

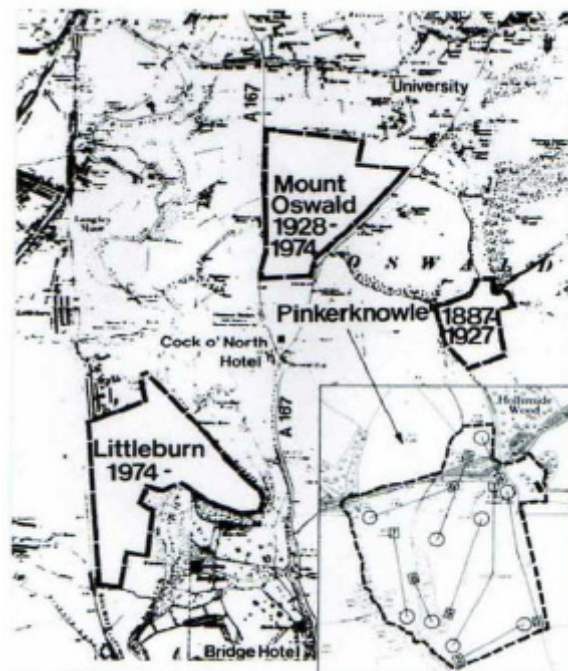
## DURHAM CITY GOLF CLUB - A HISTORY

The Durham City Golf Club was inaugurated at a meeting held at the County Hotel, Old Elvet, Durham on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1887. Golf at this time was played mainly on seaside courses that over the years would become famous. Places like St Andrews, Muirfield & Troon. Locally clubs had been established at the links of Alnmouth & Seaton Carew. In Durham City they were about to form one of the earliest inland golf clubs in England.

At that very first meeting attended amongst others by local MP, Thomas Milvain and baronet Sir Hedworth Williamson, it was decided a 6-hole course would be laid out at Pinkerknowle, on university land. The first match was played there on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1888 by eighteen local golfers. Each played three rounds of the 6 holes & The Newcastle Daily Journal hailed the occasion in some style, reporting the next day.

‘The ancient city of Durham entered into a new phase of its history yesterday.... local golf fever, the seeds of which were first sown at Alnmouth some twenty years ago....have at last found an inland growth in the neighbourhood of the cathedral city of the Wear’

Pinkerknowle is not perhaps a name now recognised by many Durham residents but the lay out of the course can still be seen. It is however where golf was initially played in the city and where Durham City Golf Club begins its history.



*Pinkerknowle, on the right and the subsequent sites of Durham City Golf Club*

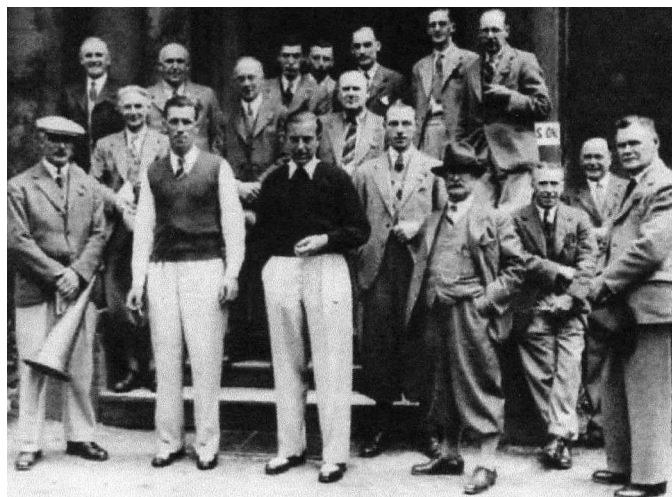
As the game widened in its popularity the club decided to employ a professional, David Brown in May 1889 and in 1892 a greenkeeper, Mr Macdonald was employed. With membership now totalling 90 the decision to extend the course to nine holes was taken on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1893.

The following February 1894, a decision to allow ladies membership was taken – ‘under such regulations to be determined by the committee’. The annual subscription was now a guinea and the club continued to prosper until it had literally outgrown itself by the time 1927 came around.

The club decided to seek a lease on land a few hundred yards from Pinkerknowle, at what is now known as Mount Oswald golf club. A meeting held at the town hall in October 1927 was told by the then captain, Tom Colpitts, that the Hexham club professional ‘an expert in the laying out of golf courses’ had reported favourably on the possibilities of the new site.

A new company was formed in January 1928, Durham City Golf Club Ltd, each member being required to hold at least one share in the new company. Protracted negotiations to buy the 25-year lease obtained began in April 1928 but unable to reach an accord over three years later. This theme would continue with various lease owners and renewals over the following years. Happily such agonising is now part of past history, although many still recall wonderful days on the old course and the many hours spent in the old clubhouse with great affection.

The memories are of league victories and grand celebrations at the 19<sup>th</sup> hole, of visits by the golfing stars of the day such as Sir Henry Cotton & Alf Padgham in 1937 and the visit of Peter Alliss, Dai Rees and Dave Thomas in 1966.



*Pictured outside the clubhouse at Mount Oswald in May 1937,  
Henry Cotton & reigning Open Champion Alf Padgham.  
Cotton, later to be knighted for his services to golf won the second  
of his 3 Open titles a matter of weeks after this exhibition match.*

The darker days of 1939 recall the manor house, once the family home of the Rogerson family, now the clubhouse, occupied by the East Surrey Regiment and prisoners of war. The greens were fenced off and cattle grazed the course to keep the grass down.

After World War II the club were still without a lease and feelings of insecurity continued to grow. Outside factors fed that feeling. The course was not included in the new Durham City green belt bordering Mount Oswald on three sides. Rumours about university expansion and housing developments persisted.

In September 1969, the committee gave consideration to an imaginative idea to amalgamate with Brancepeth Castle Golf Club. Both clubs potentially had much to gain. Durham City had significant resources, membership and waiting list but no secure tenure. Brancepeth Castle owned their course but only had around 100 members. After first giving approval to the proposal in October 1969, the Durham City members were asked to give formal approval to the amalgamation at the annual general meeting in March 1970. The idea was turned down by a narrow margin in the vote.



*Moving times ahead, the North Durham Union  
Championship winning team of 1971.*

This vote proved to be a very significant point in the history of Durham City Golf Club. The committee inspected the 110 acre site at Littleburn Farm the following October. This site was to become the club's home.

For the record it has to be said that without the hard work, time given and sacrifices made by so many members the club would not be able to stand as proudly as it does and recall the beginnings that lead to this, the latest chapter of its history.

The initial inspection of the potential site took place on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1970 and led to intense activity by the committee, at its head, chairman, Prof H.C. Baker. Charles was

later to be made an honorary member. They worked hard and gained wide-ranging information on grants, loans and development costs.

The asking price of £27,500 being met from reserves that totalled £12000, loans from the Sports Council, brewery and banks. A significant amount however came from members – through interest free loans, increased subscriptions and many fund-raising efforts.

It says a lot for the foresight of the members that they backed the plans almost unanimously and after 83 years of uncertainty Durham City Golf Club at last secured a home of its own.

Construction work on the Littleburn course took place over the summer of 1972 and the greens were seeded later that year. The total cost of £10000 had been hard to come by. Architects were briefed to produce a clubhouse design of maximum space, capable of being easily extended at a later date. The hexagonal module form that you see today is what they came up with. Subsequently extensions to the clubhouse continue today, as the facilities offered to the members and visitors alike are renewed and improved upon.



*The clubhouse, picture summer 2006*

A brewery loan for £18000 was secured and the clubhouse finally completed in time for the move to our new home at Littleburn in November 1974. The early days were tough both financially for the club and as golfers for the members. The course initially laid out is now barely recognisable. The trees, some bought by members, have matured and define the course designed by club member Chris Stanton. Chris was given honorary membership status in recognition of his foresight, imagination and massive contribution to the golf course we now enjoy daily.





*Mature trees now define the 3rd Hole at Durham City.*

Durham City Golf Club reached its centenary in 1987 and celebrated in style. Amongst the many events a match was played against Cleveland Golf Club, which also celebrated its centenary that year, and has been played every year since. The course having matured beyond its years now stands proud, bordered by the River Browney, holes carving their way through the thousands of trees that were planted and improves year on year. The club itself has moved from strength to strength over the ensuing years since its move to Littleburn and as every golf club should, has evolved, secure in the knowledge that it should never be required to look for another home again. Improvements continue to both clubhouse facilities and the course. Junior development programmes are in place to continue the bright future of the club. In 2006, honorary member Mary Vine received the Sir Henry Cotton Award from the Golf Foundation for her continued and tireless work in developing junior golf.



*Mary Vine receiving the Sir Henry Cotton award at The Belfry from Sir Michael Bonnallack in 2006.*

Mary is also an honorary member of the Durham County Ladies Golf Union for her tireless efforts and contribution to ladies golf over the past decades.

The North Durham Union team also bring success to the club having won the Division 1 title in 2003 and retained the title in 2004. They have also finished runners-up a further four times this millennium alone. Individuals also bring County Championship titles to the club, 5 held in the year 2006 alone, which by any standard is a magnificent achievement.

Perhaps we barely give a thought to the origins of the course or the club but those men who met in December 1887 and the many members who have subsequently met, contributed, enjoyed and celebrated golf at Durham City Golf Club wherever it has been situated should not be forgotten. Long may it continue to progress, flourish and evolve.