

GOLFING

Its Trek From Scotland To Calabash

BY DOUG RUTTER

(Doug Rutter is a golf enthusiast and writer living in Carolina Shores.)

It has taken more than 850 years for the game of golf to spread to Brunswick County, but with the area's natural beauty and seaside flavor, it stands to reason the game belongs here.

And if six new courses in the county by 1990 are any indication, Brunswick County and golf may soon be as synonymous as New England and clam chowder.

All six are located in the South Brunswick Islands. The marsh and waters of the Intracoastal Waterway and Calabash River have proven to be very attractive to the golfing industry. Major development has resulted.

That's a far cry from the 12th century, when Brunswick County was undoubtedly barren land, except for sparse Indian tribes.

Yet in 1100 a new game was developed that would much later cover that terrain with lush grass and small holes into which smaller balls would roll, causing great excitement among onlookers.

This new sport of golf came about

along the coast of Scotland. Although written reports date back only to 1457, it is believed it developed from a similar game known as paganica, played by the Romans who occupied parts of Scotland from about 100 B.C. to 400 A.D.

Paganica was played in the open countryside with a bent stick and a leather ball stuffed with feathers.

It spread quickly throughout the British Isles and was so popular it was banned by King James II of Scotland for a 45-year period, when it threatened national defense and the practice of archery. The ban was lifted in 1502 when England and Scotland signed a treaty of "perpetual peace."

The first permanent golf club, founded in 1758 along the eastern coast of Scotland, is still thriving today. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews established the rules of golf and continues to govern the game throughout most of the world.

The origin of golf in the United States has been widely debated, with three northeastern courses claiming to be the original. Dorset Field Club in Vermont, Foxburg Country Club in

Pennsylvania, and St. Andrews Golf Club in New York have all stated their cases as being the first golf club in America.

The lack of substantial written evidence on behalf of either club renders this case unsolvable for the time being, but the important fact is that once golf was introduced in the U.S. about 100 years ago, it spread rapidly.

The U.S. Golf Association was founded in 1894 and this organization held its first Open Championship one year later in Newport, R.I. The U.S.G.A. governs the game of golf in the U.S., just as the Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews does for the rest of the world.

An organization including both playing and club professionals was then established in 1916. The Professional Golfers Association conducts most professional golf tournaments and also holds its annual P.G.A. Championship which is open to both playing and club professionals who qualify.

From the northeastern U.S., golf quickly spread throughout the land and was brought to North Carolina

around the turn of the century. Ironically, it was a Scotsman, Donald Ross, who began organizing the game in the Pinehurst area of the state, now home to the P.G.A. World Golf Hall of Fame.

Golf in Brunswick County is more than 25 years old, with nine courses currently in operation.

The first course in the county was Oak Island Golf Club which opened its first nine holes in 1961. It was the first to be built along the ocean and offers views of historic Ft. Caswell, Bald Head Island and Southport.

Since then the following courses have been built, in chronological order: Fox Squirrel Country Club in Boiling Spring Lakes, Brierwood Golf Club in Shallotte, Bald Head Island's Golf Club, Carolina Shores Golf and Country Club in Calabash, the Ocean Isle Beach Golf Course, Marsh Harbour Golf Links in Calabash, Oyster Bay Golf Links in Sunset Beach, and Sea Trail Golf Links, adjacent to it.

A new era in golfing was ushered in Sept. 1, 1987, with the grand opening of the Pearl Golf Links outside Calabash. Its 36 holes are expected to

give the golfer a wide variety of challenges and scenery along the Calabash River.

The opening of Brick Landing Plantation's first 18 holes is scheduled for Oct. 15, featuring four holes along the Intracoastal Waterway, as well as a waterfront clubhouse.

Holden Beach's first golf course, Lockwood Folly Links, will be designed in the Scottish links tradition and has been tentatively scheduled for opening in November. Its rolling fairways, pot bunkers and abundance of water will offer area golfers much of what is found on the historical links where golf originated.

Three other courses in progress include the 36-hole Sandpiper Golf Club near Sunset Beach, the 36-hole Calabash Plantation, and Sea Trail II.

There is no current information on the opening of Calabash Plantation, but Sandpiper plans to open its first course late this fall, with its second layout opening sometime next year. Sea Trail has tentatively scheduled the opening of its second course for September, 1988.



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