

Kirkbrae-Golf Hotel- Golf Court



Situated alongside the Wood Memorial Church the plot on which it was built was acquired from the Wood Memorial church by William Greenfield in 1890 or so. Greenfield

was born in England but eventually acquired the post of Professor of Anatomy/Pathology at Edinburgh University medical school and he was instrumental in making Edinburgh one of the most prestigious centres for medical education.

In 1881 having worked in England he transferred to the Edinburgh medical school where professional examinations consisted of anatomy physiology material medica and pathology. There was no doubt that pathology was the simplest course and perfunctorily taught but Greenfield set out to make it an important course for all medical students.

He also pioneered changing university buildings to far more suitable premises and as a result he became a very well-known teacher. He acquired the plot of ground from the church and commenced building a substantial country house on it. It was called Kirkbrae because the hill upon which it was built was owned by the church. He started building his house in about 1890 but retired in 1912 intending to spend his years of retirement in his large country house. Latterly his health deteriorated and he died in 1919. Of his family a son was a doctor in London, another was a minister of the United free Church of Scotland. His eldest daughter was in charge of the church hospital in Puna. So there was a very strong connection both to the church and medicine. His children whilst appreciating the house that he had built were really not in a position to take it on so the property was sold and it was purchased by J.B. Greig who turned it into hotel known as the Kirkbrae Hotel in the first instance and subsequently adding 'Golf'.

Greig himself was a character and had a few scrapes with the law as a licensee of the Kirkbrae Hotel. He was also a specialist deep sea angler having brought many fish which he caught himself to the table of the Golf Hotel. It was a very successful hotel in many respects not least of which it was, other than the Marine, the only hotel of

any substance in Elie at the time. Indeed James Braid in one of his, very infrequent, trips to Elie in 1929 stayed in the Golf Hotel rather than the Marine.

In 1933 Greig made some court appearances. One was for not having a proper driving licence, the second was for making alterations to his premises without the licensing court's permission and thirdly, in May 1930, being drunk on his own premises. However it seems no doubt that it was a very successful business but by 1939 at the outbreak of war he decided that the hotel would have to close. It was then taken over by the Polish parachute regiment who had been billeted in Elie. Behind the hotel on the Recreation Park, Polish paratroopers built a scaffold above which they practised jumping off with a parachute and landing safely – at least one assumes most of the time!

Greig sold the hotel in 1948 and it was purchased by Mr J R Henry. The ravages of the Polish paratroopers during the Second World War necessitated a considerable number of alterations and renovation and eventually the hotel was reopened in 1948 as simply the Golf Hotel. With the downturn on those likely to want to stay in hotels it was eventually sold for development in 2000. After some shenanigans the development was eventually finished by 2004 and is now apartments known as Golf Court.

Graham Johnston (Jan 26)