


Open Golf Championship medal to be sold in Edinburgh



The Open Golf Championship medal won by 'The Coronation Champion', Scottish golfer Sandy Herd (1868 –1944), in 1902 at Royal Liverpool in Hoylake is to be offered for sale at Bonhams Sporting Sale in Edinburgh on Wednesday 13 May 2015. The medal, which is approximately two inches across and made from solid gold, is estimated at £35,000-50,000.

Alexander 'Sandy' Herd was born in St Andrews and by his late teens had become a proficient golfer and caddie. Turning professional in 1890 he moved to England and in 1892 was appointed the golf professional at Huddersfield Golf Club, Yorkshire where he stayed until 1911.

 Herd's triumph in the 1902 Open at Hoylake came despite trailing by four strokes after the first day. Competitors in those days played four rounds over two days and Herd had clawed his way into the lead going into the afternoon session of the final day. He was three up over Harry Vardon and eight up over fellow Scot James Braid. In a tense round, the pursuers got to the final hole needing to make their final putts to force a play-off. Both missed and Herd became Open champion for the only time in his career, winning £50 and the gold medal which is being sold. As 1902 was the year of King Edward VII's Coronation, Herd was known as 'The Coronation Champion'.

Herd used a newly invented type of ball from America introduced to him a few days before the Championship by John Ball, the man who partnered him in third round at Hoylake. Unlike the standard ball of the time which was made from solid

rubber, the Haskell golf ball was made from wound rubber threads which improved the trajectory and the distance it could be hit. The Haskell was the forerunner of the golf ball used today.

Sandy Herd is considered unlucky to have been playing when the game was dominated by three outstanding competitors, Harry Vardon, James Braid and John Henry Taylor. Known as the Great Triumvirate, they won the Open 16 times between them from 1894 until the outbreak of war in 1914 and although Herd came close on several occasions he never repeated his 1902 victory.

Bonhams Golfing Memorabilia specialist Kevin McGimpsey said, "Open winners' medals very rarely come onto the open market. In fact, the last one sold in the UK was at Bonhams, Edinburgh in 2007. While there are still a few in private hands most are held by Golf Clubs associated with the winning player or the venue for that year's Championship. They have either bought the medals themselves or hold them as gifts or loans. Harry Vardon's six medals, for example are on display in a museum in Jersey, his birthplace."