

TRAVEL



SILVER ANNIVERSARY FOR 'PERTHSHIRE'S FINEST NINE HOLES'

Perthshire's "finest nine holes", the golf course at the Mains of Taymouth country estate at Kenmore, has announced that it has celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Estate owner Robin Menzies, who designed and built the course in 1991-2, was joined by his head greenkeeper, Stuart MacGregor, for a photocall at the first tee, during which a special celebratory cake, donated by Kenmore Bakery to mark the occasion, was cut.

Several other leading estate personnel were present including Peter Bancroft, estate manager, and Pauline McLaren, general manager.

Assisted in part by a couple of workers on the estate and his late father Duncan Menzies, who had the forethought to plan a major business diversification from farming into leisure, Robin Menzies carried out the vast majority of the work to create the course himself.

In what was a major feat of engineering completed over a two-year period, to turn farmland into a challenging 3,026yd course, civil engineering graduate Robin had only a trusty JCB for company, along with a huge passion for the game.

Reflecting on a quarter of a century of his vision coming to life, he said: "We're absolutely delighted to celebrate 25 years of this course, which means a great deal to our family. We are really proud that this course has become such a major part of the Perthshire golfing scene, and are humbled to have become known locally over the years as 'Perthshire's finest nine holes,'" said Robin.

"Our anniversary has coincided with a visit we have had from the head of sales and marketing for Callaway Golf, creators of the Big Bertha Club. He came to stay with his family in our cottages, but played and toured round the course and was very impressed. We are thrilled that someone who has played the world's finest courses enjoyed a round here."

As Robin explained, the Menzies, who all loved and played golf locally at the time, wanted to create their own course to supplement the many fine courses in the immediate area, and attract more visitors to Kenmore.

This fitted with Duncan Menzies' plan to build up the leisure side of the business, with firstly a caravan park, followed by bistro and self-catering properties.

"Dad was very much the driving force in applying for the planning consent for change of use in 1989/90. With this secured, I bought the JCB excavator and began work the following July," said Robin.

"Certainly, we could not have asked for a better setting for the course. In many ways, the land, which had been home to our cattle for nearly a hundred years, was already natural golfing terrain with steep hills either side and plenty of trees and natural vegetation, all set in the most picturesque surroundings. It was inspiring.

"My plan was always to design each hole of the course around natural features and contours.

"As I went along, I realised the enormous potential of the land, and made everything bigger and better than originally anticipated

to produce something of real quality.

"My own favourite hole is the second, the tee for which is built within a 'roundel'."

Robin explained that he came to the daunting task fresh from four years of building motorways as a civil engineering graduate.

"In many ways, building a golf course is very similar – you have to meticulously plan out every stage," he said.

"The major difference was that I had to complete the vast majority of the hard physical work myself."

The Menzies were very lucky to have their own quarry nearby, from which to source gravel and sand to infill the course, with some 7,000 tons being used.

"This saved us thousands of pounds in materials, as building a golf course is no mean feat in terms of expenditure," said Robin.

"Labour was certainly harder to estimate as I remember thinking that screening the soil would take two days when it actually took three weeks' hard solid labour."

Robin continued: "I am very grateful to my father for allowing the cattle to give way to golfers more than 25 years ago.

"We have created a legacy for golfers to enjoy in Highland Perthshire, and there is no doubt that the success of the golf course as a visitor attraction has played a major part in the overall success of Mains of Taymouth as a five-star holiday estate which has won many awards over the years.

"We look forward to another 25 years of this course. It has matured beautifully and still offers us yet more potential for further development."



The Mains of Taymouth team, from left: Rab Montgomery, Jordan Steel, Pauline McLaren, Patsy Penny, Julie Kilpatrick, Robin Menzies cutting the anniversary cake, Scott Gibson, Peter Bancroft and Stuart MacGregor