

Will She Win ?



Miss Poppy Wingate, of Temple Newsam, who has entered for the "Yorkshire Evening News" Tournament, which is to take place at Temple Newsam this month.

Poppy Wingate

The 1st Ever Lady Golfer to play in a Professional Tournament in Great Britain. She represented Temple Newsam in the 1933 Yorkshire Evening News Tourney played at Temple Newsam.

This tournament attracted all the top British Professional golfers at the time including Henry Cotton, Dick Burton, Abe Mitchell

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'Smartness With Freedom'

The remarkable story of Poppy Wingate

by

Peter N Lewis

ON SUNDAY the 16th of October 1949, three members of The R&A's Championship Committee, Rear Admiral FR Barry, Lt Colonel CO Hezlet and Mr HM Dickson met at Portrush. The minutes stated that they 'took the opportunity of forming themselves into a sub-committee to deal with the applications for reinstatement to Amateur Status some of which had been outstanding for a considerable period'. One player was denied reinstatement but sixteen players were restored to Amateur Status. The second name on the list was Mrs Hinchcliffe.

So ended one of the most remarkable stories in the recent history of British golf. Mrs Hinchcliffe was the married name of Poppy Wingate, a true pioneer of the game. She holds two distinctions in the annals of golf. She was the first woman to enter a professional tournament in Britain and she was the first woman golfer to appear on British television.

Hannah Sophia Wingate was born into a golfing family in 1902 but she was always known as Poppy. Her father, Frank, was the professional at Harborne, near Birmingham at the time of her birth. He stayed there until 1906 and then moved to Hornsea and on to Ravensworth Park. Her uncle, Charles, was the professional at Olton until 1913 and then at Castle Bromwich until 1933. Two of her brothers, Syd and Roland, would become professional golfers. Her father and uncle were both among the founders of the Midlands Professional Golf Club, later the Midlands Golf Association, which helped pave the way for the formation of the PGA.¹

When she was ten, her father gave her a brassie, showed her how to grip it and then sent her out to hit balls. She was not allowed another club until she had mastered that brassie.² She grew up in the world of club professionals in the early twentieth century. In 1923, her brother Syd, who was nine years older than her, was appointed the professional at the new Temple Newsam Golf Club in Leeds. Aged 21, she joined him there as his assistant, teaching both men and women.

Poppy's life took a new direction in 1928 when she married Dr Herbert Arnott Eadie of Leeds. Eadie was born in Edinburgh in 1901. He trained as a doctor at Edinburgh, receiving his MB ChB in 1922 and after two years as a hospital surgeon in Edinburgh, moved to Leeds around 1924. Outside his normal practice, he was very active in the Territorial

Army, joining the 146th West Riding Field Ambulance, RAMC and rising to the rank of Captain. He and Poppy had two children, a daughter, Mary and a son, Douglas.³

Tragedy strikes

On Sunday, the 27th of September 1931, the Leeds Motor Club held a gymkhana in Pudsey, just outside Leeds. Dr Eadie was in attendance as one of the Club's medical officers. Arthur Waterman owned a motor caterpillar tractor, which he had brought to the event with the intention of putting on a demonstration with his son driving it up the incredibly steep Post Hill. This was planned as a solo ascent. However, there were many requests to ride in the tractor and the Watermans relented. Originally a Mr Senior was chosen as the passenger. When Eadie learned of this, he had a word with him and convinced Senior to give him his place. The younger Waterman with Eadie as his passenger set off on the climb at a speed of one mile per hour. About two thirds of the way up, the tractor suddenly reared up, tipped right back and then fell over on its side. Eadie was pinned under the six-ton weight of the tractor and killed. Poppy was left a widow with two infant children. It was a true tragedy, considering that originally there were not meant to be any passengers and Eadie had only talked his way on at the last minute.⁴

History is made

Poppy continued to make a living in the only way she knew how, teaching golf at Temple Newsam under her maiden name as she had always done. Her motivation in everything she did for the rest of the 1930s was to do what it took to keep her family together. She had a real worry that her children, Mary and Douglas, would be taken away by her in-laws to Scotland.⁵ In 1933, she made a ground-breaking decision. The *Yorkshire Evening News* £750 Tournament was due to be played on her home course on the 30th and 31st of May. It was a split format event with two days of stroke play followed by match play for those who qualified. It was attracting a top class field with the cream of the British professionals playing, including Henry Cotton, Dick Burton, Abe Mitchell, Percy Alliss, Alf Perry, Charles Whitcombe, Reg Whitcombe and Alf Padgham. Syd Wingate was going to play and Poppy decided she would enter. It caused a sensation.⁶

Poppy's logic was simple. She was an assistant professional. Other assistant professionals were playing in that event and others, so why shouldn't she play? She was not the first woman to enter a men's professional tournament. That distinction had fallen to Genevieve le Derff, an assistant professional at the Fourqueux Club. She entered the French Open in 1929 when it was played on her home course.⁷ Poppy was the first to play in a men's professional tournament in Britain.

On the 21st of May, the *Sunday Chronicle* ran a screaming headline:

SHE IS OUT TO WIN THE MEN'S TITLE
And Show Her Sex The Importance of It

It went on to report that:

Miss Poppy Wingate, the most courageous woman golfer, has given 200 male professionals the shock of their lives. She is to compete against them on equal terms in the big golfing tournament at Temple Newsam on May 30. It will be a trial to which no other women have subjected themselves."

Poppy told the reporter that 'this business of regarding professional golf as a holy of holies is all nonsense. I'm going to get that championship if I can. I cannot understand why more women do not take up golf as a career. Making allowances for rainy weather or snow, when there are few pupils, a good woman professional should be able to average about £300 a year with teaching alone and there are profits from the shop on top of that'.

She captivated the golf correspondent of the *Scotsman*. The report of the first day's play carried a three-tiered headline:

ABE MITCHELL'S 67
BRILLIANT ROUND IN £750 TOURNAMENT
A WOMAN COMPETITOR

He then began the article, not with an account of Mitchell's 67 but rather:

Everything in yesterday's qualifying round of the *Yorkshire Evening News* £750 tournament on the Temple Newsam course, Leeds, was transcended by the courageous performance of a woman golfer who, in competing among men professionals, contributed another chapter to the annals of golf. It was the first time in the history of the game that a woman has taken part in a leading golf tournament among the best professionals of the country.

Miss Poppy Wingate holds the distinction. A widow of a doctor, she prefers to be known by her maiden name, and she assists her brother, Syd, who is professional to the local club. ...

In a symphony of grey and blue, with collar and tie, Miss Wingate gave the setting a most picturesque touch. Cool, and wearing a disarming, infectious smile, this girl, accompanied by her male partner, showed no sign of nerves when she began her challenge to Britain's leading professionals.

'DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH'

'I want to make good,' she told a reporter as she stood on the first tee, 'but don't expect too much'.

Adjusting her tie and remarking, 'Now, I am all right,' she drove a 'screamer' down the fairway. For eight holes 'Poppy' – as she quickly became known to the gallery – played well before a big following. She could not reach the long holes in two strokes, it is true, but that did not worry her until at the ninth, faced with a long brassie stroke to the

green, her nerves deserted her. Up went her head – a fatal error – the ball was topped and the hole cost her 6.

Valiantly Miss Wingate tried to retrieve those strokes, but slowly her chances dissipated. She finished the homeward half in 49, and her total of 90 put her in a hopeless position.⁸

Her participation ended the next day. This time her travails were relegated to the third paragraph of the *Scotsman* report on the 1st of June 1933: 'the task of recovering so many lost strokes of the first round was beyond the compass of Miss Poppy Wingate, who after struggling against adversity for a while tore up her card.'

Although she had shot a 90 followed by a no return, she had created history. Interestingly, there was no mention of her playing in the tournament or any listing of her scores in *The Times*. In many ways, Poppy was an unlikely heroine. Away from the glare of the spotlight, she was a gentle, quiet person and rather shy. She did possess three great attributes. She was very charming. She had a great swing and she had a great sense of fashion.⁹

Poppy's endeavours acted as a spur to Meg Farquhar. She was an assistant to George Smith at Lossiemouth, where the Scottish Professional Championship was to be played on the 7th and 8th of June. She duly entered and, in fact, was far more successful than Poppy. She made the cut, finished on 331 and was awarded a special prize.¹⁰ However, it was Poppy who captured the popular imagination, especially in England.

The July issue of *Golfing* ran a report about the press sensation caused by Poppy and Meg and included a photograph of the latter with the article on page 23. On page 42, there was a photograph of Poppy playing out of a bunker to accompany the article about the tournament, which incidentally was won by Arthur Lacey, who defeated Alf Padgham in the final.

Poppy then entered the Irish Championship. On the 18th of July, the *Scotsman* reported:

WOMAN PROFESSIONAL IN IRISH CHAMPIONSHIP
Miss Poppy Wingate of Temple Newsam, Leeds, will take part in the Irish Open Championship at Malone, Belfast, next week. There are 130 entrants including all past winners of the title except Abe Mitchell.

The quest continues

The participations by Poppy and Meg in men's professional tournaments in 1933 were not unique one-off events. Both continued to play in 1934. It is important to remember that both ladies were employed as club assistant professionals and that was what provided their livelihoods. In March 1934, two rather high profile lady golfers, Joyce Wethered and Enid Wilson, lost their amateur status. Not surprisingly, neither Wethered nor Wilson made any attempt to follow the trail being blazed by Poppy. Neither of them had the desire to be club professionals and play tournaments on the side. Ironically, Joyce Wethered made far more money during her tour of America in 1935 than Poppy could have earned even if she had won every tournament she entered.

Poppy once again entered the *Yorkshire Evening News* Tournament, being played at Moortown on the 5th and 6th of

June 1934. This time the coverage of her participation was more muted. Nevertheless she was mentioned in the first paragraph of the *Scotsman's* report on the 6th of June:

£750 TOURNAMENT
PADGHAM LEADS WITH 69

Alfred Padgham's lead over the field with 69 and Miss Poppy Wingate's 86 summarised yesterday's play in the opening part of the qualifying competition at Moortown, Leeds, in the *Yorkshire Evening News* £750 professional golf tournament. Padgham's score led the field by a single stroke. His only bad hole was the thirteenth. In that case he required three strokes to the green and three putts.

The 86 of Miss Wingate – in private life she is Mrs Eadie, the widow of a doctor – was a disappointment to her.

She followed this with a 94 in the second round to finish bottom on 180. Meg Farquhar did not fare much better at the 1935 Scottish Professional Championship, finishing second from bottom with rounds of 84 and 92.¹¹

Poppy took part in three events in 1935. The first was the Sunningdale Open Foursomes on the 28th of March. She was paired with Miss B Lees of Yorkshire, one of four all-women partnerships in the field. They were defeated in the first round by 1 hole by the all-male pairing of P Wynne and P Wynne.

The *Scotsman* reported on the 10th of April that she had entered the Dunlop Northern Tournament, which was being played at Moortown the following week. Finally she played for the third year in a row in the *Yorkshire Evening News* Tournament, this time at Sand Moor. The *Scotsman* on the 5th of June reported that :

Miss Poppy Wingate, the only woman in the tournament, could do no better than 85. She had, however, the satisfaction of beating her brother Syd, professional to the neighbouring Temple Newsam Club by two strokes.

The next day she shot an 84 to finish on 169, ironically still two shots ahead of her brother.

Poppy was now branching beyond teaching and



Poppy shown at her desk in *Golf Monthly*, designing clothes

tournament golf. The January 1936 issue of *Golf Monthly* ran a photograph of her sitting at her desk, designing a golf outfit. The extended caption beneath it read that:

Poppy Wingate, the only woman professional in England who has ever competed in open tournaments against men, is now designing women's fashions for a Leeds firm. She is also lecturing on women's clothes for golf wear.

As the story ran in January, she must have started both these activities some time in the latter part of 1935. The caption went on to say that

a suggestion is being put forward to have the Ladies' Championship thrown open to all women. Surrey representatives are sponsoring the motion, and if it succeeds then Poppy Wingate will be one of the central contenders for the ladies' title. She is a brilliant player and has the capacity of lasting out the four rounds.

This was not to be and the British Women's Open would not start till 1976.

The demise of the daytime job

At the same time that this piece ran in *Golf Monthly*, problems were brewing at Temple Newsam. In early February 1936, it was announced that Percy Alliss was being brought in to replace Syd Wingate as the club professional. Alliss took up his new appointment in April.¹² Syd and his sister had been very much a double act at Temple Newsam and he now had to give lessons from a field on Selby Road, Leeds.¹³

She once again entered the *Yorkshire Evening Post* Tournament, which was held at Temple Newsam on the 9th and 10th of June 1936. The *Scotsman* reported on the 10th of June that 'among those who seem to be out of the running with one round played is Miss Poppy Wingate, the only woman competitor. She took 86, principally through weak putting and nothing short of a record will give her a chance of qualifying.' A second round 87 was the best she could do to finish on 173.

Poppy meanwhile was making a living through a golf school in London, clothes designing, designing sports make-up for Elizabeth Arden and lecturing on golf and golf clothing.¹⁴

A peak of activity

Her golf related activities reached an apogee in 1937. On the 1st of February she gave a fifteen-minute radio talk on the BBC National station. Her subject was *Golfing Temperaments and Golfing Wardrobes*. The *Radio Times* on the 29th of January 1937 ran a small feature about her:

Poppy Wingate, the famous golf professional and lecturer, was born into a family in which golf was not a hobby but a job – her father, two brothers, and an uncle all being professionals. Not very surprisingly, this young Englishwoman followed in their footsteps.

At an early age she started an apprenticeship for her brother's shop and spent many years studying the game and everything to do with it. She is the only woman to compete in professional tournaments. For three years she ran a golf

school in London, has spent considerable time designing outfits and lectures on golf and golf clothing in different parts of the country.

On the 12th of March, the *Scotsman* reported that Poppy was going to play in the Italian Open at San Remo, which was starting the next day. Next she played in the Sunningdale Open Foursomes starting on the 1st of April. The *Scotsman* once again got quite excited on the 29th of March 1937:

WOMAN PROFESSIONAL TO MEET WOMAN AMATEUR
For the first time in an important British tournament a woman professional golfer is to be opposed to an amateur of the same sex, in the Sunningdale open foursomes competition, near Ascot, on April 1, 2 and 3.

Miss Poppy Wingate, who was formerly assistant to her brother, Syd Wingate, at Temple Newsam course, Leeds, will partner JJ Busson, of Pannal, a Ryder Cup player, and their first round opponents are Miss Betty Dix Perkin, a member of the Sandy Lodge club and H French.

As all women entrants, amateur or professional, are rated at handicap four, Miss Wingate and Miss Dix Perkin will play off the same mark.

Poppy and Busson defeated Miss Dix Perkin and HW French, her professional partner by a score of 4 & 2. In the next round they came up against the all-male pairing of Major Keith Thorburn and Leonard Crawley. A streak of three straight birdies helped the latter pair to victory by 4 & 3.

Poppy's clothing range received a timely boost when she appeared on the cover of the May issue of *Golf Monthly*, along with Dick Burton, Pauline Walker and Jack Busson. The caption pointed that Poppy was 'attractively attired in a divided skirt', which she wore at Sunningdale. It went on to say that 'pluckily she has shown the way in open competitions by many excellent performances. She will compete in the Dunlop Southport Tournament this month.' The event took place on the 3rd and 4th of May. Poppy played and missed the cut with scores of 85 and 87 for a total of 172.¹⁵

On the 7th of June 1937, she became the first woman golfer to appear on television when she gave a golf demonstration from Alexandra Park Golf Course at 3pm. The first golf demonstration had taken place on the 1st of March and this was only the fourth ever. In the 20 minute telecast, she showed how to drive, how to play chip shots and recovery shots from bunkers and how to putt.¹⁶

The following month, she took part in a sports festival at Selfridges. The event was opened at noon by Henry Cotton on the 26th of July. The idea was that well-known sports champions would personally demonstrate the secrets of their skills. Poppy held a golf clinic on the roof from 11 am until 6 pm that day. She was described in *The Times* as 'the golf instructor'.¹⁷

Her final tournament appearance came the next year, at the 1938 Dunlop-Southport event on the 2nd of May.¹⁸

Giving lessons remained her main source of income throughout this period. Also, like many of her male counterparts, the main purpose of her participation in tournaments was to enhance her profile, so that more golfers

would want to take lessons from her. Poppy combined instruction and fashion in a remarkable little booklet called *8 Key Shots in Golf*. This is a small publication, running to fourteen pages and measuring 155mm by 115mm. It was produced by Avison Hare & Co Ltd Leeds, England, who sold the 'Poppy Wingate' range of clothing. It retailed for 6d (2½p). Unfortunately, it is undated. Given the mention of her clothes designing at the very beginning of 1936 and the level of her activities in 1937, it is fairly safe to assume that the book was published sometime between 1935 and 1937.

The introduction on p3 explains the concept of the book:

KEY SHOTS IN GOLF
INTRODUCING A FAMOUS INSTRUCTRESS & AN
INTERESTING IDEA

Born into a family in which golf was not a vocation but an avocation (her father, two brothers and uncle, all being professionals) it's not very surprising that this young Englishwoman, Poppy Wingate should follow in their footsteps.

With this background, and a most earnest desire to improve the standards of play, everywhere, we are happy to present to the golfers at large, Poppy Wingate's very sound and interesting little brochure "8 Key Shots in Golf"

It describes in detail how to bring off those important shots which save heartbreaking strokes. Illustrated with specially posed photographs of the authoress, it will help you to an understanding of the shots winners use and whether you're a star or not, once your swing is grooved, you'll find lots of fun and maybe some profit in adding them to your game.

In addition to golf, this booklet illustrates to you the really super golfwear that has been specially designed by Miss Wingate. Endless time and thought have been spent to get the perfect garments



Poppy in the 1937 Sunningdale Foursomes

and at last we have clothes which give you 'Smartness with Freedom'.

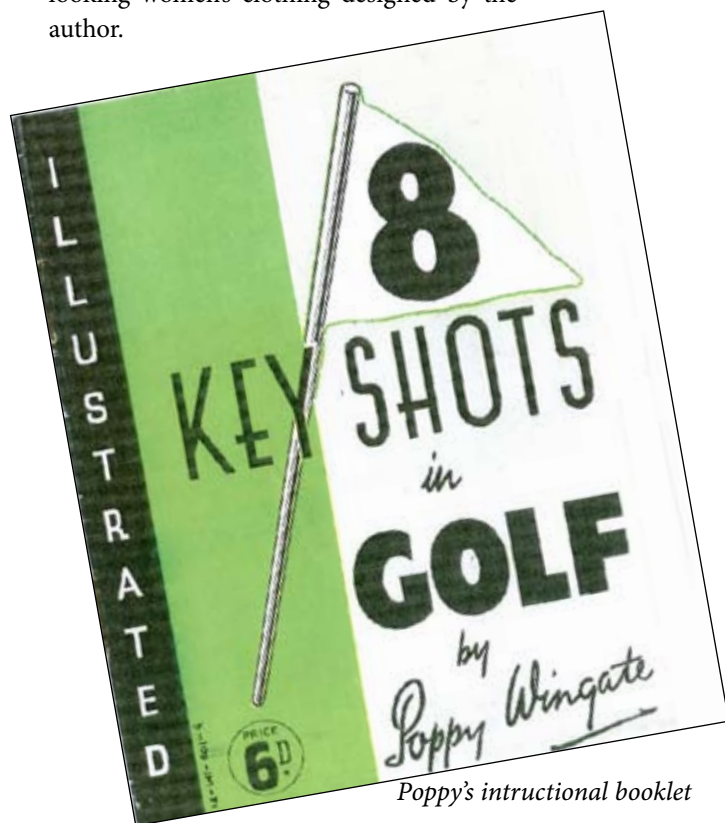
It then lives up to this description. The main text is about how to play the shots while the illustrations show off her clothing range to best effect. The first key shot is 'Driving Down Wind'. The photograph shows Poppy's stance and reads: 'Miss Wingate wearing a new style Shirt and Tweed Divided Skirt, designed by her specially for general sportswear'.

The second shot is 'The Uphill Lie'. A photograph of Poppy's stance has the caption: 'Miss Wingate has always held the view that lady players could be suitably attired for golf and yet appear as stylish as on any other occasion'.

The third shot of 'The Downhill Lie' is captioned: 'When the weather is unkind, the 'Poppy Wingate' waterproof Overtrousers offer a distinct advantage over the skirt, as they afford more freedom.' The caption for 'The Cut Shot' reads: 'Miss Wingate has designed a neat wrapover type of waterproof skirt, which effectively combines smartness with freedom.'

The fifth shot is 'Playing from the Tall Uncut' and the caption says: 'Poppy Wingate' tailor cut Overtrousers for ladies are perfect fitting and the undesirable baggyness usually associated with this type of garment has been entirely eliminated.' The sixth photograph 'The Bunker Shot' is uncaptioned. She is wearing the same outfit as for 'The Downhill Lie'. The seventh shot is 'The Drag Shot' and again the photograph is not captioned. She is wearing a blouse and a pair of trousers. The eighth and final shot is 'The Dying Putt'. Once again the picture is not captioned and she is wearing what looks like a very neatly tailored waterproof outfit.

The book lives up to the introduction and is a combination of good instructional advice coupled with some very smart looking women's clothing designed by the author.



Poppy's instructional booklet

A very happy ending

Poppy's story has a very happy ending. On the 10th of May 1940, she married Raymond Hinchcliffe, a barrister doing war work at the time.¹⁹ It was a very happy marriage and he was a much-loved step-father to Poppy's two children. In 1947, Hinchcliffe was appointed KC and ten years later, in 1957, he was appointed Judge of the High Court, Queen's Bench Division. This meant that Poppy Wingate was now Lady Hinchcliffe. Sir Raymond died on the 6th of September 1973²⁰. Poppy died peacefully at home on the 14th of April 1977, her passing largely unnoticed by the golfing press.²¹

Poppy Wingate felt that her clothing range gave women 'smartness with freedom'. For that six-year period from 1933 until 1938, she brought smartness and a new sense of freedom to golf in general. In those years, she was a true pioneer.

Grateful Thanks

I am very grateful for the help given to me on this article by Mary Savill, Poppy's daughter.

Endnotes

1. See Richard **Holt**, Peter N **Lewis**, Wray **Vamplew**. *The Professional Golfers' Association 1901-2001: One Hundred Years of Service*. Grant Books. 2002. 4
2. *Sunday Chronicle* 21 May 1933
3. *Scotsman* 2 October 1931
4. *Scotsman* 30 September 1931
5. Conversations with Mary Savill.
6. *Sunday Chronicle* 21 May 1933, *Scotsman* 31 May. Poppy was not a member of the PGA. The PGA had turned down an application for membership by Miss B Robinson in 1925 by a very close vote of six to four. It did not form a Ladies' Section until 1962. See **Holt, Lewis, Vamplew** op. cit 51-54 and 164-166.
7. *Scotsman* 25 September 1929 and *Golfing* July 1933 23
8. *Scotsman* 31 May 1933.
9. Conversations with Mary Savill
10. *Scotsman* 27 May 1933, 8 June 1933 and *Golfing* July 1933 23
11. *Scotsman* 7 June 1935
12. *Scotsman* 11 February 1936
13. *Yorkshire Post* 4 February 1992
14. Conversations with Mary Savill and the *Radio Times* 29 January 1937
15. *Scotsman* 4 and 5 May 1937
16. **Lewis**, Peter N. *The Future of It Makes One Wonder: Golf and the Development of Television 1936-1939. Through The Green* June 2009
17. *The Times* 26 July 1937
18. *Scotsman* 26 April 1938
19. Conversations with Mary Savill, *The Times* 7 September 1973
20. *The Times* 7 September 1973.
21. *The Times* 15 April 1977. I have not been able to find any references to her death in *Golf World*, *Golf Monthly* or *Golf Illustrated*.

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