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# LINKS OF GREEN

## A GOLFING VACATION ON COASTAL SCOTLAND'S FAMED COURSES

BY THOMAS DUNNE Sunday, October 7, 2012



PHOTO: Scottish Viewpoint/Alamy  
"The Dunes," as Southworth's new club is known

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Perhaps there aren't yachts, palm trees or thong-bottomed starlets, but the Kintyre Peninsula southwest of Glasgow still earned a nickname as the "Scottish Riviera." The Argyll region was known for fine summer homes, famed whiskey distilleries and a legendary golf course (not to mention that diamond sock pattern so synonymous with golfers). Though the past three decades have brought tougher times for the area, a Massachusetts-based developer has injected it with fresh vision.

David Southworth, a businessman who helped develop Liberty National Golf Club on New York Harbor, had visited the village of Machrihanish, home to the famed Machrihanish Golf Club and ... not much else. Across the street was a boarded-up apartment building called the Ugadale.

"It was a disaster — beyond description," Southworth said. "But I could see how nice it could be. When you think about World Top 100 courses," he added, "The land adjacent to them — especially oceanfront land — is usually sold by the square inch."

But Southworth set his sights (and coffers) on Scotland's erstwhile vacationer's paradise. Four years and 21 million pounds (about \$34 million) later, a multi-faceted dream has come to life: two hotels,



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high-tech golf cottages, restaurants, pubs, spas and a new destination golf course.

At the height of Beatlemania, to escape the public eye, Paul McCartney purchased a farm near Machrihanish; lore has it that “The Long and Winding Road” was inspired by the trip there. Macca still owns the farm, and it’s still a crawl down the Kintyre Peninsula (if you make it from Glasgow in three and a half hours, you’ve done well). Instead of driving, book a Glasgow-to-Campbeltown flight via [Flybe](#): 35 minutes in a puddle-jumper will give you more time.

Machrihanish Golf Club is a major draw for traveling golfers: Its world-famous first hole calls for an exhilarating drive across the raging Atlantic. Southworth recently opened Macrihanish Dunes, designed by Scottish architect David Kidd, who abided by strict environmental constraints, including moving almost no earth during construction. The result is a raw and exciting links course.

Mere steps from Machrihanish’s first tee sits the Ugadale Hotel. Southworth renovated the classic Victorian structure to include a full-service spa and whiskey tastings. “The Ugadale really caters to the golfer,” according to interior designer Estelle Mitsopoulos. “Our goal was to have a high-end European feel that appealed universally.” To that end, the showers are equipped with high-pressure heads to massage those shoulder and back muscles that golfers work out.

Most golf resorts have a 19th hole, but travelers to Machrihanish are spoiled with choice. All three of the area’s new spots offer tradition. The bustling Black Sheep Pub, located on the ground level of the Royal Hotel, is the choice for a “big night out” on Campbeltown’s harborfront. Machrihanish proper has the Old Clubhouse (not an arbitrary name — the joint served the golf club during the days of Old Tom Morris), a tin-ceiling’d charmer. And the Ugadale Hotel features the Kintyre Club, reviving a charitable and social club of the same name that operated locally from the 1820s to the 1980s.

Before the advent of modern marketing, there were just four traditional whiskey regions in Scotland: Highland, Lowland, Islay and Campbeltown, which isn’t the whiskey powerhouse that it used to be. But one of the three surviving distilleries, Springbank, makes one of the best single-malts that many Americans have never heard of. Made in the Campbeltown “style,” Springbank features some of the peaty smokiness of the island whiskeys. The distillery offers an informative tour and private tastings.



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