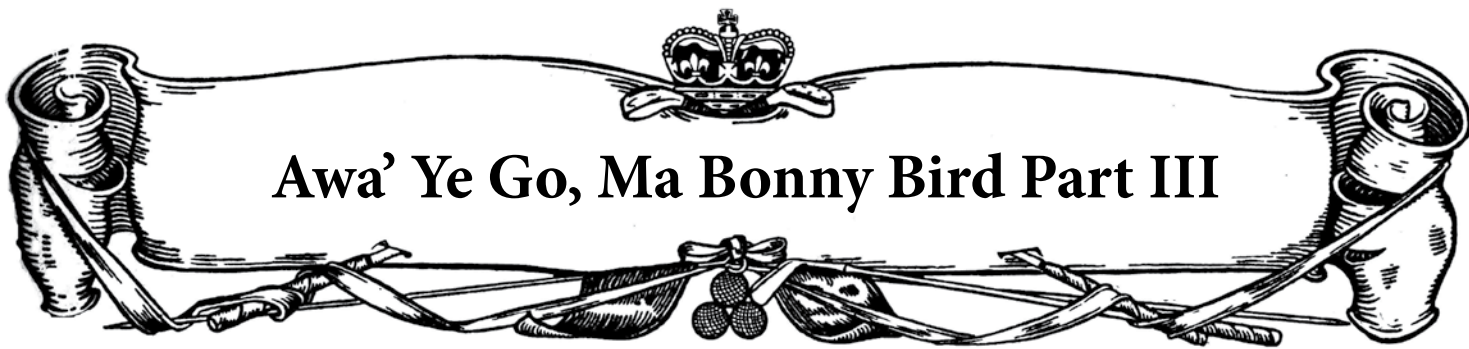


Through the Green



June 2022



Awa' Ye Go, Ma Bonny Bird Part III

Iain R Crawford

details Douglas Rolland's remarkable 'Week in June' in 1894

THE YEAR OF 1894 was pivotal for golf. It saw the first Championship played outside Scotland, the first English professional winner and the dawn of the Great Triumvirate's domination of the sport.

The Championship was played at St George's in the second week of June and their committee, driven by Dr W Laidlaw Purves, organised a unique programme for the week. The Open was to be played on Monday and Tuesday, the 11th and 12th of June; the St George's Cup (an amateur trophy) on Wednesday the 13th; and the Professional vs Amateur competition on Thursday and Friday the 14th and 15th. For Douglas Rolland this was preceded by the £100 challenge match against Willie Park Jr on Saturday, the 9th of June and was followed by his participation in a tournament at Cinque Ports GC on Saturday the 16th.

Just in case his form dipped due to lack of matches, he accepted a match against Joseph Lloyd (Pau GC) to be played at Folkstone GC on Wednesday the 13th (when Sandwich was hosting the St George's Cup).

This is the story of that 'Week in June'.

Saturday the 9th of June 1894 – The Challenge Match

Earlier in 1894 Willie Park Jr took a quarter page of *Golf* to challenge Rolland to a £50 a side match to be played the week of the Championship at Sandwich. *Golf* referred to this as 'one of the finest matches which Southern golfers will ever witness' and hoped 'that Rolland's many supporters will see that the challenge is accepted with alacrity'.

Rolland initially found it difficult to find a backer willing to finance the match, not due to a concern over whether he could win, but because Rolland had taken the extraordinary position of requiring 15% of the purse in the event he won. Many likely backers were put off by these terms, and for a time

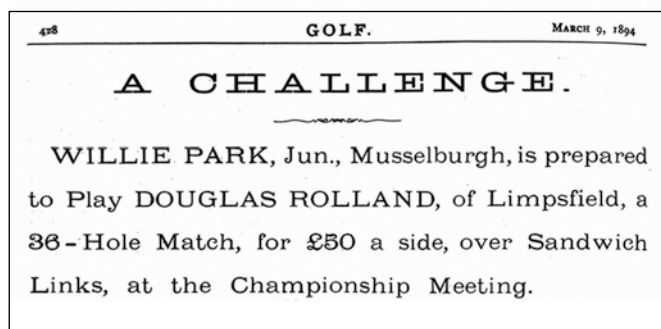
it was far from certain that Park's challenge would be taken up. The editor of *Golf*, AJ Robertson, outlined the predicament to George Newes MP, who agreed to Rolland's terms and the match was on. This challenge almost certainly had the effect of making Rolland's mind up about contesting the Championship at Sandwich, which he had not entered in ten years and focussed his attention on having his best game ready for June.

This match attracted a huge amount of attention; not only was it contested by two of the top players of the day and a £100 match was still a rarity, but because the location and the timing of the event drew a large and knowledgeable crowd. *Golf* reported that 'well-nigh 100 professionals' were in attendance, including Andrew Kirkaldy, Willie Fernie, Archie Simpson and Ben Sayers. Amateurs such as Harold Hilton and John Ball bolstered the crowd which varied between 1500 and 1000.

Train loads of keen golfers had left London on early trains for Sandwich and although the early morning was cold and wet, the match started promptly at 10:30 in reasonable conditions for golf. A major attraction was Park's caddy *Fiery*, who had travelled south for the week's golf. *Golf* noted 'No one who has ever seen that bronzed, clean-shaven face, full of shrewd, pawky character, surmounted by his Scottish Glengarry bonnet, is soon likely to forget it'.

Both players had arrived a few days earlier and had the opportunity to play the course before the match. The feeling amongst the experts who had watched the practice carefully was that it was going to be a very close-run thing. The match was indeed close. Rolland went ahead at the first. Holes changed hands regularly, but the best Park managed was occasionally to get the match back to all square. Rolland was one up at the turn in the first round, but it was the Eighteenth that proved pivotal. Rolland pulled his ball into a difficult position, while Park's drive split the fairway. Rolland's attempted recovery was over ambitious, and he only moved his ball a few yards. Park overhit his approach over the fence and into a tricky position. Rolland hit his third carefully onto the putting surface, whilst Park hit his recovery too hard and was still 25 feet from the hole. Rolland holed and Park missed. The morning round finished with Douglas two up.

After a lunch break of an hour the match resumed with Rolland winning the Third and Fourth to take control of the match. Park holed some long putts to keep his hopes intact and at one stage had reduced the deficit to two but Rolland's win at



Young Willie's Challenge

the Sixteenth secured the result by 3/2.

The scores in the morning were Rolland 82/ Park 85 and for the sixteen holes in the afternoon 71/73. Douglas would have been satisfied for more than one reason. Nearly 30 years before, Rolland's father – Andrew and Willie's Uncle Mungo Park – had played Tom Morris and Mr Proudfoot. Andrew Rolland had a putt to win the match, but missed, much to the disgust of Park who told him in no uncertain terms that 'he couldna' play' (or perhaps something stronger which could not be printed).

Rolland had started his week's golf in the way he wished. Next the Championship itself.

Monday and Tuesday – The Open Championship

Initially, I wondered why the first Championship outside Scotland was played at St George's GC in Kent? The more obvious candidate was surely Royal Liverpool, who had many members in common with the R&A and had successfully inaugurated and developed the Amateur Championship. However, this overlooks the simple fact that the two most prestigious events in the golfing calendar were organised by different committees. The Open was run by the three clubs which had contributed to the Claret Jug in 1871, namely Prestwick GC, The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers and the R&A. In June 1893 this group decided that English clubs should be added to the rota and St George's and Royal Liverpool were included in the list of venues. This meeting also decided the venues for the Championship from 1893 to 1897, with St George's chosen for 1894 and Hoylake in 1897. By 1894, the Amateur Championship rotated between four courses (Royal Liverpool, St. Andrews, Prestwick and St George's) and it was the turn of Royal Liverpool to host the event which was played in April.

The Championship arrived at this wonderful course in June 1894 hosting a very strong field, which *Golf* noted, 'At no previous competition for the Open Championship has the gathering of professional and amateur players been so great...'

The field was bolstered by the presence of Rolland, who was at the top of his game, playing for the first time in ten years. Douglas came into the Championship with high hopes; he had been playing well throughout the year and he had just beaten Willie Park convincingly. However, the week would not be complete without a 'Duggie' story, and this episode came at the beginning. From Rolland's obituary in the *East of Fife Record* (Friday the 11th of September 1914), the writer states:

He (Rolland) told me that present day golfers did not feed themselves properly and had a firm belief in big steaks for breakfast. In this connection he told an incident of the Sandwich Championship. The feeding arrangements, then as now, were faulty. Rolland and one of the Simpsons – he thought Bob* – go into the little refreshment tent first. A four-pound steak and potatoes were laid out, and the two worthies consumed the lot, to the intense annoyance of the caterer, who intended to feed the lot off the steak. The other pros went hungry.

I can find no record of Bob Simpson playing or attending that Championship, but Jack and Archie did.

Rolland's draw was seen as unfortunate. He was paired with Mr Foulis of Ranfurly Castle in the first and second rounds and with John Cuthbert of the Stanmore Club in the third and

fourth rounds, neither of whom (even their closest friends would admit) was going to win the Claret Jug.

Cuthbert had just come off the best week of his career, winning over his home course against a top field, including James Braid, JH Taylor and the Champion Willie Auchterlonie. However, the previous week's exertions clearly caught up with him and he ran out of steam the week of the Championship and finished on a score of 375 – 49 shots behind the winner.

Foulis retired after the first day having scored 103 and 93.

Rolland outscored his playing partners by a total of 46 shots over four rounds, including an eighteen-shot gap between Rolland and Foulis in the first round. *The Times* suggested that Rolland's play had been adversely affected by the weakness of his partners and this led to a concerted effort to screen out poorer players from future Championships.

The Golfing Annual Report on the 1894 Open stated,

... at Prestwick last year seventy-two entries were received; and it was felt that on these occasions that a large proportion of the players had slight pretensions to championship form. What must be thought of the entry of ninety-four, with which the executive of Sandwich had to deal? In the absence of any rule, the Committee have to accept the entry of all and sundry.

The favourites were JH Taylor, Sandy Herd and Douglas Rolland and as usual the bookmakers were on the mark. Herd led after the first round, with an 83 and Rolland's 86 was commendable in the conditions, more so when one realises that he broke his favourite driver at the turn in the first round. Although Rolland was usually indifferent about his clubs, his score on the second nine in the morning included two sixes and a seven, which may have been, in part, due to the lack of a driver. It is worth



John Carey, aka Fiery, Young Willie's famous caddie

remembering CR Smith's comment that 'clubs meant nothing to Rolland. He usually had two or three of them tied around with a bit of string.'

This was rectified at lunch and in the second round he scored one of the only two rounds of the week under 80, a distinction he shared with Andrew Kirkaldy. On Monday evening this left Taylor (164) with a single shot lead over Andrew Kirkaldy and Douglas.

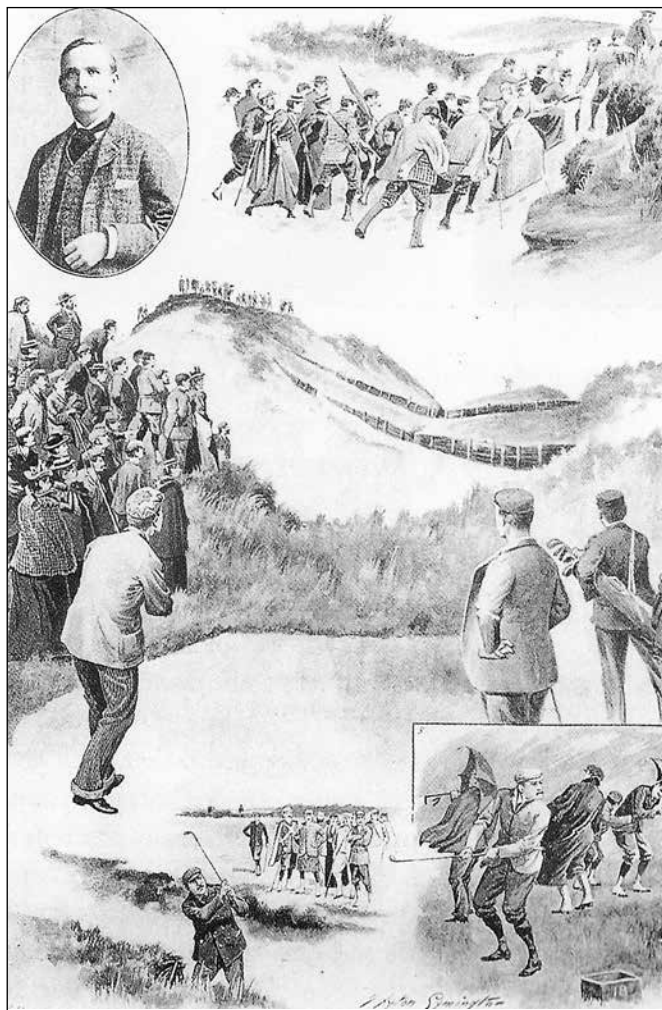
Conditions improved for Tuesday's play, and this allowed Rolland to go to the turn in 40, which included three 3s despite some indifferent putting. This continued on the homeward nine and he registered an 84 for his third round, which could and should have been better. This left him four shots away from Taylor who had played a well-controlled round of 81 (40/41).

Rolland again reached the turn on 40 shots, but Taylor's score of 37 for the same holes put paid to Rolland's chances and although he returned an 82 and came second in The Open, Taylor's consistency and excellence shone through. His victory was secured with a final round of 81 (37/44).

The Golfing Annual noted that Taylor –

certainly occupied a unique position in being not only the first English professional to win the Championship, but also the first one to win it on English soil.

It also asked readers to be aware of the 'tremendous carries' necessary to play St George's in windy conditions and to take



JH Taylor - Open Champion, 1894

that into account when considering the scores.

Rolland and Taylor had considerable respect for one another as individuals as well as for their golfing abilities. This is best demonstrated by Taylor's letter to *Golf Monthly* in November 1951, when he wrote in support of Rolland's inclusion in 'The Phantom Ryder Cup Team',

I can say from personal contact with 'Duggie' that he is eminently worthy of a place even though he would have no experience of the use of modern golf clubs, which I am sure he would have rejected with scornful pride as the implements of a degenerate. 'Duggie' and I became great friends in the early days, well over fifty years ago, when I was struggling to make some sort of name and became more firm as I learned more fully to appreciate his manly qualities and kindness of heart which no disappointment could effect.

Wednesday – Match against Joseph Lloyd

The week's events at St George's included an amateur event christened the St George's Cup, which was won by Harold Hilton. The only report *The Times* carried of the week's golf was a few lines on Hilton's success.

This punctuation in the professional events allowed Rolland the opportunity to accept a 36-hole match against Joe Lloyd (Pau) at Folkstone GC, not far from Sandwich. Plying his trade in France, Lloyd had been starved of top-class opponents and he was a bit of an unknown quantity. Most of the large crowd therefore expected Douglas to win the generous £10 put up by the Club. However, Rolland fell behind in the first circuit of the nine-hole course, but won the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Eighteenth to draw level at lunch.

The weather picked up in the afternoon, and so did the quality of the golf. Rolland thought he had sunk a good putt for a win at the First only for the ball to pop back out of the hole. However he was clearly relishing the contest and when he drove the fifth green, he was in front for the first time in the match. He maintained this lead at the turn, lost the Tenth but unleashed another remarkable drive to re-establish a lead at the Eleventh. Lloyd won the Seventeenth with a three so it was all down to the final hole of a match that had enthralled the crowd. On the final hole Lloyd drove his ball to ten feet from the pin and Rolland in attempting to do the same pushed his tee shot right but played



The Professionals: W Park Jnr, A Simpson, A Kirkaldy, W Auchterlonie, JH Taylor, A Herd, DS Rolland, W Fernie

a remarkable second shot to two feet. When Lloyd missed his putt, Rolland had a chance to tie the match. He missed. What was remarkable was that both players scored 75 for the second round (Lloyd 39/36 and Rolland 36/39) to beat Freddie Tait's course record by six shots.

Three years later Joe Lloyd won the US Open at The Chicago GC by one shot.

Thursday/Friday – Professionals vs Amateurs Match

This unique event was an innovation by the St George's committee, which responded to repeated suggestions in *Golf* that an event bringing together the best amateurs and professionals should be staged. The St George's committee also took responsibility of selecting the amateur team, while the professional side was picked by Old Tom Morris, Charlie Hunter, Jack Morris and the local professional Ramsay Hunter. The matches were to be determined by holes (this may have been the only time the St George's committee went against the wishes of Dr Purves, who was keen on 'an American style [stroke-play] tournament') and played over one round.

As is always the case there was many complaints about the selection of both sides. The omission of Ben Sayers, James Braid and Harry Vardon surprised many, and the fact that the amateur side was shorn of JE Laidlay and Leslie Balfour-Melville reduced their chances significantly.

The first round drew a professional against an amateur, only two of whom survived to the afternoon: Tait and Ball.

The key match in the tournament was the semi-final between Lieutenant Freddie Tait and Douglas Rolland. A valuable insight of this epic contest was written by Harold Hilton and included in his book *My Golfing Reminiscences*,

In round number two Mr Ball went down before Taylor but Lieutenant Tait easily held his own against Willie Fernie and then had to meet Douglas Rolland. What a game it was! Rolland won on the twentieth green and on the run of play deserved to win. He undoubtedly had the best of the long game and consistently outdrove his opponent, who was not at his best from the tee; but in short approaching and putting there was only one in it, and that was not the professional. Indeed, it is more than probable that the fact that Rolland laid Freddie a stymie on the seventeenth green saved the former the match.



The Amateurs: A Stuart, S Mure-Fergusson, J Ball, FG Tait, HGH Hutchinson, C Hutchings, AD Blyth, HH Hilton,

Tait's famous *Golfing Diary* unfortunately adds nothing to the story of this match. *Golf* (19th June 1894) contains more detail and shows that Rolland took the lead for the first time on the fifteenth hole by dint of an uncharacteristically long putt and that, 'At the seventeenth, after playing a better game than his opponent displayed, Mr Tait had the misfortune of finding a stymie barring his way to a dead putt.'

The hole was halved as was the Eighteenth. Tait pulled his drive at the first additional hole but rescued a half with a putt of 25 feet. However, his drive at the Twentieth landed in heavy ground and he was still short of the green in three while Rolland's third was adjacent to the hole. The match was conceded. Both players had recorded 81 shots for eighteen holes.

The final was between the best two players in golf. Although it started at 2:30pm, it was followed by around 500 spectators. Rolland dominated the early play and was 2 up after four holes and it should have been 3 up as he missed a short putt on the First. Taylor held on and by holing a long putt at the Ninth, reduced the deficit to 1 down at the turn. Rolland's putting had let him down over the first ten holes, but he made good long putts at the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth holes to establish a three-hole lead with five to play. Taylor got a hole back, but no more and Rolland triumphed over The Open Champion 2/1.

Hilton's *My Golfing Reminiscences* closes the account stating, 'Personally, I have always looked upon that tournament as one of the most interesting in the history of the game and it seems a pity that it has never been repeated.'

The Championship Committee came to a different conclusion and in 1895 issued an edict that 'no subsidiary events should accompany the Championship'

The Golfing Annual of 1894 stated, '... undoubtedly the display of golf witnessed during the Championship week was such that it may be safely said the like has not hitherto been witnessed at any golf meeting.'

Amateurs v Professionals match at Sandwich,

Park	)	Ball	)	1 up	)	Taylor)	
Ball	)		)		)	$\frac{4}{3}$)	
Taylor	)	Taylor	)	$\frac{4}{3}$	)		)	Taylor
Hilton	)		)		)	$\frac{4}{2}$)	
Herd	)	Herd	)	19 th))	
Blyth	)		)		)	$\frac{3}{2}$)	
Kirkaldy	)	Kirkaldy	)	$\frac{7}{6}$	)		)	Rolland
Hutchings	)		)		)	$\frac{2}{1}$	)	$\frac{2}{1}$
Auchterlonie	)	Auchterlonie	)	$\frac{2}{1}$))	
Fergusson	)		)		)	$\frac{2}{1}$)	
Rolland	)	Rolland	)	$\frac{4}{3}$	)		)	Rolland
Hutchinson	)		)		)	$\frac{19}{th}$)	
Fernie	)	Fernie	)	$\frac{4}{3}$))	
Stuart	)		)		)	$\frac{2}{1}$)	
Simpson	)	Tait	)	$\frac{2}{1}$))	
Tait))))	

Although there is no evidence of any repeat of a tournament which pitted eight amateurs against eight professionals, there was a match at St Andrews on St Andrew's Day 1897, when Freddie Tait and Ernley Blackwell played Andrew Kirkaldy and Willie Auchterlonie in a better ball competition over 36 holes. Perhaps surprisingly the amateurs won easily (5/4), with the highlight of a hole-in-one by Blackwell at the eighth hole. The amateurs' better ball score of 69 in the afternoon was certainly exceptional.

Saturday – Cinque Ports GC Tournament

The Cinque Ports Club took advantage of the plethora of talent assembled at Sandwich to stage a 36-hole tournament at the end of the week of the Championship.

The course at Deal had been laid out by Ramsay Hunter (St George's) and was said to resemble Scottish links both in terms of design and in quality of the turf. Thirty-two players entered and it was Sandy Herd who came to the fore after the first nine, scoring 38 and showing form that had been absent earlier in the week. The key protagonists, Taylor and Rolland each recorded 44 for the first circuit of the nine-hole layout. Herd completed the first eighteen holes in 80 shots, breaking the course record in the process, however Hugh Kirkaldy took the record from him in the afternoon with a 79. The leader board had a look that would become very familiar over then next twenty years with Herd, Vardon and Taylor all featuring and Braid not far in arrears.

- | | | | | |
|----|--------------|-----------------|-----|-----|
| 1. | Sandy Herd | 38. 42. 40. 41. | 161 | £15 |
| 2. | Harry Vardon | 43. 41. 40. 40. | 164 | £ 8 |



Rolland and Taylor, finalists in the Amateurs v Professionals

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|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----|---------|
| 3. | Douglas Rolland | 44. 41. 42. 40. | 167 | £4 10s. |
| 3 | JH Taylor | 44. 42. 40. 41. | 167 | £4 10s. |

It is interesting to note yet again that the mornings no longer seemed to suit Rolland. He was six shots adrift of Sandy Herd after nine holes and the same at the end of the tournament. He was not the only one; Hugh Kirkaldy was sixth with 169 which included two 7s and a 9.

Prize Fund

During the week Rolland won:

Challenge Match	£15
The Open Championship	£20
Match against Joe Lloyd	£5
Professionals' vs Amateurs	£20
Cinque Port Tournament	£4 10s.

A grand total of £64 10s, which was a significant sum for a week's work. I wonder whether Rolland considered sending any of this windfall back to Edinburgh to support his daughter, Louisa Rolland Campbell, who was by then nine years old? He was still under an obligation to contribute £8 per annum towards her upkeep.

By comparison, JH Taylor won £53 10s. over the week:

Stanmore Tournament (Wednesday 6 th of June)	£ 9
The Open Championship	£30
Professionals vs Amateurs	£10
Cinque Ports Tournament	£4 10s.

This week in June had, once again, shown Douglas Rolland to be one of the best golfers of his day. He had come second in The Open Championship and although he never threatened to win, he had beaten Willie Park Jnr, Freddie Tait and JH Taylor in matches within a week.

However, that week also showed that the balance of power in golf was changing. John Henry Taylor's victory was the first by one of the Great Triumvirate, who won sixteen of the twenty-one Championships played between 1894 and 1914.

This does not detract from Rolland's exceptional record over the previous six years. He played and beat every golfer of note who would meet him. He could produce golf of such power and excellence that it left others floundering. His willingness to play anyone, anywhere was critical to the development of the game in England, and his matches drew crowds never previously seen. If the next twenty years belonged to the Triumvirate, then the previous six had surely belonged to Douglas Rolland.

His record is remarkable. He played in 46 matches between 1888 and 1894, winning 38 (an 83% success rate) and participated in seven tournaments and won five (a 71% success rate).

Golf was changing. The game was increasing in popularity every year, and the number of courses was increasing significantly. Those who played the game professionally were having to change too. Douglas had always been on the margin between a caddie and a professional and this way of life was disappearing; a page had been turned.

This does not mean Rolland was finished as a force in golf and in the final part of his story I will explore the last twenty years of his life.