

A Short History of the Artisan Golfer's Association

The Artisan Golfers' Association had its official birth in a room in the Fleet Street Hotel called, Anderton on a July evening in 1921 instigated by the famous professional golfer of the times, JH Taylor together with FG Hawtree and supported by Lord Riddell and Jim Wilks of Flackwell Heath.

The prototypes of artisan golf, by playing golf in off peak times, are Northam at Royal North Devon and Cantelupe at Royal Ashdown Forest followed by working men's clubs in the North East; Ryton & Newcastle and then more followed in Norfolk. None had the word 'artisan' in their title. This appeared for the first time with the formation of a club called Bulwell Forest and then Malvern. At the end of Queen Victoria's reign there were approximately a dozen clubs scattered around the country.

As the popularity of golf increased and more clubs were formed it became necessary to form an organisation. It was decided that the organisation be called The Artisan Golfers' Association with the object of uniting the various artisan and working men's clubs and to encourage and help in the formation of new clubs. The first subscription was £1. It was divided into sectors: Southern, Midland, Northern, Western, Eastern & Wales. At its peak there were over 200 clubs.

The AGM is to be held each year in the second week of December and it was agreed at a meeting in 1922 to write to all artisan golf clubs to encourage them to affiliate to the AGA and offer a Challenge Trophy for competition to all members.

In August 1936 an agreement was made that JH Taylor & FG Hawtree be appointed Trustees of the Artisan Golfers' Association.

In December 1937 an agreement was reached between the AGA and National Public Golf Courses and the English Golf Union regarding representatives to the executive of that Union.

JH Taylor was a co-founder and the first chairman of the British Professional Golfers' Association and was very influential with the Artisan Golfers' Association and was appointed as Vice President and acted as chairman at many of the meetings until the time he was President in 1941. He served in that office until 1963; 42 years of remarkable service.

At a meeting of the interim council of the AGA held on 16 October 1923 JH Taylor proposed that WJ Gardner of Flackwell Heath be appointed honorary assistant secretary of the Association. An office held until he retired in 1966 fulfilling his AGA duties for 43 years, including 30 years as secretary taking over from FG Hawtree in 1936. He was known as 'Mr Artisan Golf'.

John Henry Taylor

JH Taylor took a leading part in the formation of the Artisan Golfers' Association and the National Association of Public Golf Courses, so democratising a sport that in his early days was largely a preserve of the wealthy. Although he was five times Open Champion, he was one of the founding fathers at Northam in 1888 and four years later helped to form an artisan club at Royal Ashdown Forest, Cantelupe. He also helped to start the Professional Golfers' Association.

It was typical that he should prize as highly as any of his possessions (and at his home are scores of mementoes of his career) a desk that was the gift of the Artisans' Clubs of Great Britain, a tribute to his work for them.

Artisan Golfers' Association Firsts

First President

Lord Riddell

First Vice Presidents

Sir Emsley Carr
Arnold Tebbutt
JH Taylor

First Secretary

Fred Hawtree

First Tournament

The prizes were donated by the Association's constant friend, The News of the World. It was held at Walton Heath in 1922. It was a one day event, but as the association quickly grew, it became a two day event and eventually a three day event after the WW2.

First Royal Patronage

In 1935, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) was the first Royal Patron. He was succeeded by King George VI and then the present Queen followed by our current Patron, Sir Michael Bonallack