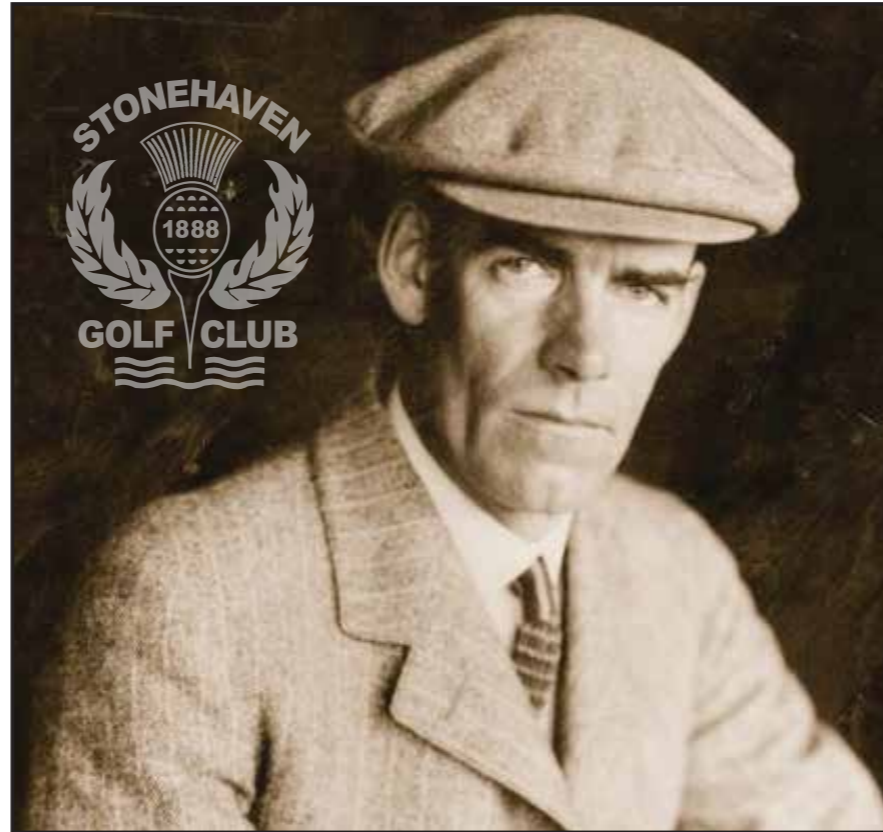


STONEHAVEN'S OPEN CHAMPION

GOLFING LEGEND

GEORGE DUNCAN



George Duncan (born September 18, 1883, died January 15, 1964)



Stonehaven's Open Champion

In the long history of Stonehaven Golf Club, dating back to 1888, perhaps the most famous golfer to be closely associated with the club was George Duncan, winner of the Open Championship in 1920.

Duncan, a policeman's son from Methlick, Aberdeenshire, came to Stonehaven GC in 1901 as a novice professional and worked in the club for a year or so before heading south to pursue his career at various clubs in Wales, Cheshire and then London, notably at Hanger Hill (1907-1924) and Wentworth (1924-1929).

In 1920, in the first Open to be held after the First World War, Duncan triumphed at Royal Cinques Port, Kent, after one of the greatest fight-backs in Open history. Starting with two rounds of 80, Duncan trailed leader Abe Mitchell by an amazing 13 shots before shooting 71 then 72 to snatch the title by two shots. No player in any Major Championship since then has scored 80 and won.

Two years later, Duncan finished runner-up to the great US player Walter Hagen, losing by one shot. His third round score of 69 was only the third round under 70 in Open history to that point, almost equivalent then to shooting 59 in today's terms.

Consistency was one of George Duncan's greatest assets. Allowing for the war years, in the nine Opens he played between 1910 and 1924, he was never out of the top ten.

Our Ryder Cup Pioneer

George Duncan played a key role in the birth of the Ryder Cup, now golf's greatest team competition.

Along with pros Walter Hagen, Abe Mitchell and Emmett French, Duncan suggested to Samuel Ryder, an English entrepreneur and golf promoter, that some informal golf matches held in the early 1920s between Great Britain and the United States should be developed into something more official.

Ryder agreed, put up some cash for team travel expenses and commissioned a golden chalice as a prize. Thus the Ryder Cup was born, with the first official match being staged at Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1927.

George Duncan played in that match, then captained a victorious Great Britain side at Moortown, Leeds, in 1929, winning all his matches, including two victories over Walter Hagen. In all, he played in five Ryder Cups.

Since then, the Ryder Cup has transcended golf and become one of the world's greatest sporting events. It is remarkable that George Duncan, who started his golf at Aberdeen Links and forged a successful career as a pro via Stonehaven GC, should have been so influential in its beginnings.

Golf at a Gallop!

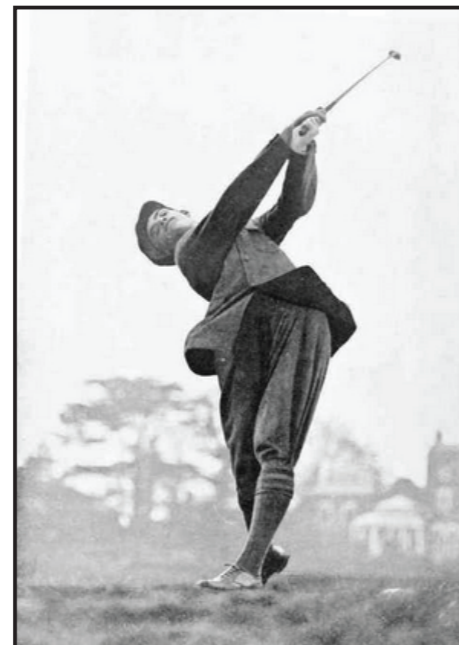
George Duncan learned his golf at Aberdeen Links as a keen pupil of Jim Donaldson, who went on to become a professional in the United States. He studied Donaldson's style, as well as that of Archie Simpson, another pro at that time, and was also much influenced by the famous Harry Vardon, who was one of the "Great Triumvirate" of golf in the early 1900s along with John Henry Taylor and James Braid.

Duncan became known as the "pro's pro" due to his teaching and swing-analysis skills. He was also renowned for his very fast speed of play. He would walk up to his ball, take his stance and play. He had already studied the line and decided the shot required before he reached his ball. He had no time for practice swings -- he regarded them as unnecessary and even barely legal! Close to practising on the course!

It was no surprise then that when he wrote a book, its title was "Golf at a Gallop".

Apart from his distinguished record in Open championships and in the Ryder Cup, George Duncan won the French, Irish and Belgian Opens among others. He also became a golf course designer and had a club-making business and produced autographed models with iron heads manufactured by Gibson of Kinghorn and Spalding.

Truly he was a golfing all-rounder of whom Stonehaven GC can be proud.



English business man and founder of The Ryder Cup Samuel Ryder (centre) with American team captain Walter Hagen (left) and British team captain George Duncan at a dinner function to launch The 1929 Ryder Cup at Moortown, Yorkshire.