

David Simpson

1855 - 1943

David was the second son of Alexander and May Simpson. He was born in 1855 and so far, as we can see he may have been a good golfer but he did not follow the rest of his siblings into golf club making but he was a player of some renown. He married 1889 and had two children (Alexander and May) and he died in St. Andrews on 18th May 1943. He had been trained as a mason and worked all his life as one. However, he had an impact even although he was not one of the Simpson professionals or club makers. He was a mason to trade as had his father been before him. It is more than likely he popped over to Carnoustie of a Saturday afternoon to help his younger brother Bob in his enterprise there. However, when he lived in St. Andrews, he achieved much on the golf course and was well known as a very good amateur.

ST ANDREWS GOLF CLUB CARNOUSTIE. GRAND DAY'S WORK BY THE ST ANDREWS MEN. BY ONE WHO TRAVELLED. *Last Saturday 25 players representing the St Andrews Golf Club travelled to Carnoustie to fulfil the first half of the great home and home match with the powerful Carnoustie Club. The team returned to the city in the evening having accomplished splendid afternoon's work. The result of the day's play was—Carnoustie, 11 matches; St Andrews, 8 matches. Contrasting this with last season's figures, which were Carnoustie, 19; St Andrews 31, one immediately recognises what wonderful improvement has set in amongst the St Andrews Clubmen, especially the younger players.*

Few teams can return from Carnoustie and do so well. I am sure there is not another artisan Club in Scotland that could hold the Carnoustie boys as the St Andrews men did last week, and it is right that we give them every credit. I travelled to Carnoustie by the mid-day train, and it was gratifying to see what grand turn out of the old veterans was there, men who had represented St Andrews against the chosen of Forfarshire nearly years ago.

There was David Simpson, than whom no one is more popular among his fellows and also with his opponents, quite fit to hold his own with the best of them yet. Davie hasn't been to Carnoustie for years, but he recalled one particular match there which evidently gave him great satisfaction. He was told on arrival at the tee that he was up against so and so, and that he had no chance. He was to lose by 10 holes. His opponent had nothing to do but win hole after hole until the match was concluded, as easily as knocking flies of a tablecloth.

Davie's made of pretty stern stuff, so he set his teeth together and played so well that he had his opponent in the uncomfortable position of being dormy five down. "Davie," of course, won and taught his opponent and that worthy's friends a severe lesson. The merry party soon reached Carnoustie, where enthusiastic following awaited their arrival. They take their golf very seriously in Carnoustie. It used to be likewise in St Andrews. At Carnoustie I am told when it is too dark to play, they will indulge in half-an-hour's putting round the last green in the dusk. Well, to the match. The Carnoustie course is very wide, very flat, and, one must admit, very monotonous, but a grand test of long driving, affording ample scope for cleek and iron play. A. Simpson, son of David, is like his sire a born player, and he came in with victory to his credit; 1910

His claim to fame in Earlsferry comes from the following cutting from the newspapers of 1896. It was the tradition if not the rule that if any competitor of a club won the same trophy three times in a row it became his own absolute property. In this instance as can be seen from the report David won the Glover Medal/Cross twice and obviously had he won it on the next occasion he would have kept the trophy. His complaint was basically that the club had advertised the competition in such a way as to make it difficult for him to know of its proposed date and therefore enter. He obviously

claimed that the actual competition was invalid because he had not been given an opportunity to take part in it. The court continued the case to enable minute books and regulations to be lodged and so far as we can see they were lodged a few days later witness this notice.

THE GOLF CLUB AND ITS MEDAL.—The action by Earlsferry Golf Club against Mr **David Simpson** presently residing at St Andrews, for delivery of the "Glover" medal was again before Sheriff-Substitute Henderson at Cupar on Thursday. The pursuers have delivered the minute and cash books, and the book which contains the rules of the different competitions. The Sheriff is to hear parties on Tuesday, so as, if possible, to avoid a proof. Agents—For pursuers—Mr W. T. Ketchen, W.S.; for defender—Mr J. E. Grosset.

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EARLSFERRY THISTLE GOLF CLUB.

DAVID SIMPSON AND THE "GLOVER'S MEDAL."

Before Sheriff-Substitute Henderson at Cupar on Thursday, an action was intimated at the instance of Earlsferry Thistle Golf Club, ordaining David Simpson, mason, presently residing at 22 Abbey Street, St Andrews, to deliver to the committee of said club a gold cross or medal, known as the "Glover Cross." Mr J. E. Grosset, Cupar, who appeared for the defender, said that the cross in question was a prize given by the Thistle Golf Club for competition, the person winning it three times to become the owner. The defender had won the cross twice in succession in July and August, 1882. No competition took place for a considerable period after that. In 1899 a third competition was held, when Simpson had taken up his residence in St Andrews. He (the defender) had got no notice that such a competition was to take place, and he was thus debarred from coming forward. The winner on that occasion had never asked him to deliver up the cross. The defender considered he was entitled to keep possession of the medal until it had been won. The Sheriff asked if there was any evidence in the club's minute books as to giving notice to competitors of the competitions? Mr W. T. Ketchen, W.S., who appeared for the club, said that the competitions had taken place in the usual way, but he would be quite willing to produce the minute books. The Sheriff—And any other information as to whether the competition was advertised? Mr Grosset pointed out that the defender did not claim ownership of the cross. The Sheriff said it was an asset of the club, and it could not possibly vest in defender as a personal right. He understood defender only held the prize *pro tem*. He would adjourn the case in order that the minute books might be produced.

There does not seem to be a report of what happened "on Tuesday" so we must assume that his claim was withdrawn or refused. However, there is an interesting side story to the Glover Cross/Medal. On the Earlsferry Thistle website there is a section which deals with the trophies and the winners. The Glovers Cross/Medal according to that website was only instituted in 1953 when it was donated by Thomas T Glover. We are fairly certain that such a trophy would have been donated by Thomas Craigie Glover of Earlsferry House. There are a number of other trophies both at the Thistle Club and the Golf House club which bear his name. Thomas Craigie Glover (he was known as "Craigie" purchased Earlsferry House which had been built by Admiral William Duddingston in 1906 and took entry to the property in 1887. He died in 1904. Thus, if the Glover Cross/medal was donated by TC Glover it must have been with reasonable certainty within his lifetime. The Thistle website mentions the winners from 1953 onwards. Glover was actually captain of the Golf House Club and his daughter Alexa was the first Scottish Ladies Golf Champion in 1903 (q.v.). Again, newspaper reports give the information that the Cross/Medal was won in 1899 so it would be reasonable to assume that David failed in his bid to cancel the competition for this trophy.

He was sufficiently well known in amateur golf circles and in St. Andrews that his wedding anniversary was the subject of a celebratory report:

NOTED GOLFER'S GOLDEN WEDDING. AND MRS DAVID SIMPSON. Great happiness reigned in the home of Mr and Mrs David Simpson, Abbey Street, St Andrews, on Wednesday. It was a day of special significance, marking the end of fifty years of happy married life. This grand old couple were married half century ago by the Rev. J. E. Houston at Clement's Manse, Dundee, and messages of congratulation have poured into their home. Mr David Simpson was born round the coast in Earlsferry and as a young man he came to St Andrews, where he was to make his mark as an artisan golfer. A few years ago, his long connection with St Andrews Golf Club was fittingly recognised, when he had conferred upon him honorary life membership. His greatest golfing achievement was the winning of the "Glasgow Evening Times" foursomes trophy, with Willie Greig as his partner.

EARLSFERRY THISTLE GOLF CLUB.

Splendid weather favoured the competition for the Glover Cross on Saturday. Several new names of promising young players were coupled with the lowest cards of the afternoon, these being:—Wm. Anderson (winner), with a score of 86 less 10—76; Douglas Given, 93 less 16—77; James Anderson, 88 less 10—78; J. Mackie, 85 less 4—81.

He has also won nearly every trophy of the St Andrews Club, and played in the inter-Club matches and also in national championships. A mason by trade, Mr Simpson served his apprenticeship at Earlsferry, and his first job coming to St Andrews was at the building of the Burgh School Abbey Walk. Afterwards he was the employment of the Town Council for many years, retiring eight years ago. He is now in his 86th year, and attributes his longevity to the fact that until several years ago seldom missed Saturday afternoon's golf. When the St Andrews Club moved into their new headquarters six years ago, Mr Simpson was not present at the opening, but still cherishes a desire to see the Clubhouse. He could have done so, but has steadfastly refused the kind offer of friends to drive him down. He will walk or not at all. One of their two sons, Mr Alexander Simpson, has inherited his father's love for golf, and now holds a golfing appointment in America. The 50th anniversary of the wedding was celebrated in a quiet fashion by the old couple. [June 1939]

His death in 1943 elicited the following obituary.

PASSING OF A NOTED ARTISAN GOLFER—St Andrews has lost one of its noted artisan golfers of the old school by the passing of Mr David Simpson, who died at his home, Abbey Street, on Tuesday evening. He was in his 88th year and had been confined to the house for a considerable time. Along with Mr Willie Greig he had the distinction of heading the list of veteran members of the St Andrews Golf Club. When they were in their prime, they were the Joint-winners of the Glasgow Evening Times foursomes trophy. Mr Simpson won many competitions of this Club in his time and had quite a collection of medals and trophies. He was also one of the stalwarts of the St Andrews team in the inter-Club matches with Leven and Carnoustie, and also played in national championships. The Club several years ago honoured his prowess as a golfer and his services to the Club by electing him life member.

Mr Simpson was born at Earlsferry in 1855, and as his home was on the margin of the golf course there it was no wonder that he became a keen golfer. When a boy he made a walking-stick serve as a club in his first efforts to learn the game. He came to St Andrews when quite a young man to be a mason with the late Mr Ness, builder, and he soon became a prominent figure in local golf. He had the temperament for the game and excelled in putting. When 80 years of age he was quite proud of doing hole in one at the Bruce Embankment Putting Green.

Mr Simpson was a skilled tradesman and helped in the building of the Burgh School and the tower of St Leonards Church. For the last thirty years of his active life he was on the outdoor staff of the Town Council, and was particularly good in the laying of pavement. When he retired on reaching the age of 77, the late Mr William Watson, Burgh Engineer gave him an appreciative testimonial for the valuable work he had done for the city, Simpson was the oldest stone mason in the city.

A happy domestic event in his life was when he and his wife celebrated their golden wedding in June 1939. They were married by the Rev. J. E. Houston, at St Clement's Manse, Dundee. Mr Simpson was of an unassuming and kindly nature, and this, along with his pawky humour made him a popular

personality with all who came in contact with him. He is survived by his wife, one son, and two daughters, and nine grandchildren. The son, Mr Alexander Simpson, has, like his father, been a golfer from his earliest days, and has a green at Massachusetts. His daughter is also in America. The funeral took place to the Western Cemetery to-day (Friday). [1943]

SIMPSON.—On Wednesday, 17th February 1954, Catherine Grant (in her 90th year), beloved wife of the late David Simpson, 29 Abbey Street, St Andrews, and mother of Mrs Finlay. Funeral private to Western Cemetery from Macgregor's Service Rooms, North Street, on Saturday at 2 p.m.

His wife died in 1954

