

COUNTY
SPRING 2013



Golfer

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's Complimentary Golf Magazine

Featuring:

**Newark
Golf Club**

**Bulwell
Forest**

**Oakmere
Park**

**Sherwood
Forest**

Machrihanish Golf Club & Machrihanish Dunes



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Lets a' gang tae Scootlund 'n' speil golf.

Translated - let's go to Scotland and play golf.

Yes it's that time of year when the County Golfer team steps outside the East Midlands to play somewhere in Scotland. Last year you read and saw on our facebook page that we played at St Andrews which we fully enjoyed. The only problem is the bar was high. Where do you go to play after that experience?

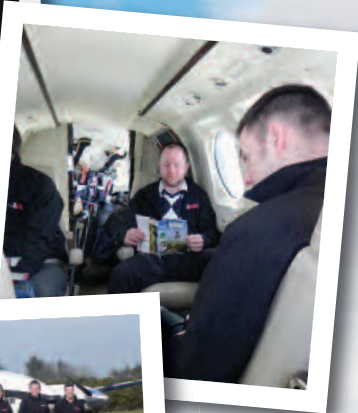
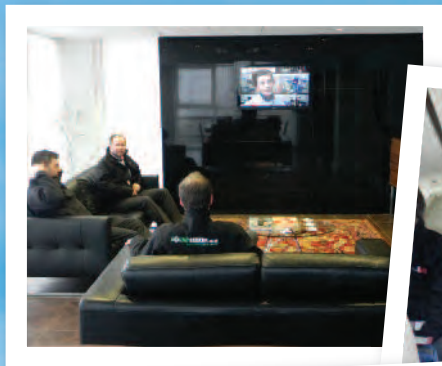
It all started when MPS Aviation offered us the use of their plane (Beech King Air turboprop for all you plane geeks out there). Which got me thinking. 'Last year it took us 8 hours to drive up to St Andrews so this could be great'.

Where could we fly where there is an Airport next to the golf course? The answer - Machrihanish Dunes, Argyll, Scotland where the runway is one of the largest in Europe. It was designed to accommodate the Space Shuttle in case it had to land somewhere else other than America! Now all it had to accommodate is yours truly, 'Lefty', Newby, Randall and the Yorkshire Terrier.

Adam takes up the story:

We arrived at Gamston airport with a departure time of around 8am but this was

delayed as we had to wait for the fog to lift. So we went to see the private plane that we were going to fly up in and what a surprise we got! As you can see in the pictures, it's a nice piece of kit seating up to 7, boasting cream leather seats with tables that let you keep on working (or in our case play cards) whilst in the air. Cruising at 250mph, depending on departure points you would be able to reach all major UK golf courses within one hour and most of continental Europe in just three. Adrian our pilot gave us coffee and croissants to enjoy while we waited for him to get the plane ready. The four of us plus the pilot boarded the plane with our luggage and four sets of golf clubs and we were up and away by 10am in MPS Aviation's Beech King Air. With 'Lefty' sitting in the co pilot's position we were naturally a bit worried but trusted Adrian



not to let him take control! After taking some great shots from inside the aircraft, a little over an hour later we arrived at Campbeltown airfield ready for our first round at Machrihanish Dunes GC. Had we driven, it would have taken 8 hours so it was a no brainer really; flying up in style in one of the smoothest plane journeys I have ever been on was far more preferable!

Lefty continues:

When we got to the Airport we were greeted by customs, the fire response team, the airport mechanic and passport control or, as the locals call him, John! John had opened the airport for our arrival. Leaving the airport we were greeted by Mike, who loaded our bags and golf clubs on the Mac Dunes mini bus and drove us straight to the course.

Now a little about Machrihanish Dunes: When I tell people I have played here they invariably say, 'oh this is on my wish list of courses to play' and I'm not surprised. It's an 18 hole links course of untouched beauty which winds its way 7,175 yards effortlessly to and fro along the shore line. The routing, as well as the positioning of its tees and greens, was dictated by the lay of the land - and the presence of several endangered species of flora and fauna. Machrihanish Dunes is the only course ever created on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and unlike Mr Trump, who moved in and changed the landscape of the dunes on his course, Machrihanish laid the course within the dunes without touching them. In fact the greens are the only bit of the course that was landscaped so this leaves a course that is unique in that it was not designed but found amongst the dunes.

This makes it like no other you have played. After coffee and biscuits in the temporary clubhouse we were shown to the 1st, a short par 3 to get you warmed up.

Adam:

The course was opened in 2009 but you find that hard to believe as it feels as though it's been there for years. This isn't just down to the sea spray and the scenery, but the fact that every hole has something to offer. The greens had recently been hollow tined so were a little woolly and unfortunately the signature hole, the 14th, was out of action due to the bad weather over the last few weeks. Nevertheless this was a great experience with blind tee shots over mounds, hills and bumps then approach shots on undulating fairways with pot bunkers awaiting you both on the fairways and around the slopy greens. The only fault I could find was that there was a lot of walking between holes and not enough sign posts telling you where the next tee was.



Lefty:

We all managed to get away clean and got a couple of pars. Not a bad start and it looked like we were on for a good round. Maybe a bit premature though, as we realised this was a temporary first hole. So when we stood on the second, looking out into the wilderness of the dunes with the Atlantic sea in the background, we could see that we were going to have to produce our best golf shots.

The 2nd is a short par 4 being only 292yds. As in all links golf you have to keep it on the fairway or else you will be in a world of trouble. So the driver is not the best option as you need

to keep the ball down to the left of the fairway with your second shot placed on top of the dune, (yes I said dune) giving you a shot into the green, which undulates like the waves of the Atlantic. None of us got pars, in fact we were humbled straightaway, as we paid dearly for accuracy.

The 3rd hole is a little beauty; a 148yrd par3. A partially blind tee shot onto a large green. You can see the flag waving in the fresh Scottish wind; this brings a whole other element to the game as well. My advice here is to put back the club you think you need and pick up an extra club to get the distance, it was a real joy when I saw my ball hit the green.

The 4th is a 369yds. You will find, along with most of the holes on the dunes, that you are trying to aim at a well placed post in the middle of the fairway as it raises up before you, hiding the view from the green. Just one bunker on this hole but don't be fooled, you can lose a shot on this hole by being too far away from the flag on the green, as it's 45 yds from front to back. If you have a range finder in your bag this would save you some dropped shots.

The 5th, a par4 295yds, will tempt the big hitters to go for the green but be aware... Newby and Randall can both hit so decided to go for it. Randall just made it but Newby disappeared into one of the two bunkers waiting to catch anyone who hits too short.



Those who have played links courses before know that bunkers on links courses are almost impossible to get out of in one shot. The depth of them wrecks many a score card.

As you walk onto the 6th you start to see the real beauty of the course, with the sea to your left and an empty beach as far as the eye can see. You will love this hole as it's a short par 4, 314yds to the green with the famous marker post resurfacing showing you the way to go. You need to negotiate your drive over a dune. We all managed to get away cleanly with Newby just missing the post. He could not have got it closer if he'd tried! Unfortunately he was not as successful with his second shot, failing to get up to this elevated green, guarded by formidable bunkers. By this time he was getting better at getting out of them.

Now we come to our first 458yds par 5. The fairway narrows at about 182 yds so 'sally gunnels' will not help you here. A large dune sits to the right of you half way up the fairway so again you don't want to be behind it.



There is a fairway bunker about 116yds from the green to catch your second shot, so keep down the left if you can. It can be difficult though, as if there is a gale blowing off the Atlantic, you would probably have to hit your ball at the sea and hope it lands back on the fairway!

Now on to the hardest hole on the course. This is the starter's favourite hole on the course and I can see why. It's 348yrd par 4. The famous marker pole is back showing the line. This truly is a blind tee shot. What you don't see is that on the other side, the fairway slopes away and ends abruptly. If you're a long hitter you would be better using your 3 wood. Your second shot is over wetland up to a hidden elevated green. It's a real beauty this hole and caught us all out! We

walked off with double bogies but after reading the course planner it says 'a par is a very good score here!'

The 3 holes that follow each other at the most southerly end of the golf course are the 13th, 14th and 15th and they are 3 crackers. The 13th is a 223yrd par 4. You would think with it being only 223yds that you could walk away with a birdie or even an eagle. Don't be fooled. There is a cross marker showing you where the green is, but my word if you miss, say good bye to your ball. I must point out that the green is great to aim at.

After you have negotiated this you are then faced with a peach of a hole; the 129yrd par 3, but be aware, if the wind is up get out your driver. It's an elevated green with two bunkers to catch you, one on the left and one on the front bank of the green. When you make it to the green just stop for a minute and take in the view as you'll say to yourself 'this is why I love links golf'.

This hole is followed with another par 3. This is short at only 98yds. Get the right club and judge the wind and you should walk off with a par. You do need to hit the green in one, as anything short will land you in trouble. Fortunately we all managed to walk off with pars.



On finishing the par 5 17th, 513yds, we were absolutely exhausted. We had run out of haggis, lawn sausage and my hip flask had almost run dry which caused mass panic amongst the boys. Consequently we were glad to see the 18th, a gentle 359 par 4. Considering how shattered we were you could not wipe the smile off our faces as we putted out with the sun starting to set,

casting an orange glow across the golf course. We all stood there and agreed that we had just played somewhere special - an absolute gem of a links course.

We got back to the temporary club house and were met by Mike. He loaded our bags back on the mini bus and took us to the Mac Dunes' owned Royal Hotel in Campbeltown. The rooms were massive with a bed big enough for your clubs and your caddy. They also own Ugadale Hotel and Cottages which is right next to Machrihanish Golf Club.

The hotel has been renovated to a very high standard. After we had showered and changed we once again got back on the mini bus which took us to the old club house bar and restaurant. The food was excellent and the whiskey even better. I recommend you try the local whiskey 'Springbank'.



Adam:

After over a 5 hour round which included a sandwich at the clubhouse and a brief break after 9 holes we returned to our hotel which was a very luxurious stay, the one night we were there was not really enough but that is all we had time for unfortunately. After a well earned pint in the bar and a very nice meal at the Ugadale hotel (I highly recommend the

yellow curry with chicken) we sat down to watch the Man United vs. Real Madrid game which left Ali (Newby) in tears.

After a good night's sleep and a Scottish cooked breakfast I was ready to play our second round at Machrihanish Golf Club. Being a bit stiff after the previous round the conditions had changed and were a lot worse as we were about to tee off in a very cold gale force wind. The first tee, as you will be able to see on the County Golfer website, is one to behold and especially with the wind blowing into your face it's not one for the faint hearted. I got over the sea/beach ok as did Newby and Lefty, just! However, Mark (Yorkshire terrier) was not so successful and ended up playing more than one shot from off the beach!

This was my favourite course even though the weather was a lot worse. I enjoyed the layout and you can see that it is more mature than the Dunes course. Again, like the dunes there were a lot of blind tee shots and hidden bunkers, with undulating fairways and slopey greens - it really was a good test of golf. I was a bit disappointed that I couldn't finish my round but it was that cold I was seizing up by the hole and I ended up tearing some abdominal muscles on the 15th tee which meant I had to walk in.

Not long after the round we realised that we had missed calls and voicemails from Adrian the pilot who needed us to try and leave earlier than expected due to adverse weather conditions back in Gamston. After a frantic drive to get to Campbeltown airfield we were taken once again by a staff member to the airfield and it was my turn this time to sit in the Co Pilot's seat! What an experience that was, it's not every day that you get to fly a private plane! And yes, we did manage to get back to Gamston in time before the weather got any worse. The funny thing was it took me longer to get back from Gamston to Mickleover than it did from Campbeltown to Gamston!

I would highly recommend MPS Aviation as the company to fly with, it's a lot more affordable

than you think and with no charge for carrying your golf clubs on board their plane why not contact them today to see about flying you and your friends up to play golf at some of the best golf courses in the UK. Playing in Scotland was a great experience and I would recommend you book a package. Fly up and stay over in either The Royal or The Ugdale hotel at Campbeltown so you can play both Machrihanish Dunes and Machrihanish Golf Course as they are two excellent links courses. I can't wait for our next trip, sorry I can't tell you where yet but keep your eyes peeled for an update later this year; you will be intrigued if it comes off!!

Lefty:

The courses, hotels and restaurant are owned by Southworth Developments, an American company in Boston and you can tell; the service was second to none. I can honestly say I did not open a door for myself for the whole two days I was there. I got a shock when I got back. I stood outside our office for two hours before someone opened the door for me.

We would like to thank MPS aviation and Cindy from Southworth Developments for their help arranging this trip. I recommend you take up the offer in County Golfer Magazine and arrange a trip you will thoroughly enjoy.



Airfield distances from top 25 UK and Republic of Ireland golf courses

All distances are as-the-crow-flies.

As you can see from the list below, there are useable airfields within 10 miles of all but 3 of the top 25 United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland golf courses and within 10 miles of all top golf courses in England.

Course	Nearest Airfield (CI72)	Nearest Airfield (KA90)
Royal County Down	Aughrim (8.5 miles)	Belfast City (33 miles)
St. Andrews	RAF Leuchars (2.5 miles)	RAF Leuchars (2.5 miles)
Muirfield	Archerfield (0.4 miles)	Edinburgh (20 miles)
Royal Dornoch	Dornoch (0.8 miles)	Dundee (21 miles)
Royal Portrush	Causeway (9 miles)	Londonderry (19 miles)
Turnberry	Turnberry (on-site)	Prestwick (14 miles)
Ballybunion	Kerry (19 miles)	Kerry (19 miles)
Royal St. George's	Manston (5 miles)	Manston (5 miles)
Royal Birkdale	RAF Woodvale (2.5 miles)	RAF Woodvale (2.5 miles)
Sunningdale (Old)	Fairoaks (4.5 miles)	Fairoaks (4.5 miles)
Carnoustie	Dundee (9.2 miles)	Dundee (9.2 miles)
Kingsbarns	Kingsmuir (4 miles)	RAF Leuchars (8.1 miles)
Woodhall Spa	RAF Coningsby (4.8 miles)	RAF Coningsby (4.8 miles)
Lahinch	Shannon (16 miles)	Shannon (16 miles)
Royal Lytham & St. Annes	Blackpool (1.3 miles)	Blackpool (1.3 miles)
Portmarnock	Dublin (5.2 miles)	Dublin (5.2 miles)
Ganton	Eddisfield (6.9 miles)	Pocklington (21 miles)
Sunningdale (New)	Fairoaks (4.5 miles)	Fairoaks (4.5 miles)
Waterville	Kerry (32 miles)	Kerry (32 miles)
Royal Troon	Prestwick (2.3 miles)	Prestwick (2.3 miles)
Loch Lomond	Glasgow (14 miles)	Glasgow (14 miles)
European Club	Brittas Bay (on-site)	Weston (32 miles)
North Berwick	East Fortune (3.7 miles)	Edinburgh (26 miles)
Royal Porthcawl	Old Park Farm (4.1 miles)	Cardiff (14 miles)
Royal Aberdeen	Aberdeen (4.2 miles)	Aberdeen (4.2 miles)