

SAUSAGES AND GOLF

By Dave Bambrough 2009. (Part one).



Mr & Mrs A. Kennedy.

In the spring of 1931 Mr. Alexander Kennedy a London businessman and regular visitor to the Island, purchased five acres of land from the war department along Culver Road in Sandown. Sandown was fast becoming a popular venue for visitors and needed new attractions to fulfil their stay in the resort. So with business in mind he saw the potential for an enterprising pastime by way of a miniature golf course, comprising, a nine-hole pitch and putt and three small putting courses. The family had made their money as provision merchants with their brand of sausages being highly recommended by all who purchased them. Mr. Kennedy's father opened their first shop in Peckham, South East London, in 1877.

Work on the golf course was well underway by October 1931 with a score of men working feverishly in order that it would be ready for

the following summer. The course was completed and named "Browns" within schedule, and the opening set for Easter Saturday, March 26th 1932. The name "Browns" was chosen due to it being Mr. Kennedy's nickname.

**GOLF FOR
EVERYBODY.**

**Brown's Pitching and
Putting Courses.**

6d. Per Round (TILL START OF SEASON.)

**Don't waste your opportunity
these nice long evenings. We
have put the turf down. Come
and dig it up.**

The whole adventure generated a lot of anticipated excitement amongst locals and visitors alike due to there being a distinct difference between this course and the many ordinary putting greens dotted around the Island. The nine-hole pitch and putt course would require an additional iron to the putter, by way of a mashie niblick. (A golfing term no longer used to describe an iron).

A nationwide competition for names for the two courses was duly advertised with the person submitting the winning suggestion to be awarded a gold watch. The winning names however, "Chip-Putting Course" and "Bantam Golf" were chosen from two separate entrants. Both hailed from South East London, Mr. R. A. Fisher from S.E.1 and Mr. Arnold Smith from Peckham, S.E.15. As there was no satisfactory way of dividing the watch, the very generous Alex Kennedy awarded two watches, both alike.

Henry Cotton, a well-known Langley Park (Kent) professional golfer of the time designed the course and was duly hired to open the proceedings. It was billed as being the most comprehensive course of its kind in Great Britain. Predictable English summer weather played its inevitable hand and delivered a day of driving rain, somewhat spoiling the pleasure of the opening ceremony. Nevertheless, the opening went ahead and Mrs A.

Kennedy drove the first ball with a silver club, declaring the pitch and putt course open to the public. The club and ball, suitably inscribed, were afterwards presented to her on behalf of the contractors, Messrs. Clark and Co., of Victoria Street, Westminster. The three miniature putting courses, each received identifiable names, "Village Green", "Gretna Green" and "Turn-em-Green", were declared open by the Kennedy's youngest daughter Lorna, who was also presented with a club and a ball.

The amenity was an immediate success with all courses being well patronised on the two days following the opening. Mr. Kennedy engaged a professional golfer by the name of Arthur Carroll to give assistance to those without experience of having to first lift the ball into the air for a distance, prior to putting from a standing position.

The first "hole" in one was registered by Flight Lieut. F. J. W. Humphreys, son-in-law of Mr. W. H. Findon (proprietor of the Sandown Chronicle) who holed out at the fourth on the Sunday.

Henry Cotton then played an exhibition round but the rain compelled him to wear an overcoat, which seriously handicapped his swing. Despite this he played some crowd pleasing shots,

completing his second round in 25, two under bogey. (The term used in those days rather than par). A touch of humour enjoyed by the crowd, occurred when Mr. Cotton pitched into one of his own hazards, by lofting the ball into the water at the eighth -hole, an attractive setting designed in the shape of the Isle of Wight with surrounding water.

**BROWN'S GOLF COURSE,
SANDOWN, I.O.W.**

Official Opening of New Extensions.

HENRY COTTON
(The well-known International Golfer)

v.

JOE KIRKWOOD
Miami, Biltmore, U.S.A.

On TUESDAY, JULY 11th, 1933.

FIRST ROUND - 12 noon.
SECOND ROUND - 3.30 p.m.

Joe Kirkwood will give his World Famous Exhibition of Trick Shots, after each round.

ADMISSION FREE.
Free Car Park for 500 Cars.

After the exhibition the new 14 hole course will be open for the season at 9d. per round. The old nine hole course is 6d. per round.

There was general praise for the equipment and the contractors with the whole scheme reflecting great credit on the enterprise of Alexander Kennedy. Messrs. W. J. Simmonds & Sons, builders of Yarbridge, (near Brading), erected the pavilion, which was considered to be a neat, artistic piece of craftsmanship.

The immediate success of the venture prompted Mr. Kennedy into purchasing a further 10 acres of land in May 1933 for which to lay out another twelve holes. The new course was designed to be longer, more elaborate, and reserved for use by experienced golfers. There was local speculation that Mr. Kennedy might even find a use for the derelict Granite Fort, which was not to be.

By August of 1932 the three small putting greens, all housed in front of the clubhouse, had not proved to be as popular as first thought. So in 1933, the three were combined into an eighteen hole putting course with generous sized cup holes in order to simplify and bring more pleasure to the out and out novice. Also, the original clubhouse was replaced with a slightly larger one and the new modifications proved to be a winning formulae, well patronised.

For the opening of the new 14-hole extension, two world famous professional golfers were invited to attend the ceremony, Henry Cotton and Joe Kirkwood. They were engaged to play two matches for which a special prize was put up, Kirkwood had the additional task of giving an exhibition of some of his famous trick shots.

Brown's Golf Course,
CULVER ROAD,
SANDOWN,
HAVE PLEASURE IN ANNOUNCING THAT

HENRY COTTON
(BRITISH OPEN CHAMPION)
will play a **36 HOLE MATCH**
against **F. G. SHILLING,**
of the Shanklin & Sandown Club,

WEDNESDAY, 3RD JULY,
commencing at **2.30.**
You are all invited and there will be no charge for admission to the course.

BROWN'S GOLF COURSE.
Golf For Everybody, at Everybody's Price.

Joe Kirkwood was born in Sidney, Australia, although he was billed here, as being out of Miami, Biltmore, U.S.A., was famous for his trick shots, and like Cotton, for winning major tournaments. Two of the tricks, which required volunteers with plenty of nerve, were, teeing off of a man's nose and off the glass of a valuable watch. He was also an expert at "The Stymie", having to loft a ball over an opponent's ball that was in the direct path of the shot. Joe was adept at lofting six over one another with great rapidity into the hole. (The need to do this was outlawed in 1951 when the dead ball was permitted to be lifted from the

green, therefore allowing the opponent an unhindered shot at the hole).

The 14-hole extension was opened on Tuesday 11th July 1933 by the two famous golfers with the principal event being a match between the two. A crowd of three to four hundred people watched the game with Kirkwood winning by two strokes, one over par for the course.

The following morning both players played over the original nine-hole course, and the 18 hole-putting course. In winning the match Kirkwood won a substantial money prize put up by the owner, Mr. A. Kennedy. Kirkwood led by two strokes after the nine holes, and on the putting course Kirkwood once again ran out the winner, returning a 45 against Cottons 49.

During the winter of 1934 two more acres of land were purchased in order to extend the fourteen-hole pitch and putting course to the east of the grounds, running behind the Granite Fort to 18 holes. The land required draining and a total of fifteen hundred turfs were needed to form the new greens. The new holes were designed and the work carried out under the supervision of Mr. L. A. Kennedy, one of Mr. Kennedy's sons. By now Mr. Kennedy senior owned more than 20 acres of land.

On Wednesday July 3rd 1935 Henry Cotton was once again booked to play a 36-hole exhibition match at Browns Golf Course. He was currently the British open champion and his progress was monitored with special interest should he manage to retain the title prior to his engagement at Browns. Unfortunately he did not retain the title but was to go on and win it twice more in 1937 and 1948.

His opponent on this occasion was Mr. F. G. Shilling, the professional at the Sandown & Shanklin Golf Club. Cotton was simply too good for his local opponent, being 6 up with 4 to play. His aggregate score for the 36 holes, some varying from 40 to 90 yards in length, was 105, three under par. Shillings score was 111 and although matching his opponent on shots from the tee, Cotton had the edge on putting.

Further improvements were made to the Golf Course in 1935 by way of a small wall at the front of the course property for which to straighten it up and bring it in line with the improved Yaverland Road and footpath. In 1936 the second pavilion was demolished to make way for the third and present clubhouse with the introduction of light refreshments for sale. Also in 1936 an Engine House was built from which to generate d/c electricity, alternating current had not yet reached this Culver Road outpost at this time. The Engine house pumped water for watering the courses and was also used to pump water back into the river when flooding took place, which it inevitably did on the yellow course rendering four holes unplayable much to everyones annoyance. The water was pumped from a pump house, built on the marshes alongside the Ryde to Shanklin railway line, which can still be seen when travelling through Morton Common.

More embellishment at this time came by way of the twin fountains built just outside of the clubhouse door, which unfortunately no longer cascade water. The Island shaped hole on the Yellow course, originally surrounded by water, also failed in the end despite many attempts to correct it, due to unsustainable leakage.

(Part 2 next Chronicle)

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Such was the increase in business that the catering arrangements in the clubhouse were no longer adequate to meet demands. A large shelter had been erected behind the building in order that players could shelter from inclement weather, but this did not incorporate any provision for refreshments at the time.

With the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939 the complete length of Culver Road was put out of bounds to the public and Brown's inevitably closed its doors at the end of the 1939 season.

A pluto pump (Pipe Lines Under the Ocean) was housed in the store room at the back of the ice cream building and for the duration of the war a caretaker remained on the premises. This job was accorded to Alf Keiling, chief green keeper from inception of the business, a position he served the company until his death in 1960, Alf also played football for Sandown during the 1930's.

He was also subject to certain conditions during the war years, one of them being that neither he or anybody else would be permitted to walk over the grass and that the grass would not be cut whilst hostilities continued. A privilege allowed to him, was that he could grow vegetables, mainly potatoes at the back of the course during this time of conflict. With the grass being left to grow at will, considerable maintenance, especially reurfing was required before re-opening after the victorious campaign. Time takes care of everything, the grass was cut, the greens re-turfed and Browns re-opened for the summer season of 1947.

One sad occurrence in the early days of the war was the death of Mr Alexander Kennedy. He died at Beckenham Hospital, Kent, on August 16th 1942. His son Mr. A. R. Kennedy took over as managing director and his daughter Lorna held the position of Browns Golf Course secretary.

With the war in Europe virtually over the Clerk to the Council met with representatives of the military regarding the desired opening of Culver Road. Proposals were put forward whereby with the co-operation of the Council certain facilities of access would be allowed without prejudice to the military. Midway through March 1945 subject to certain security arrangements Culver Road was re-opened to the public.

Extending their business in 1946 the Kennedy's purchased the adjoining Sandown Canoe Lake, the two enterprises would be run in conjunction with one another. The Canoe Lake Bakery was duly reconstructed in 1948 thereafter producing mouth-watering pastries, including the famous doughnuts that were consumed in their 1000's during the following years.

A couple of amusing or perhaps not so amusing (depending whose side you were on) events worth relating, occurred at the golf course during the nineteen forties & fifties. The first was an uninvited visit from residents of the Grand Hotel. Intoxicated visitors on their penultimate night of residence formed a Conga Line at the Hotel and duly did a tour of the sea front between the two premises, incorporating the Golf Course on their way. Another not so amusing occurrence was the appearance of an Elephant wandering around on the small putting course. It had escaped from Colmans Circus, which was located in the grounds of Granite Fort, on another occasion several circus horses ran amok over the well-kept greens necessitating some unwarranted repair by the green keepers.

A very rare incident that caused injury on the course happened to one Dorothy Craig, a visitor from Twickenham. Thinking that her ball had gone into the water at the Island hole, she was peering into it when her right foot slipped and doubled up beneath her. Astonishingly, the local police were called, and being that they were stationed locally in St. Johns Road, obviously had a surfeit of men at hand. Police Inspector Turnbull and



P.C. Harris diagnosed a suspected fracture of the right ankle, a diagnosis that was confirmed by X-Ray examination at the local hospital, to which she was conveyed by the Shanklin St. John motor ambulance.

Never losing its popularity the golf course flourished over the years, the greens were kept in immaculate condition and visitors flocked there year after year. A nice touch, indicative of these times was a free round award. On completing whichever course you had played, one simply added ones name and address to the scorecard and placed it in a chest situated just outside of the clubhouse. Every day winning cards were drawn and duly sent to the recipient for free rounds.

The entrepreneurs from Peckham finally severed their connection with Brown's golf Course in 1979 when they sold out to a Mr. & Mrs Snelling, business people from Bembridge.

The provision business in London also thrived over the years, but in September 2007 the following announcement was made; "a popular chain of butchers is set to close after more than a century in business. Kennedy's, which is well known for its sausages, will finish trading at Christmas. The company, run by the same family for 130 years, has nine

stores across South East London. Their premises at 61 High Street, Bromley, will close earlier than the others".

On October 27th, director Chris Kennedy, based at the company's factory in Peckham, said: "There is a large possibility that the company will close on December 22". (Which it did). In response to this announcement dozens of e-mails were sent lamenting the decision, some urging them to pass the magic formulae onto other provision merchants.

John Stack from Sidcup says;

Wed. 28/11/07

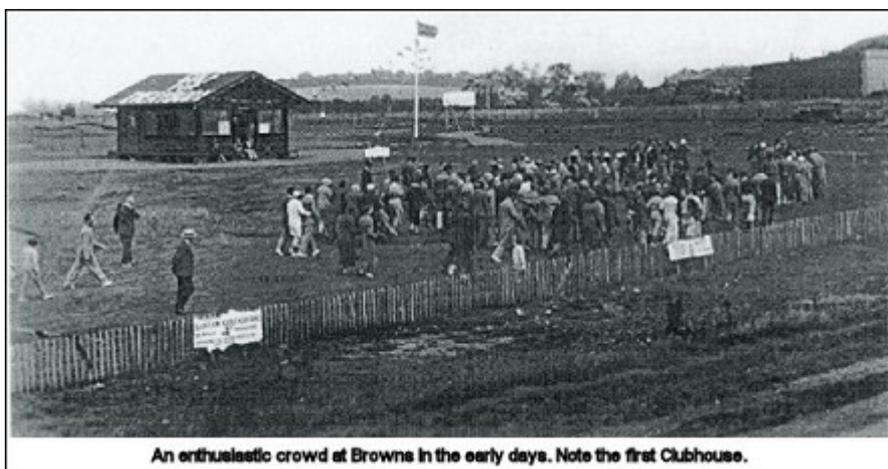
I join the long list of Kennedy's produce lovers. I find it hard to believe that a large supermarket chain has not taken the brand on board, it would be a best seller and bring customers in. I really hope this idea is taken up.

Peter Wise from Beckenham says;

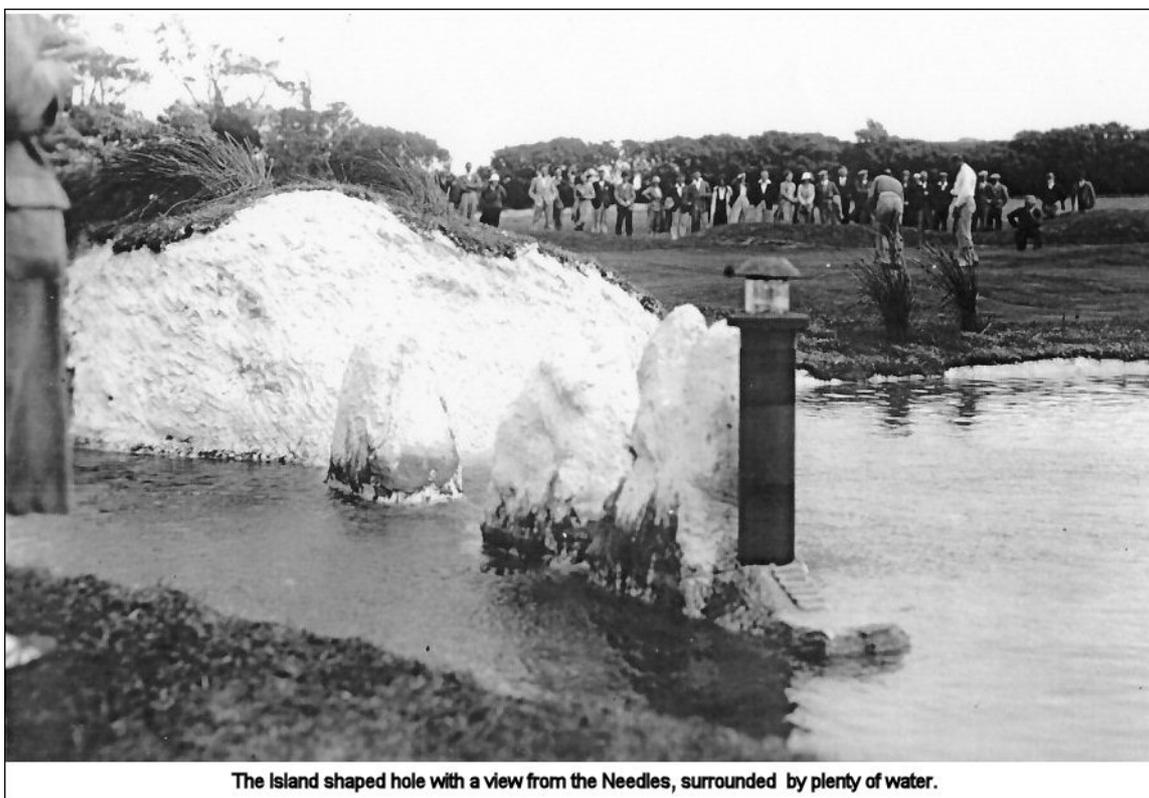
Thurs. 22/11/2007.

It's a dreadful pity Kennedy's is closing. I've been eating their sausages for as long as I can remember and will certainly be making a couple of trips to bulk buy before closing day! I even took Kennedy's sausages on a self-catering holiday to Barbados they are that good, and they were always a popular feature on canal holidays too. Nothing in the supermarkets comes close to Kennedy's!

The Kennedy's had that magic touch, the Golf Course, Sausages, Doughnuts, Ice Cream and who knows what else. They all live in the memories of those that sampled their wares, their style and know-how, which simply cannot be replicated it seems. (Conclusion).



An enthusiastic crowd at Browns in the early days. Note the first Clubhouse.



The island shaped hole with a view from the Needles, surrounded by plenty of water.