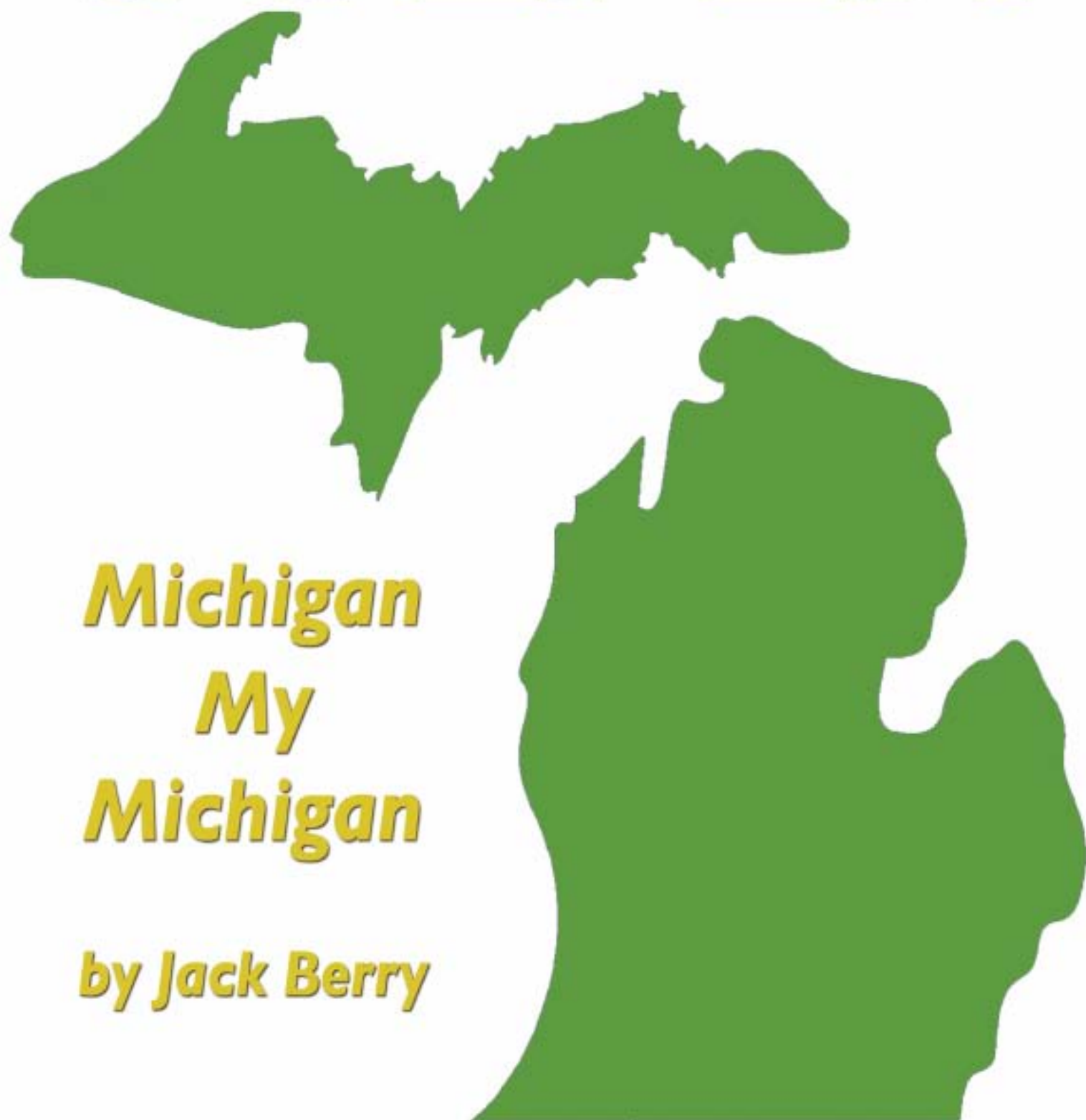


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***Michigan
My
Michigan***

by Jack Berry

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Michigan Golfer News



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MICHIGAN GOLFER

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The Berry Patch – Michigan My Michigan

By Jack Berry



Illustration by Tytti Fallon

Jack Berry

Considering the coast-to-coast disasters, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, fires in California, Montana, Oregon and Washington, 100 degree tempera-

tures in the northwest where air conditioning is rare, floods in the south and the annual twisters in Tornado Alley, I am so glad I live in Michigan.

No orders to evacuate. No long lines at gas stations. No rushes to stores where shelves have been emptied. No rushes to hardware stores for plywood to cover windows. No rushes to save photo albums. No rush to hose down the roof, clear flammable materials around the house. You've seen all the destruction on television, all the crushingly sad stories.

That's not Michigan. Sure, we've got winter. Have to go to a dome to hit balls. Lake effect means more snow on our west coast but snow turns to water and the farm land, apple and cherry orchards and vineyards that produce fine wines need the water. Michigan produces 75% of the tart cherries grown in America and 20% of the sweet cherries. Three thousand acres of vineyards produce wines that make Michigan fifth in the country, trailing California, Washington, Oregon and New York.



Photo courtesy of Travel Michigan

Pictured Rocks National Seashore, Munising

Christmas trees need the snow and water too and Michigan ranks third nationally in Christmas tree production, three million trees, a dozen varieties, on 42,000 acres.

All our water, feeding 11,000 inland lakes (as the world's No. 1 aquaphobe I think I've hit a ball into most them) keeps golf's "farm land," 700-some courses, green from spring to fall.

Those of us who live in large metropolitan areas and zip around the freeways at 80 per forget that Michigan is a big farm state.

My three farm grandkids are grown now but I always enjoyed getting off I-96, going up M-66 to M-57 and west to Greenville for the annual 4-H Fair. I passed a roadside market on M-66 that had the best red raspberries I ever tasted. I loaded up.

This year, because an accident had I-96 backed up, I got off at exit 86 and up through farms on both sides of the road to Westphalia, a neat small town, then west on David Rd. to Ionia. On the north side of the road it looked like there was a big lake. I found out it's a very wide spot in the Grand River.

Michigan golf has had some wide spots to jump, losing courses to residential growth hardly a decade after losing them because



Photo courtesy of Travel Michigan



Photo courtesy of Meadowbrook CC

Meadowbrook CC

of bankruptcy. The Links at Pinewood and Eldorado in Commerce turned into city hall, library, business and residential. Bald Mountain was purchased by Pulte to turn it into residential. There's been talk of turning one of the nines at the Inn at St. John's into residential or an expansion of the busy Inn.

A number of headline clubs have gone into renovation including a complete do-over at

Meadowbrook in Northville and everyone is pushing nine hole rounds. Some years ago I wrote a piece titled Nine Is Fine for the Golf Association of Michigan magazine. They no longer do a multi issue magazine but the GAM definitely promotes nine hole rounds.

My half century old league is a niner and as the years go on the manager laments that the sale of post-round pitchers of beer isn't what it used to be because the old guys aren't as thirsty as they used to be. But neither he nor any manager from Lake Superior down to the

Ohio-Indiana line has lost a round to hurricanes, twisters, five-foot deep floods or forest fires.

That's Michigan, my Michigan.

- MG -



Photo courtesy of Travel Michigan

Peak Fall Foliage



A drone's views Bird Creek Golf's clubhouse and grounds.

Bird Creek Golf: A Perfect Getaway

By Michael Duff



Michael Duff

You might ask yourself, why travel to Port Austin to play golf when there are so many other courses to choose from in this great state of ours? In fact, where is Port Austin? At the tip of the Thumb where you find the big waters of Lake Huron. Great sunsets or calm waters might be one of the attractions, but besides that, good restaurants, artist shops and cozy garment stores might be your other choice. Our best friends Stan and Sherry Hertel put the idea in front of us. Sharon and I jumped at the chance. A primary reason why we chose Port Austin was to play Bird

Creek golf course which Stan happens to have a 1/250 (or something like that) share in the ownership. Bird Creek is located a mile south of Port Austin on highway M53.

It had been a number of years since Stan played the course. So, what he saw was completely different from what he remembered. Even the entrance sign had changed dramatically. We saw the full beauty of the course: rolling terrain, tree lined and generous fairways and, most importantly, native fowl life everywhere. And, when I learned that Mathews & Associates, a renowned golf course architect in Michigan had designed the course, I knew we were in store for something special. Phase I: The course lived up to the

Mathews' legacy but the story behind Bird Creek could be something far more inspiring. So, the story begins... Around 1987 a group of golfing buddies in the Port Austin area came up with the idea to build their own golf course. Hence, the dream began. Gary Babcock, one of the original founders along with 20 other disciples, agreed to throw in \$2000 each and see what they could do. They reached out to others who might be interested and Stan was one of them, according to Paul Heinrich, one of the early investors and their first paid employee. He is also considered the historian of the group and provided some early history of Bird Creek. A core group of investors living in the area, set out to find property to

build the course. That effort resulted in three local farmers by the name of Knoblock, Jandreski, and Sosnoski who had property adjacent to each other agreed to sell a portion of their land. Once the land was acquired, the real work began.

Phase II: The next order of business was to find and hire an architect. They found one of the best in Bruce Mathews. Bruce agreed to come aboard and brought a greens shaper, Glen Caverly, who was credited in shaping and directing the work force. Most of the investors provided the sweat equity to actually build the course. It took them nearly two years to complete the project, often working in shifts well in to the night. Paul described it as a beer working party. They shared in pro-

viding the beer and after they finished their days' work they relaxed, shared stories and ideas about the accomplishments of the day. This continued night after night. Matter of fact, they even seeded the greens at night. One of the farmers, Harold Sosnoski, donated a great deal of his time and equipment along with Harry Clancy who was hired as general contractor.

Phase III: Now that the architect was secure and the land was under development this venture was well on its way to fulfilling the dream that these investors wanted. The first design called for the completion of only 9 of the 18 holes. But after things were going so well in the early stages, the group decided to complete the full 18 holes. The aes-

thetics of the course can be attributed to Shirley "Smith" Cleveland. You will notice around the 9 and 18th holes some beautiful flower arrangements that depict the support this group received. She donated a large variety of flowers to enhance the finishing holes. Signage is, located near the 9th hole honoring her contribution. On Thursday July 26 1990 all of the volunteers who worked on the course celebrated the completion of this major construction project. The following day Bird Creek Golf Club was open for play.

Phase IV: The Course: This might be, in my opinion, the best golf course in the Thumb area. Golf courses might be difficult to remember after 40 years of writing about



Bird Creek's 'Home' Hole

Photo by Richard Kindy

golf courses in Michigan, but I have to say for the Thumb region you won't be disappointed in playing this course. The course is not overwhelmingly difficult. From the tips it is only 6500 yards. But, let's be realistic, if you are spending time on a trip to the tip of the Thumb, who needs to find a Treetops or Shepherds Hollow to burst your bubble? The first 3 holes don't make you say "WOW". The next two holes, number 4 a 455-yard par 5 over the creek thru the trees up hill to the green and number 5 "Charles Corner" a 429-yard par 4 over the ponds avoiding traps on your left surrounding the green will make you work for every shot. Six, seven and eight are manageable, but make sure your shots avoid the ponds and the creek. Hole 9 is a great visual. However, you may want to take an extra club length to reach the green. Nine and eighteen are considered their signature holes. The back 9 is a little more forgiving but don't under estimate numbers 12, 15, and 17th holes. They can ruin your game if you don't stay focused. The 18th, is a great finishing hole. A long par 5, with a flat landing area from about 160 yards setting up your 3rd shot in to the green. Big hitters can reach the green in two but the creek approaching the green can make it difficult to manage. It bears repeating, the 9th and 18th are truly two great holes.



Photo by Richard Kindy

An overview of Bird Creek golf course



Photo by Richard Kindy

Bird Creek's clubhouse

Choosing to stay and play in Port Austin will make your trip even more enjoyable. Bird Creek is named for the creek that winds through it and offers you a chance to play a good course with an appealing character. You won't be disappointed if you make Bird Creek a vacation/golf destination. The location and history of Bird Creek makes for a perfect get-a-way. Presently head/pro/club house manager Trenton Donakowski, PGA

oversees golf and club operations working to provide first class service to both members and visiting golfers.

BCGC:

Email: tdonakowski@pga.com
 Website: birdcreekgolf.com
 Phone: (989) 738-GOLF /
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- MG -

Firefly Golf Links and Downtown Clare for a Fun Golf Day

By Susan Bairley

Illustration by Tytti Fallon



Susan Bairley

Sometimes the best golf is right around the corner.

It may not be a championship course, but playing a mom & pop or family-owned links, combined with a local breakfast and/or lunch, can be the perfect outing for a lot of golfers.

Now take that concept a little north, to Clare, Michigan, for a fun adventure.

Grab a donut and coffee at the popular Cops & Doughnuts, play 9 or 18 at Firefly Golf Links and then enjoy the best burger around at the Whitehouse Restaurant, and you have a special golf day.

Firefly Golf Links, just four miles north of downtown Clare, at 7795 South Clare Ave., is a nice, playable track. Actually a course for sale, it's been run by the same owner for the last 33 years, who's ready to retire, even though the course isn't.

At first look, the course may not pull you in. The clubhouse is a

modest building, and you only see a few holes from the road. But once you're there, you'll enjoy a course that's fun and friendly to all levels of players, and afterward, you might enjoy the cozy Brassie Lounge for drinks and conversation.

With three sets of tees, Firefly Golf Links plays 6,012 yards from the tips and 4,588 yards from the forward-most red tees. The greens are solid and true, and the course is nicely designed, with lots of water hazards, rolling terrain and some pretty woods. At the same time, it's walkable and is one of the increas-

Photo by Paul Bairley



Firefly's 4th Hole

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ingly fewer courses that offers a no-cart, walking rate.

We played only the front nine and thoroughly enjoyed Firefly's attractive, traditional style. Favorite holes included the scenic, par 4, fourth hole, and dogleg sixth, where a tee shot to the turn provides a straight-on approach to an ample green. We liked the long, 187-yard, par 3, seventh hole, which plays 126 yards from the red tee, and also enjoyed the starting, par 5, first hole.

Throughout the course the forward tees offer a reasonable edge for those who play them and make scoring competitive with those playing from the white tees, so it's fun for golfers of all abilities.

For those looking for a second course to play, Ray Hearn and Jerry Matthews' Eagle Glen Golf Course in nearby Farwell, which advertises itself as a 'hidden gem' is another,

more challenging, upscale option that's sure to please.

Now for the local culinary bookends. Cops & Doughnuts is a local doughnut shop legend. Located at 521 North McEwan in downtown Clare, it opened in 2009 when nine officers in the Clare Police Department purchased the Clare City Bakery, which was about to go out of business. Greg Rynearson, one of the officers, retired to focus on the bakery full time and the result has been an amazing success. In addition to a full-scale bakery serving coffee and doughnuts, the store also features a diner and gift shop which sells law enforcement and doughnut themed merchandise.

Home to the squealer, a long john maple frosted pastry with bacon, the shop offers a broad selection of tasty doughnuts, cookies and breads, including day-old doughnut 'parolees.'

The Whitehouse Restaurant, one block north, at 613 N. McEwan, is another special find. With all of six small booths – three which line up against the grill area, and three seasonal outside tables, the place is plain ol' tiny, but serves food that's big on flavor at easy prices.

According to grill chef, Tanya Fent, the burgers are fresh, hand-pressed every morning, and the breads and buns are locally sourced, along with seasonal produce. Although it's an all-day breakfast and lunch/dinner spot, the burgers and fries rule. From the unadorned regular hamburgers and cheeseburgers to specialties like the Double Bacon Cheeseburger, Irish Burger with swiss cheese, sauerkraut and thousand-island dressing, peanut butter burger, or cherry burger, topped with dark cherries, walnuts, jalapeños and swiss cheese, the food is delicious. Fries come straight up, or can be topped with house chili, Flint coney sauce or even served as Philly fries, with ribeye steak, peppers and cheese, or bacon cheeseburger fries. And watching Tanya cheerfully grill up orders for the whole place is like sitting in your home kitchen.

Family owned and operated since 1935, the place is gaining a big reputation, which can result in customer lines and wait times on weekends. Nonetheless, it's worth the wait.

Golfers can also check out the Blind Tiger Pub & Eatery and historic Doherty Hotel, both in the same two blocks of town.

- MG -



Cops and Doughnuts



Whitehouse burgers



Arcadia Bluffs: A Timeless Golfing Experience

By Chris Lewis



Chris Lewis

With its panoramic views of Lake Michigan (roughly 3,100 feet of frontage), gorgeous clubhouse and pris-

tine course conditions, Arcadia Bluffs has garnered praise from national golf publications—while also attracting golfers from around the world—ever since it was first opened to the public in 1999.

After all, it has annually been ranked as one of the top 100 courses

in the United States by magazines like *Golf Digest* and *Golfweek*. Not to mention, it has also consistently been named one of the world's most scenic seaside courses, to the point in which it is now considered a “must see”, whether its guests live in Michigan or across the Atlantic.

As staff members prepare for the future, they are determined to maintain Arcadia Bluff's reputation as one of the nation's most prestigious daily-fee, public golf clubs. To achieve such lofty goals, a second 18-hole course—known as the South Course—began construction on November 1, 2016.

Designed by Dana Fry of Fry/Straka Global Golf Course Design, the duo that designed Erin Hills Golf Course (site of the 2017 U.S. Open), the 310-acre course will be located approximately 1.5 miles south of Arcadia Bluffs on M-22.

Considered a companion course to Arcadia Bluffs, the South Course is expected to have a soft opening in late summer 2018, as well as an official grand opening in spring 2019. Just like Arcadia Bluffs, the course will be opened to the public seven days a week from mid-April to mid-November, depending on the weather.

Developing a throwback

The shaping of the front nine has already been completed, along with the seeding. The back nine, meanwhile, is currently being shaped, as under development several holes are now being roughed in. They're expected to be completed by September 15, 2017, according to president and COO, Bill Shriver, who has been employed at the club since the construction of Arcadia Bluffs began in 1997.

"We had been talking about the potential for a new course for a cou-

ple years, as guests had been requesting it for a while," Shriver says. "It took some time to find land that is usable though."

Due to the lack of available land, the South Course will be entirely inland. In fact, it will not have any water holes whatsoever. Instead, it will be a throwback to the style of golf courses that were built in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with wide fairways, flat bottomed bunkers and greens with false fronts and squared off edges, which will require golfers to hit their approach shots in the correct locations of the

greens, or else they will not have birdie putts.

In addition, the course will feature greens, tees and fairways comprised of 007 Bentgrass, as well as primary roughs featuring 90 percent turf type tall fescues and 10 percent bluegrass. It will also include large native areas between each hole, encompassing hard and sheep fescues, as well as two fine fescues—Quatro and SR3150.

"The ultimate goal of this course is that it feels timeless in its design," says Fry. "[It] will [also] provide



Photo by Bill Hobson

Arcadia Bluffs South Course under development



Arcadia Bluffs, The Bluffs Lodge

golfers an ‘Old World’ golf course feel that few golfers have ever experienced.”

More lodging options

Aside from the South Course, a driving range, as well as a clubhouse with dining, a pro shop and locker rooms (similar to Arcadia Bluff’s The Lodge), will also be developed over the next few months and opened to the public in 2019.

To better accommodate more guests, especially as the public continues to learn about the South Course, a new lodge—located just a

few feet away from the club’s 15-room The Lodge, which is on the second level of the club’s original clubhouse—opened on July 1, 2017.

Featuring 16 300-square-foot guest rooms, each with two queen beds, double vanity sinks and private balconies overlooking Lake Michigan or the South Course, the lodge, known as The Bluffs Lodge, was developed with larger groups in mind.

“Our original lodging was designed for individuals and couples, as each room only has one king

size bed,” Shriver says. “So we thought it would be nice to have some space for foursomes too.”

He adds, “The Bluffs Lodge will also have a state-of-the-art fitness center, which guests requested. Six more rooms—a third floor—will also be added this winter and opened in time for next spring.”

A bright future

As Arcadia Bluffs staff members prepare for the future, they have certainly not forgotten the influence of the club’s past either. After all, Warren Henderson, who, along

with Rick Smith, designed the original course in the late 1990s, is leading the project management aspect of the South Course development, while also providing construction oversight.

At the same time, the South Course's clubhouse has been entirely inspired by the club's original clubhouse. Aside from featuring similar amenities offered by The Lodge, it will also have comparable aesthetics, with virtually the same look and feel that The Lodge has provided to guests for nearly 20 years.

And why shouldn't the club's past impact its present and future? Since 1999, Arcadia Bluffs has consistently been one of the nation's finest and most reliable golf destinations—a club with views, dining and hospitality that are unparalleled.

But, just as influential as its past has been, its future appears to be even brighter. With the addition of The Bluffs Lodge, which, again will be comprised of 22 guest rooms, as well as the South Course, Arcadia Bluffs will now be able to offer something for everyone—couples

looking for romantic getaways; a foursome of golfers seeking a guy's weekend; individuals requiring some rest and relaxation; and so on.

"A lot has changed the last few months, but all of the work will be well worth it," Shriver concludes. "With our two courses, two clubhouses and two lodges, Arcadia Bluffs will be well prepared to exceed customers' expectations for another 20 years—and beyond."

- MG -

Photo courtesy of Arcadia Bluffs



Arcadia Bluffs



Michigan Golfer TV Upcoming Shows

Photo by Carter Sherline / Frog Prince Studios



MWGA's second class of Michigan Women's Golf Hall of Fame inductees. Shirley Spork, another inductee, is not pictured.

October Shows

"Lunch with a Legend"- Shirley Spork Returns to Meadowbrook CC
Tom Doak Series
Educational Journey - The Cornell Internship
Golf Magazine's Top 10 World Courses
Manistee Golf & CC - W. Bruce Matthews First Work
Shirley Spork Invitational, Eagle Crest GC, Ypsilanti

November Shows

Meadowbrook CC - A Drone's Eye View
MGCOA Golf Course of the Year
Tom Doak Series
High Pointe GC - The Journey Begins
Shirley Spork - Michigan Women's Golf Hall of Fame

December Shows

Annual Awards Banquet - MGCOA
Tom Doak Series
The Michigan Courses
Mentors and Mentoring - Pete and Alice Dye
Stoatin Brae - The Renaissance Team

January Shows

Sanibel Golf
Tom Doak Series
The Down Under Courses
Jerry Matthews Series
Sycamore Hills GC: The North Nine
The Courses of W. Bruce Matthews III - Part I

February Shows

Tom Doak Series
The Loop GC - The Journey Continues
West Michigan Golf Show
Jerry Matthews Series
Sycamore Hills GC: The West Course
Black Lake GC - History and Tour: Front Nine

March Shows

Jerry Matthews Series
Sycamore Hills GC: The South Course
A Tour of The Lynx GC
Michigan Golf Show
The Courses of W. Bruce Matthews III - Part II



Stoatin Brea: Gull Lake View's New Addition

by Peter Allen

Photo by Jennie McCafferty



The Scott Family of Augusta, Michigan opened their sixth golf course in May at Gull Lake View. Jon Scott, Charlie (father), and the late Darl (grandfather and founder) round out three generations of those who have served to run the family business. The six courses include Gull Lake View East and West, Stonehedge North and South, Bedford Valley and now Stoatin Brea (The Grand Hill).

Jon and Charlie teamed up with Renaissance Golf Design of Traverse City, owned by Tom Doak, to build a wide open course. Mr. Doak's senior associates actually did the design since Tom was working on The Loop in Roscommon.

Stoatin Brea is built on a unique piece of land, formerly an orchard. There are no trees, just rolling terrain, great vistas, and tall bluffs. The bluffs provide views of a mile or more. These elevations allow players to see wide fairways and contours of the property. There are many unconventional holes with limited bunkering. Beyond the fairways are heathers followed by two feet tall wild flower fields. It is said you can see 15 golf flags from the bluff on #13.

Playing the course offers some interesting instructions that must be heeded. Written notices on the carts and verbal instructions from the starter state "Do not try to land

your ball on the green". You are advised to land your ball in front of the green and roll it up. Since many greens are elevated this can be difficult. If your ball is 20 or 30 feet short of the green you will be better off putting rather than chipping. Every green is rock hard and domed on some part. This combination leads to the possibility of being on the green but when you putt it can quickly roll off the green. The greens of a young course often need some time to soften. They do run true, so when you learn a soft touch you will make some putts.

Enjoy.

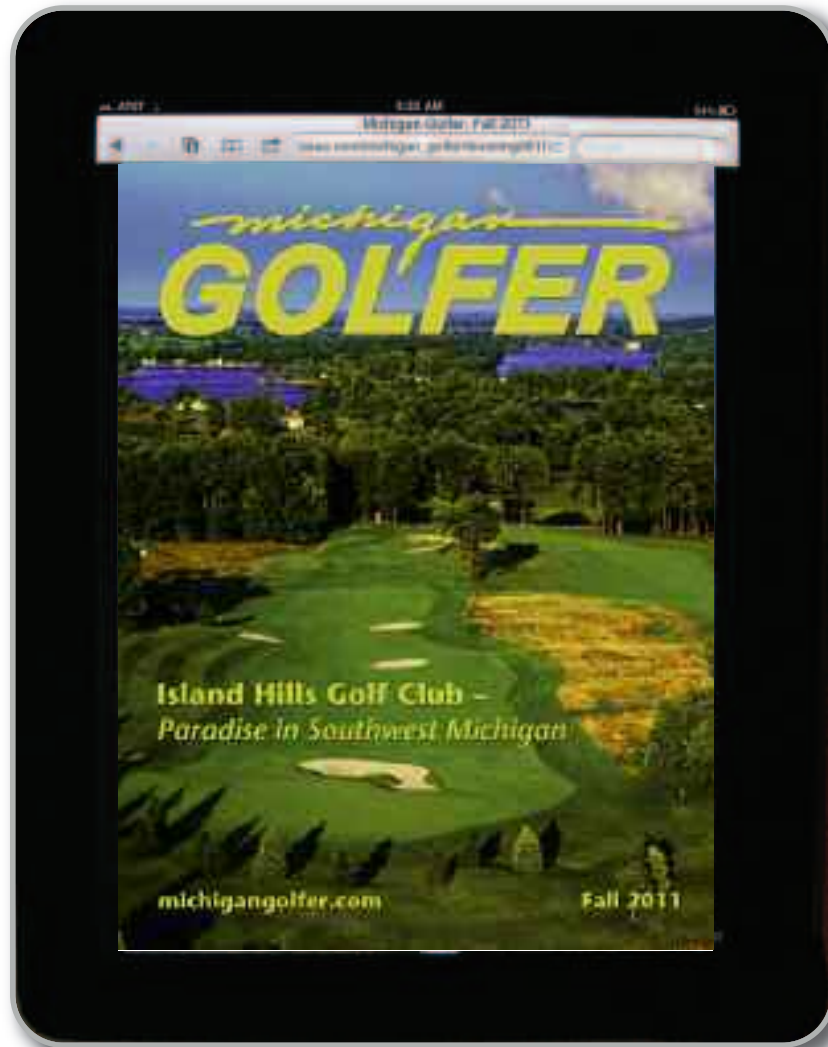
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Photo courtesy of Stoatin Brea

Stoatin Brea

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The Olympics are Going to La La Land and Riviera in 2028

By Art McCafferty

Illustration by Tytti Fallon



Art McCafferty

Riviera held the dressage equestrian

Their role as host golf course for the 2028 Summer Olympics will not be Riviera's first rodeo in the games. In 1932,

competition at the club. At that time in its history, polo was a big time sport at the club, with riders including Will Rogers and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. It was also where Elizabeth Taylor prepared for her role in her breakout film, National Velvet.

Actually, Hollywood used the course for many of its films, Pat

and Mike, starring Spencer Tracy, Babe Zaharias and Katherine Hepburn as well as The Caddy, with Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Also, Follow the Sun, the movie about Ben Hogan made following his horrible accident, was made there. In fact, Riveria has e a statue of Ben Hogan to commemorate his three wins at the L.A. Open.

Photo courtesy of Paramount Pictures



Sam Snead, Ben Hogan, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis down it up in a scene from "The Caddy.

The walls of Riviera Country Club are covered with photographs of members who were also movie celebrities; Humphrey Bogart, Glen Campbell, Vic Damone, Peter Falk, Gregory Peck, Walt Disney, Hal Roach and Mary Pickford, to name but a few.

Photographs of the golf professionals and amateurs that have won at Riviera also adorn the walls of the club. They include; Sam Snead, Byron Nelson, Hale Irwin, Tom Watson, Johnny Miller, Ben Crenshaw, Mark Calcavecchia, Fred Couples, Craig Stadler, and Phil Mickelson.

Photo courtesy of Golf Magazine



Larry David recreates scene from *The Swan*.

Photo courtesy of Metro Goldwyn Mayer



Hepburn tees it up

Even the architects were stars. George Thomas, who designed courses in the East before moving to the West coast, designed, Los Angeles CC, Riviera and Bel-Air. Thomas was assisted by architect icons, Alister MacKenzie and William Bell. In 1927, he penned "Golf Architecture in America", a

benchmark book about the strategy and construction of golf courses.

Even the street leading up to the club, Sunset Boulevard, is famous.

Obviously, all of these stories and more will continue to pour out in during the decade of waiting for the

2028 summer olympics. However, golf tourists, should keep a sharp eye out for tournaments, such as those held at Riviera, so they can attend the event and see the history of golf that is everywhere on the grounds and the clubhouse.

- MG -



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Slice of Life

By Terry Moore

Illustration by Larry Lewis



Terry Moore

"I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."

—W.B. Yeats

Here's a telling sign of a memorable golf trip: you start dreaming about it long after one's return. And the subconscious tug is not due to losing one's passport or wallet. No, only pleasant dreams abound with friendly faces and gestures, scenic landscapes and soul-stirring golf. For me, they speak of Ireland.

It was a year ago when my spouse Deb and I began planning our overseas trip. Both of us had traveled to Ireland on several occasions, the first time being in 1985 when we scoured the Emerald Isle

from east to west, south to north and parts in between. On this occasion, we were determined to trace some of our Irish history while partaking, naturally, in that old game with fourteen implements. In short, the theme was family links meet golf links.

The West of Ireland

After landing in Shannon, we were driven to Ennis, our first stop on our family history pilgrimage. Known for its Irish music, Ennis is a

Photo courtesy of Tourism Ireland



Aerial View of Lahinch

delightful, picturesque and stroll-friendly town. And it's well-located for some of our planned local forays into the past. After catching a nap, we visited Kildysart, aka Fisherman's Haven, where Deb's great-great grandfather was born in 1812 and lived until 1842 when he emigrated to the U.S. On a clear and sunny day, we couldn't have been more pleased with our start.

The next day our ambitious itinerary took us through three Irish counties visiting the villages of Doonaha, Carrigaholt and Lorrha. All with connections to Deb's relatives, we visited churches, farms, abbeys, monasteries, beaches and graveyards. On the surface, such stops may seem snoozy but through the eyes of a determined family detective it's an uplifting adventure. And trust me, I wasn't even sampling the Guinness. A particular highlight was a fascinating tour of Lorrha given by James Heenan of the local historical society with whom Deb had corresponded. Remotely located on the northern tip of County Tipperary, Lorrha exudes the Irish past and ancient ways marked by Druids, saints, scholars, monks, Viking raids, Norman settlements and Cromwellian onslaughts. This

small village seemed to encapsulate Ireland's rich and varied past like no other: inspiring, timeless and authentically preserved in the most humble of settings.

With a delicious dinner at the Town Hall Bistro followed by foot-tapping Irish music at Ennis's famed Brogan's Bar, we said farewell the next morning to Ennis. In keeping with our desire for less stressful and simplified transportation, we took a bus from Ennis to Galway and it was a smart decision, allowing us time to relish the beauty of the countryside and the oft overlooked details of place—like a priceless sign

seen in a cafe window: "We do not have wi-fi—We talk to each other!"

Galway is thriving, young, eclectic and bustling—known as Ireland's oldest city on the wild Atlantic way. It doesn't disappoint. Especially when our visit began with lunch with Michael, one of Deb's second cousins who kindly took the bus down from Ballina, located two hours north in County Mayo, to meet us in the city. (Note to golfers: Ballina is 15 minutes from Enniscrone Golf Links, an admired links course.) Family stories were dusted off and shared, local and regional history explained and con-

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Lahinch

nections retraced. And this time, a pint or two of Guinness was implicated in the proceedings.

We later explored Galway on foot and marveled at all it had to offer: museums, pedestrian-only and fashionable shopping areas, seaside promenades, street musicians and chic bistros, raucous pubs, the last stone cathedral built in Europe, and the National University of Ireland Galway. On this last note, we loved touring the campus and its Tudor Gothic buildings, modeled on Christ Church at Oxford. On a warm and sun-splashed day, the students gathered on lawns and in outdoor cafes. Rigorous studies were placed on hold as were our domestic cares and worries.

It may seem fuddy-duddy to some but we occasionally favor a guided bus tour as a part of our travel itineraries. You just can't beat it for convenience,

stress reduction and educational value. That's why we booked a Connemara Day Tour with Lally Tours. Besides, you always meet some friendly and interesting people along the way, like the young woman on holiday whose business was selling terrorism insurance to large multinationals. And she talked about it with such a smile!

Driven and narrated expertly by ex-military officer Michael, the tour of the Connemara area was stunningly beautiful with an added bonus of dry, sunny skies. Off the dreaded grid and far from cell towers, Connemara embraces and celebrates the traditional Irish life in the rural and unspoiled regions of the West. Along with breathtaking views of mountains and lakes and a stop at Ireland's only fjord, there's a visit to Kylemore Castle & Abbey. Akin to the lavish grandeur to Asheville's famed Biltmore Estate, the Castle—with its 70 rooms—

took four years to build and opened in 1871.

Golf: Links lovers will relish Lahinch GC, a 35-minute drive from Ennis. It's a classic layout opened in 1892—originally laid out by Old Tom Morris for one pound plus expenses—overhauled by pro Charles Gibson in 1907, and then with a major renovation in 1927 by famed architect Alister Mackenzie. It's a must golf stop on anyone's journey to western Ireland.

For those favoring parkland and scenic bucolic settings, Portumna Golf Club is highly recommended—about an hour drive from both Ennis and Galway. Founded in 1913, it's a popular choice for its undulating fairways, excellent course conditions, woodsy environs and value pricing. And its restaurant is one of the best in the region.

In the Galway area, a visit to Connemara Golf Links, designed as a community project by the inestimable Eddie Hackett, pays rich dividends. It's a wonder as to how Hackett conceived this worthy playing experience amid such a rock-strewn landscape. But it all fits perfectly, like a melody to a lyric in a favorite Irish song.

Hotels: The Old Ground Hotel in Ennis was a smart choice for its convenient location, delicious food and energetic service (the owner was ever present and busy, meeting guest and hotel needs). In Galway, we stayed at The g Hotel (small g is not a typo), the city's only five-star property that's distinctive for its decor and design, cuisine and Espa, its award-winning luxury spa.

Dublin

Arriving in a relaxed mood by

train from Galway, we were eager to tackle Dublin, now one of Europe's most thriving and popular capitals. In 1985 when we visited the city it lacked a certain spark, big-city attributes and cosmopolitan allure. (Of course, the same could've been said about us!) But wow has that changed. Dublin is bustling, young, smart, diverse—ever lively in the arts, business, shopping, dining, and nightlife. For an unhurried overview of Dublin, we opted for the “Hop on Hop off” city bus tour. Later, we enjoyed just strolling around this compact city with its rich and storied history as well as a visit to the fine National Museum. Although the choices for a visitor's time are endless, the city itself remains manageable and not daunting.

Following dinner at our hotel, we had a delightful time at O'Donoghue's Bar savoring its traditional Irish music, singing along

on a few well-known favorites with new-found friends from Europe and the U.S. It was one of the highlights of our holiday.

While I was playing golf (more on that later), the next morning Deb took a stimulating three-hour guided walking tour by a firm established by Pat Liddy, a renowned author, local historian and artist. Led by the friendly and knowledgeable Darragh, the tour expertly touched upon many aspects of Dublin's history and culture, many of which touched upon our family heritage.

That evening we took in a play at the famed Abbey Theatre. Showing was the iconic “Waiting for Godot,” the sparsely staged and tersely written masterpiece by Samuel Beckett, the Nobel prize winning Irish author. I first read the play back in college and was enthralled then by its difficult yet universal themes



Island Club



Island Club

about language, meaning, and loss. This faithful and deft Druid Production was marked by exceptional performances that kept the packed house keenly focused and aware, despite its bizarre and confounding narrative. Being a part of this appreciative Dublin audience was a special treat.

It should be noted here that no relatives were visited in Dublin. In '85, we had dinner with some distant cousins but they're both long gone. Over the years through letters and emails, Deb has made good use of Dublin's National Archives of Ireland in fleshing out our family tree. It's a vital resource for genealogists and family historians.

Golf: Only the world's biggest

sourpusses will leave Portmarnock Golf Club, founded in 1894, with a frown about their round. An esteemed links club ten miles north of Dublin, it's hosted a slew of championships. On the morning of my memorable round, I was paired up Brad, a fellow American and a fine senior player from California. It was Brad's first trip to Ireland and this was his inaugural game. Guided ably by our caddie, an aspiring European Tour professional, we both struck the ball well and were buoyed by the spirit of links golf. The turf was firm and fast and greens were smooth. With fairways set low in the flat dunes land, views of the sea are limited unlike many links layouts. However, I did note that on the demanding par-four 4th hole, the card's no. 1 index, a row of

trees lining the seaside of the fairway had been recently removed, thus exposing a better view of the shoreline and water. To sum up Portmarnock, I favor this 1902 quote from World Golf Hall of Fame British amateur Harold Hilton: "Its charm is difficult to describe. There is little sign of artificiality and it is one of most natural links in the world." Nailed it.

Hotel: The Fitzwilliam Hotel exceeded all our expectations. Centrally located near fashionable and busy Grafton Street and across from St. Stephen's Green (the city's main square), the Fitzwilliam is a five-star property that's earned some of the top domestic and international travel awards, most notably by TripAdvisor, the all-telling con-

sumer website. We joined the chorus of pampered and satisfied guests and particularly savored the dining and ambience of Citron, the elegantly yet minimalist-designed restaurant neatly located on the mezzanine above the lobby.

Malahide

The village of Malahide, only a short drive from the Dublin airport and situated along the Irish Sea, was selected for the final spot on our Irish itinerary. Over the years, friends and savvy travelers alike have stayed here as either the first or last stop on their overseas golf adventure. In many ways, Malahide is a model Irish village, offering a town center, a beautiful and expansive park, seaside views and paths, golf courses, tennis courts, and many good restaurants and pubs. Despite its proximity to Dublin—or maybe because of it—it has managed to maintain its cozy charm. As we were headed to an early dinner one evening at the Greedy Goose (highly recommended) which overlooks the marina, we watched a class of school children lining up on a dock for a kayak lesson. Donning bright yellow life jackets, they entered into their vessels like obedient tiny ducks following their large-feathered parents. The whole scene embodied the lasting appeal of Malahide and its less noisy and simpler essence.

Golf: The Island Club has been on my personal bucket list for a long time. From my hotel, I could see the course across the estuary but short of swimming there was no way to get there. For almost a century, the course's sole access was by a boat from Malahide with its oarsmen doubling

as greenkeepers. In its early days as an invitation-only club seeking members from Dublin's "best circles," The Island's isolation was part of its allure. Today, a winding road takes panting golfers to the club's entrance but due to the topography, it still takes 25 minutes. Immediately on arrival, one is struck by the wild dunes land and the stiff wind whipping the flag in starched salute.

As my able guide and congenial playing companion, John Lawlor, the general manager of the club, was kind enough to join me. Coincidentally, John grew up and now lives in Malahide only a "drive and a six-iron" from the club but because of the estuary "couldn't get there." An astute and cogent observer of what makes a club successful for members and visitors alike, John provided me with a wealth of insight and information. The playing experience was a joy, compounded by a day of pleasant, dry weather and tamed winds. Unlike some celebrated links course, the Island has ample fairway space on most of its holes so even with the usual constant wind it remained playable.

I loved the contrast between the two nines. The first nine's scorecard is marked by eight par-fours and only one three-par, the shortish ninth ("Bowl") while the second has a pair of par-fives and par-threes. I was also impressed with the course conditions which John duly credited to the diligence of head greenkeeper Dave Edmundson. "Dave focuses on getting as much fescue through the course as possible, providing those real and essential natural links surfaces," said John. "Due to its design as well as the attention to detail in conditioning, the course always has

been ranked around the Top 10 courses in the country."

On so many levels, The Island is a rewarding experience. It's not surprising to learn how the best American and European golf travel companies now include it among its premier links' itineraries. Let me echo and second this motion voiced by John when asked what first-timers think about The Island Club: "Visitors come away knowing they'd play a course on a par with the rest of the celebrated links courses in Ireland." Amen!

Hotel: Malahide's Grand Hotel was a perfect choice. Situated along the estuary, it's a full-service conference hotel, ideal for strolls along the water and with easy access to the village's restaurants, pubs and shops. It afforded a quiet and restful sleep on the eve of our bittersweet departure.

When we awoke and prepared to head to the airport, we felt enriched and grateful for such an inspiring, snafu-free week in Ireland.

But maybe we were still dreaming.

Images courtesy of Tourism Ireland. For more information about planning a trip to Ireland, visit www.ireland.com

A member of the Michigan Golf Hall of Fame, Terry Moore lives in Grand Rapids with his wife Deb, a personal and family historian. This summer they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

- MG -



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