor in British Open at Hoylake: Tied in U S Open with Ovimet and Varden, losing in the playoff

1920 Won U S Open Championship

1925 At the age of 48, runner up to Jim Barnes (US) at British Open at Prestwick.

In all, he represented Great Britain nine times in international matches. Only two other Britons have won the British and United States Open Championships - Harry Varden and Tony Jacklin.

The original Churston course, which was opened with nine holes in 1890, and later extended to the full eighteen holes, was laid out on the Common on the inland side of the railway. But it was short and of no conspicuous merit, and when Mr H. S. Colt was invited to lay out the present course shortly after the 1914/18 War, the only part of the ground that was retained was that represented by the first and last holes of the course as it is today.

Harry Colt made the following observations before laying out the present course: - "from a great portion of the ground are obtained magnificent views over Torbay, and the situation and surroundings are admirable in every way. I consider that it will be feasible with sufficient money available to construct a very attractive course on the ground selected. If the arable part of the land be sown down at the end of August (1923) with a suitable mixture of seed, under normal weather conditions, the course should be ready for play by the Autumn of 1924".

It is interesting to note that in 1925 there were 195 gentlemen members and 94 ladies.

A specific "Ladies Section" of the Churston Golf Club was set up at the A.G. M. of 1902. A well-known and highly respected founder member of the ladies' Club was the Hon. Lois Yarde-Buller of Churston Court. Miss Yarde-Buller devoted much of her energy in helping to establish the Devon County Ladies Club, later renamed the Devon County Ladies Golf Association, and in 1903 became Captain of the Devon County team, successfully leading it to victory in the County Championships that year.

Four of our male members have been elected Captains of Devon - Robert Thairwell in 1951, Bob Knott in 1980, Stuart Bridge in 1981 and Jim Pettigrew in 1982. Also in 1982 Mrs Beryl Dyke was elected as Captain of the Devon County Ladies Golf Association. Mrs Jane. Easterbrook was Captain of the association in 1990.

In recent years, (written circa 2000) one of the Churston members to hit the headlines has been Bill Waugh. Bill's talent as an artist, particularly when it comes to painting famous golf holes, is now recognized all over the world. We were particularly proud that in 1990, our centenary year, he chose to add the 13th at Churston, our signature hole, to his portfolio.

Few golf club Secretaries could have done more for their club and for golf generally than our two longest serving secretaries, Mr Arthur V. Armstrong (1903-1923) and Mr A. P. Cooper (1946-1971), between them contributing nearly 50 years of dedicated service to the Club.

Mr Armstrong's golfing interests were not confined solely to Churston, for in co-operation with Mr W. Whylock., Hon. Sec. of East Devon Golf Club and the Secretary of Westward Ho? Golf Club, he played a prominent part in forming the Association of Devon Golf Clubs which in 1911 became the Devon County Golf Union. The first Devon Amateurs v Professionals match was played at Churston in 1913. The Captain of the Amateurs on this occasion was Mr L. C. Palairct, and among the Professionals was L. G. Bowers (Churston).

In June 1998 the Club's President, Lord Churston, opened a fine new Clubhouse. It has excellent facilities, including a snooker room and splendid views over Torbay. Visitors are made very welcome and cannot fail to enjoy playing the course, which with justification is recognised as one of the most attractive and well maintained courses in Devon providing an excellent test of golf both for single figure and higher handicap golfers.