

Statue unveiled to golfing hero

A new statue was unveiled this week on Leith Links marking the contribution of John Rattray, Surgeon and charismatic Sportsman who signed the first written Rules of Golf for an “Open” golf competition there in March 1744.

Pat Denzler who is chair of The Leith Rules Golf Society told us why it is important that he has a statue :”After helping the wounded at Prestonpans he became Physician to Bonnie Prince Charlie, was captured at Culloden and set to hang.



John Rattray statue on Leith Links at Salamander Place PHOTO ©2019 The Edinburgh Reporter

“His golf partner and friend the Lord Chief Justice, Duncan Forbes of Culloden saved his life arguing for his release; Rattray played and won again in 1751 but had to lie low in the turbulent political times.

“Rattray’s Statue unveiled to-day will honour his rightful place in the history of the Rules of Golf and in recognising the importance of Leith Links in the story of to-day’s worldwide game.

“The Silver Club Competition is the oldest Golf trophy still competed for to-day and these Original Rules the ‘Articles & Laws in Playing at Golf’ still form the basis of the modern game.”

THE ORIGINAL RULES OF GOLF

Articles & Laws in Playing at Golf

1. You must Tee your Ball, within a Club's length of the Hole.
2. Your Tee must be upon the Ground.
3. You are not to change the Ball, which you Strike off the Tee.
4. You are not to remove Stones, Bones or any Dead Club, for the sake of playing your Ball, Except upon the fair Green & that only within a Club's length of your Ball.
5. If your Ball come among Water or any watery filth, you are at liberty to take out your Ball & bringing it behind the hazard and Teeing it, you may play it with any Club and allow your Adversary a Stroke for so getting out your Ball.
6. If your Balls be found any where touching one another, You are to lift the first Ball, till you play the last.
7. At Holing, you are to play your Ball honestly for the Hole, and, not to play upon your Adversary's Ball, not lying in your way to the Hole.
8. If you should lose your Ball, by its being taken up, or any other way, you are to go back to the Spot, where you struck last, & drop another Ball, And allow your adversary a Stroke for the misfortune.
9. No man at Holing his Ball, is to be allowed, to mark his way to the Hole with his Club, or any thing else.
10. If a Ball be stopp'd by any person, Horse, Dog, or any thing else, The Ball so stop'd must be play'd, where it lies.
11. If you draw your Club in order to Strike & proceed so far in the Stroke, as to be bringing down your Club; If then, your Club shall break, in any way, it is to be Accounted A Stroke.
12. He whose Ball lies farthest from the Hole is obliged to play first.
13. Neither Trench, Ditch or Dyle, made for the preservation of the Links, nor the Scholar's Holes or the Soldier's Lines, Shall be Accounted a Hazard; But the Ball is to be taken out Teed and play'd with any Iron Club.

John Rattray, Cptn

JOHN RATTRAY SURGEON, SPORTSMAN & JACOBITE

John Rattray (1707-1771) signed the original 13 Rules of Golf drawn up in March 1744. Eleven golfers competed in this first "Open" golf tournament played over Leith Links on 2nd April that year. Edinburgh Town Council enacted 11 tournament regulations dated 7th March, demanded written rules and commissioned a silver club as the prize. Rattray won and the Gentlemen Golfers' 13 Rules "Articles & Laws in Playing at Golf" still form the basis of today's global game.

As winner, Rattray became "Captain of the Golf" for the year and affixed a silver ball with his initials to the Silver Club. He won again in 1745. That year, however, Rattray's life took a dramatic turn. As a surgeon and Jacobite he became surgeon general to Bonnie Prince Charlie, was captured at Culloden and set to hang. Rescue came when his golfing companion, Lord Duncan Forbes of Culloden, gained his release. Rattray played and won again in 1751.

Leith is the birthplace of competitive golf, first home of the Gentlemen Golfers who wrote the original Rules and witness to John Rattray's inaugural Silver Club victory. The Silver Club remains the oldest golf trophy in the world still played for today. The Gentlemen Golfers are now known as The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers. The competition was contested over Leith Links every year until 1828 when play moved to Musselburgh and, in 1892, to Muirfield.



It is the 275 years since the Edinburgh Town Council donated a silver club for a competition by The Gentleman Golfers and

John Rattray won it, in the first of the club's competitions. (That club is now sited at Muirfield, a classic links course.) The council required the rules would govern conditions of play and the thirteen Rules of Play were produced.

More information can be found on the Leith Rules Golf Society website: www.leith-rules-golf.co.uk



*John Rattray statue on Leith Links at Salamander Place PHOTO
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