

John Allen Hawkes DONALDSON 1903 - 1966



John Donaldson was born in Newburn on 9th February 1903. His parents lived in Lahill Lodge and his father was a coachman.

He served his apprenticeship with Andrew Scott in Earlsferry. His family moved to Colinsburgh and in 1911 his father is shown as being a gas stoker. He had a brother James William Given Donaldson who was born in 1906 and at that time Donaldson senior was described as an insurance agent living in Colinsburgh. We expect that whilst doing his apprenticeship he may well have lodged with someone in Elie but we do not know who. He became a professional golfer presumably after he had finished his apprenticeship with Scott and initially we think he was attached to the RAC club in Epsom and he was living in Banstead but there is a newspaper report of his exploits.

“.....the 25-years-old John Donaldson, until recently assistant to another East Lothian man, William Watt, at the scene of yesterday’s struggle (RAC Club Epsom). Only a few months ago Donaldson became a fully-fledged professional with the neighbouring Cuddington Club.”

A 25-year-old player named John Donaldson, a native of Elie, in Fifeshire, who has been located in the London district for several seasons, finished second this week in the qualifying rounds of the Southern section, which embraces most of the stars of professional golf. It was a very enlivening performance on the part of a man hitherto almost unknown and until recently assistant, but as it was due mostly to remarkable putting, which produced record score of 67 for the Royal Automobile Club's course at Epsom, has to wait for sustenance its creator [*sic*]. On the 18 greens Donaldson took only putts.” 1929

He seems, according to that report, to have been in the London area for a few seasons and it is reasonable to suggest he had been assistant to William Watt at Epsom before appointment to Cuddington in Surrey as that club's first professional. He held that post until 1966.

Cuddington Golf Club. This course was opened on 1st January 1929. The course was designed by H S Colt in conjunction with John Morrison and Frank Harris Brothers who produced a downland course of good length and variety. The greens were large and offset to emphasise the correct line of play.

The Clubhouse, opened in June 1929, was designed by A C Burlingham, and intended to accommodate 200 full male members and a like number of other categories of membership. Over the years the Clubhouse has been altered internally to provide more appropriate accommodation for members and staff and their needs. The current membership amounts to around 750 including Lady, Junior and Social Members.

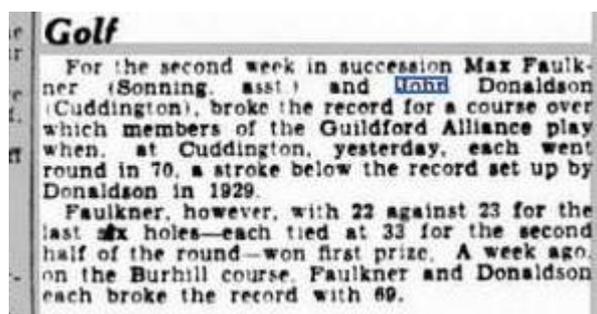
The Club's first Professional was **John Donaldson** who remained at Cuddington until 1966. John Donaldson was succeeded by his Assistant, Harold Guy, who himself gave great service to the Club until 1982. [Cuddington G.C. website] There is a reference on his appointment to his brother having also been engaged as his assistant.

He married Ellen Biddlecombe in April 1930 presumably shortly after his appointment and they lived in Banstead in Surrey. She was 18 years older than him being born in 1885 and so far as we can find out they did not have any children.

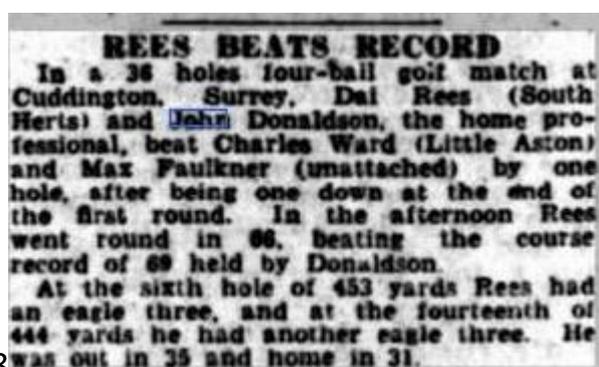
In 1943 there was this excerpt from a local newspaper:

John Donaldson, the local professional, unfit for war service, but able to do his stuff in a munition factory, unfortunately nearly sliced off the middle finger of his right hand during the week, and so could not play in the match.

He played a lot locally and some of his exploits were reported.



1938



1946

£1,040 TOURNEY. Remarkable Round by Young Pro. Archie Compston, twice winner of the first prize, headed the qualifying list of the Southern section of the £1.040 "News of the World" tournament the R.A.C. course, Woodcote Park, Epsom, yesterday. Perhaps by reason of his achievements of the past, Compston's feat of totalling 141 for the 36 holes attracted lesser notice than that the 25-year-old John Donaldson, until recently assistant to another East Lothian man, William Watt, at the scene of yesterday's struggle. The local professional had held the lead over the field, but his erstwhile pupil took all the attention when with 67, he placed himself ahead of all until the burly Compston shouldered his way to the front to the extent of one stroke. Only a few months ago Donaldson became a fully-fledged professional with the neighbouring Cuddington Club. Donaldson improved two strokes upon the joint record of Charles Whitcombe and Henry Cotton on Wednesday.

"I fear must lie confessed that desperately little talent of high promise has been brought to light in the eliminating rounds of the event known the British Professional match-play championship, which to be decided at Wentworth, Surrey on September 17 and following days. A 25-year-old player named John Donaldson, a native of Elie, in Fifeshire, who has been located London district for several seasons, finished second this week in the qualifying rounds of the Southern section, which embraces most of the stars of professional golf. It was a very enlivening performance on the part of a man hitherto almost unknown and until recently assistant, but as it was due mostly to remarkable putting, which produced record score of 67 for the Royal Automobile Club's course at Epsom, has to wait for sustenance its creator. On the 18 greens Donaldson took only 29 putts. Even the Americans, with their much vaunted strokes in the short game, do not set themselves this standard. It comes once in a long while to every competent and confident player who finds himself the rapturous clasp the putting inspiration. It sometimes contended young British professionals while their duty to their members, while the American who shows the potentialities of top sawyer [sic] by the members thinking all the while of him nursing him and encouraging him to [be] champion. They give him confidence that vital art of putting, because he feels that, whatever happens, he has his patrons in solid array to support him. British people always have left their people to individual pioneers in games. It is easy to understand that Americans and others regard their efforts to beat as the efforts of a nation. And putting largely a matter of how you feel about holing the putt. Donaldson succeeded at it because all the members, with whom he was immensely popular as an assistant, wanted him to succeed."* Yorkshire Post 1929

[*An important person]

However, in July 1944 he is shown to have married Elizabeth Hope Dorothy Brown and there does not seem to be a record of his first wife's death until 1973 when she died in Hampshire. We presume therefore that they were divorced and he remarried. She was born in 1910 so slightly younger than him at the time of their marriage. Again, so far as we know he had no children but he and his second wife took up residence in 1945 in Dorking in Surrey at Dene End Reigate Road, Dorking where he lived for the rest of his

life and where his second wife died in February 1968. John died in 1966 which must have been very shortly after he retired from Cuddington. His second wife is shown as being of private means in the census in which she appears and on her death her estate was shown to have consisted of £92,922 (equivalent to £1.6m in 2021).

There is a reference to a new assistant joining Donaldson in Cuddington in 1935 or so and it says that this new assistant replaced John's brother. Research suggests that he did not continue as such and came back to live in Elie at 11 Park Place, where his father and mother lived. It is not known his occupation but his father, when he died, was described as a retired gardener although when living in 11 Park Place he was described as a vansman. James W.G. died in 1975 in Elie. Again, so far as we can find out, he was not married although there was a similar name James William G Donaldson who married in 1967 in Bute, but we do not think this is the same person.

	fennie do.		wife		57	Mar.	24	2	-	16
2	Margaret Aitken	1	Head		45-	Wid				17
3	James Donaldson	4	Head	36		Mar.				18
	James M. do.		wife		34	Mar.	9	3	3	19
	John Allan do.		son	8		!				20
	James W. do.		son	4		!				21

Sealed London 12 January.

ex

DONALDSON John Allen Hawkes otherwise John Alan Hawkes of Dene End Reigate Road Dorking Surrey died 23 January 1966 at Guys Hospital London S.E.1 Probate London 28 April to Elisabeth Hope Dorothy Donaldson widow. £8618.

Probate (£8,681 equates to £140k

2021)