

Centenary Postscript

It sounds simple - "Please arrive no later than 8.30am on Thursday 5 October 2006 at Muirfield, ready for 36 holes of foursome matches, and the start of the SUGS centenary celebrations". However, probe a little deeper and one will find that the planning for the centenary celebrations started no less than 8 years previously.

The first hint of preparation took place in 1998 when Nigel Watt was asked by the SUGS Committee to chair a Centenary Sub Committee. Ideas on the format and funding arrangements were duly discussed, and by 2000 the first suggestions of a 2 day event in Gullane, with a centenary dinner at Gullane Golf Club, were emerging. Crucially, it had been recognised that a financial outlay would be required, and from 2000 onwards, £2.50 was taken out of every subscription and transferred to a centenary fund. The groundwork necessary to produce the centenary history (written by Gordon Simmonds) was also well under way by this time, as documented elsewhere on the website.

Fast forward to 2005, and after much discussion, deliberation over venues and menus, fundraising, donating, and no doubt a few anxious moments, the basis of the centenary had finally been confirmed. The first day (Thursday 5 October 2006) would comprise 36 holes of foursomes at Muirfield for 60 people. This would be followed the next day by 18 holes over Gullane No 1, with the centenary dinner taking place on the Friday evening at the New Club, Edinburgh. For this, previous, current and future generations of SUGS will always be grateful to the SUGS President, Archie Baird, and 2004-05 Centenary Chairman and Captain, Robin Duncan. Archie was exactly the right person to hold the office of President during this time, and his standing as a past captain of Gullane Golf Club, a member and archivist of the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, together with his reputation as a tireless support of SUGS, had ensured that Muirfield could be included on the centenary itinerary. For his part, Robin dealt extensively with Gullane Golf Club to ensure that play over the Gullane links, the spiritual home of SUGS, would feature during the centenary celebrations, thus ensuring the venues of choice were available to commemorate the occasion in the manner our founding fathers would have approved. Fortunately by this stage, the level of money in the centenary kitty was also looking as impressive as the centenary venues, largely due to the efforts of SUGS member and former Captain, David Purdie. As a renowned public and after dinner speaker, David had been able to use his platform to great effect to promote the SUGS cause, frequently waiving his normal fee in lieu of a donation to the SUGS centenary fund.

By early 2006, further detail on the event had been agreed. Due to limitations in numbers, it was obvious that not everyone would be able to play at both Muirfield and Gullane. Therefore, in order to ensure continuity over the 2 days, it was proposed to have a "Grand Match" - with 2 teams, each containing members and guests, playing foursomes on a holes up basis. The teams would be led by the SUGS President (Archie Baird) and SUGS Captain (Mike Mullins). Recognising that a number of people would have travelled some distance to play 1 round of foursomes at Gullane, the centenary committee decided to compromise and play a greensomes format instead - a 4 ball better ball match would have taken too long to play 18 holes, even for golfers of a reasonable standard.

The dates were confirmed to the SUGS members in the 2006 Annual Circular, and were doubtless inked into a number of diaries. By Easter, the guest list had also been confirmed, and the invitations issued. From the outset it had been hoped that representatives from the opposing sides that SUGS plays against each year would be able to attend, as well as guests from the clubs whose courses were used for SUGS matches, and happily this proved

to be the case. The Muirfield attendance list included representatives from Dublin University GS, London University GS, Oxford & Cambridge GS and Queens University (Belfast) GS, whilst the clubs / courses represented included The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Gullane GC, Luffness New GC, Royal Aberdeen GC, Prestwick GC and Gleneagles. We were additionally joined at Gullane on 6 October by Midlothian Ladies, and by student representatives from the Scottish universities at the dinner.

As is normal, SUGS members are asked to submit their "Annual Return" on receipt of the Annual Circular in January for all matches in the coming year, indicating which matches they are available to play in, if selected. The centenary was no different in this respect. Although by 2006 most of the active members had acquired email addresses (making mass distribution straightforward), it was inevitable that a substantial mailshot would also be required to those members not on the electronic distribution list. Over 200 copies of the Annual Circular were subsequently issued via email; a similar number were printed, folded, enveloped, and posted out via "snail mail". The level of response indicated that a ballot for names, particularly to play at Muirfield, would be required. This sensitive task was carried out by Nigel Watt, with assistance from Archie Baird, whose combined knowledge of the SUGS membership base ensured that those invited to play were fully deserving of their place.

Sifting complete, invitations to the SUGS members selected to play at Muirfield and Gullane were duly issued in August 2006, and before long notes of acceptance, cheques, and BACS transfers began to flow. Inevitable, there those whose availability had changed since submitting their Annual Return in January, and the resulting slots were duly filled after discussion between Nigel Watt and the Hon. Secretary.

The dinner arrangements were not being neglected either. By mid summer, the menu and wines for the New Club had been decided, and crucially, an incomparable line up of guest speakers had agreed to sing for their supper. We were fortunate to secure the services of DUGS member Gavin Caldwell to propose a toast to SUGS. The response was to be made by Centenary Chairman and Captain, Mike Mullins. Our own David Purdie would propose a toast to the guests, and QUGS member Brendan Cashell had agreed to respond accordingly. As the dinner approached, commemorative menu cards and place cards were also printed, and a seating plan produced. It was also decided to have, probably for the first time ever, all of the trophies played for in SUGS matches on show, irrespective of whether they had actually been won by SUGS at the last encounter! This eclectic mix included a rugby ball, a "GUR" marker, ancient putters, a crystal decanter (in photographic form only - it was sadly too fragile to travel from its permanent home at Portmarnock GC) and a selection of silverware.

The final piece of the centenary puzzle was provided by Gordon Simmonds, who had proposed that a suitable photographic record should be made of this historic occasion. By happy coincidence the renowned golf photographer David Cannon was due to be in Scotland at the time of the centenary to record the happenings at the Dunhill Links Championship in St Andrews. Gordon's powers of persuasion duly ensured that David would spend a day at Muirfield taking photographs of some less refined swings than his lenses would normally be used to, in addition to taking pictures of the Muirfield course for the R&A in advance of the 2007 British Seniors' Open.

The rest is history, and the effort expended by the Centenary Committee, namely Mike Mullins, Archie Baird, Robin Duncan, Nigel Watt, Ian Smith, Fraser McCluskey, and Andrew Thomson, was now complete. The photographs ([Gallery 1](#) / [Gallery 2](#) / [Gallery 3](#) / [Gallery 4](#)) and [Match Results](#) elsewhere on this website provide a record for future historians of

the ensuing events over 2 famous East Lothian links courses, largely blessed by good weather (although it has to be said the Hon. Secretary's match at Gullane finished in time to avoid a sudden downpour!), and filled with good company, great golf, adequate levels of refreshment and a fitting finale at the Centenary Dinner. All the centenary guests were given a copy of the SUGS centenary history written by Gordon Simmonds, "The Pleasure of Golf in Familiar and Congenial Company", as a small memento of the occasion. For those of us lucky enough to have been present, the memories of those 2 days will never fade.

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