

Tom Reekie & John Reekie

1880 – 1958



1923 - 2007

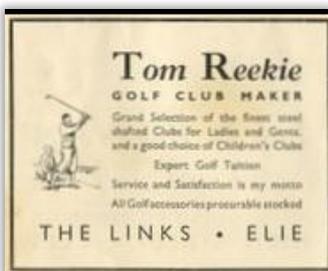


There cannot be anyone who has visited Elie in the last 100 years who has not heard the name Reekie. Father Tom and son John were stalwarts of the Elie golfing scene from 1918 when Tom came back from World War 1 and 2007 when John, who took over the business, died.

Tom was actually born in St. Monans on 20th May 1880. His father was one of a number of Reekies in the area who earned their living from the sea. It was a hard and hazardous life and Tom made it clear at an early age that he disliked the sea which rather ruled out his succession to the family boat.

30	Thomas Reekie	1880.	M	John Reekie Fisherman	John Reekie Father	1880.
		May				May 24 th
		Greenhills		Christina Reekie		St. Monans
		6th. Mrs. P. St.		M. L. Casson		James Scott Registrar.
	Broadway		1875 December 17 th			
	St. Monans		St. Monans			

However aged 15 he was taken on as an apprentice with George Forrester in 1895. Initially he commuted from St. Monans although he may have had some sort of temporary lodgings in Earlsferry. On his return from World War 1 he set up his own plate as a golf club maker and professional. By that time Forrester was still in business but his son and he did not see eye to eye and there was a lack of successor to the business which eventually was wound up in 1926 and the machinery, devised in the main and built by Forrester, was put up for sale.



Tom probably acquired some of the machinery and stock in trade from the auction. He certainly acquired the brass mould which was used for the gutty ball making. By that time Andrew Scott (q.v.) was the pre-eminent golf club maker in Earlsferry but his market was more international than local. Tom decided to set up as a professional as well teaching and making golf clubs.

When James Maclean Sunter (q.v.) the appointed professional at Elie Golf House club moved to Edinburgh in 1930 one would have thought it would have been natural that Tom or Andrew Scott would be appointed the resident professional for the club in his place. However, it was not to be and it may have had something to do with the competition that was provided by Crowley (who by

then was in Glasgow) Scott, Reekie and James Forrester. All four had a shed/shop up against the wall of the car park area at the Sports Club. He also established a workshop in his house in Viewforth in the High Street of Earlsferry and for a time 1921 he was the tenant of Forrester at Moonzie Cottage in Links Road which he may have used as a workshop. Viewforth had been owned by Mrs Catherine Sime the mother of Willie Sime (q.v.) and the Reekie family originally living in the Cross merely crossed to the other side of Earlsferry High Street in 1923 or thereabouts.

He became a renowned teacher and many an aspiring youngster was taught by Tom Reekie in the sports club area beside the Pavilion. His shop in addition to selling golf equipment also served at one time as the ticket supplier for those playing the Ladies Course (Baird Course now). Tom married Katie in 1919 and moved to the Cross before moving to Viewforth.

1019.	(Signed)	37	Broad Wynd	John Reekie	(Signed)	1019.
on the Twenty seventh	Thomas Reekie		Earlsferry	Fisherman	John Turnbull	June 25th
day of June	Golf Clubmaker				Minister of the	
at Abercrombie House	(Bachelor)			Christina Reekie	earlsferry and Earlsferry	
St. Monance				W. S. Enson	(Deceased)	at St. Monance
After Dinner	(Signed)	20	Rose Street	Peter Ferguson	(Signed)	
According to the Terms	Catherine Helen Ferguson		St. Monance	James	Thomas Latta	Witness
of the Established	Domestic Servant			William Ferguson	Lizzie Reekie	Witness
Church of Scotland.	(Spinster)			W. S. Latta	Witness	

It was the norm in these days for Earlsferry and Elie residents to move out of their homes during the summer “season” and live in a shed or cottage in the garden. The newspapers of the time would report which eminent families from which metropolis were spending the season renting the Earlsferry residents’ houses. The Reekie family was no exception, and the author of these articles has fond memories of living in Viewforth for two or three “seasons”. Tom and family lived in a small cottage in the garden during the “season” but he often came into the back garden of an evening and watched the author develop his golfing skills (aged 4), and whose future success would owe much to Tom’s sage advice.



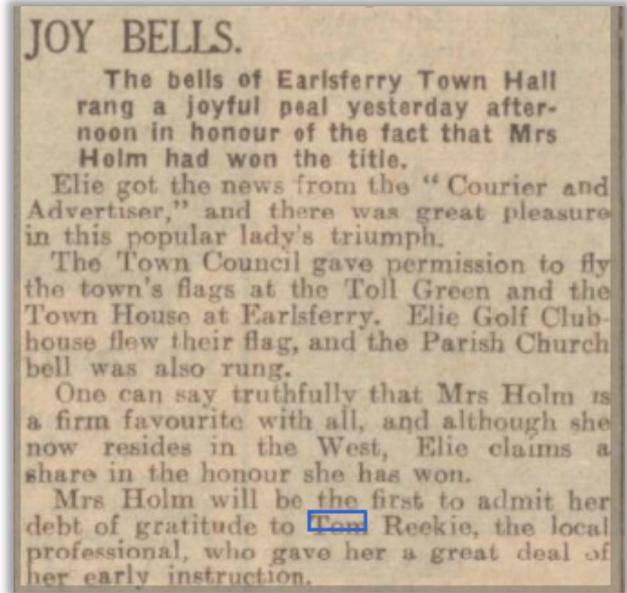
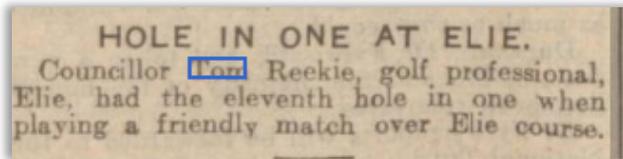
Another abiding memory - it must have been in 1949 - in Viewforth there was a half landing on the stairs which looked out across the garden and bay. It has been reconfigured now. One Sunday morning the peace was shattered by large repeated booming noise coming from the north. The author was terrified but relieved to hear and watch as the guns at Kinraig Point practiced firing into the estuary. Sure enough large splashes were observed close(ish!) to the target boat being towed up the Forth.

Tom initially made his own clubs from wood blanks he had prepared. Sometimes they were laminated other times solid beech or persimmon. The shafts of course were initially hickory but that soon gave way to steel shafts. His first foray into iron clubs would have been the manufacture



by Anderson in Anstruther – the blacksmith – who forged iron clubs and would pass them on to Tom. He ran his own brand of golf clubs which latterly were made by Nicoll in Leven but always contained his signature. He must have sold many thousands of clubs from the cut down smaller ones for children through to ladies sets and then the men’s sets. He also had a range of Tom Reekie putters. Here is an example of one purchased as a result of caddy earnings during holiday (photo left).

On the golf course Tom and John were canny players – not perhaps the full bloodied slash and hope brigade but the measured stylish swingers. It was teaching really however that was their fortes.



1937 (above) and 1934 (right).

Tom handed over to his son John in 1945 and it became Tom Reekie & Son and John was to continue the business until his retirement in 2000 or so and he died in 2007.

Tom and Katie had three children. John the eldest born in 1923, Sydney born in 1926 and Noel born in 1929. Apart from Tom and John's legacy, Elie and Earlsferry are very much indebted to the younger siblings. Sydney eventually emigrated to Oregon where he died in 2019 but he created a wonderful resource of memories of his childhood in Earlsferry at www.scottishheritage.net Whilst the website will not be updated since Sydney's (Scott's) death in 2019, the family maintain it as a legacy to all those with fondness for Elie and Earlsferry.

Both Noel and Sydney have another legacy which may not be so well known. In the 1950s they joined with Gerald Moncrieff in converting what is now Little Court into apartments. It is normally the position in Elie and Earlsferry that proprietors of property on the sea front own the ground right down to the high-water mark. However in the case of Little Court, Sydney and Noel retained the

area from the southern wall of Little Court to the high-water mark. Initially the rationale was to make it available for the Reekie family and others to use the space for beach huts which they would erect and dismantle yearly. The author of this article believes that the ground is still notionally owned by the representatives of Sydney and Noel (who died in 2007). However prior to Sydney's death and after Noel's death there is an email from Noel and Sydney to a firm of local lawyers advising of the right. Whether that is still the position we do not know. Sydney and Noel were engineers of some ingenuity and before they both moved to America they were involved in Fife Engineering Co. Ltd. (FENCO). Another project of Gerald Moncrieff which had a factory currently next door to Earlsferry Thistle golf club House. Not so long ago an article appeared in the newspapers referring to this company.



A limited company was further incorporated called Tom Reekie Ltd in 1948 whose objects were to deal in indoor and outdoor sports equipment. Tom and Sydney were directors but we do not know what happened to that company.