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INSIDE

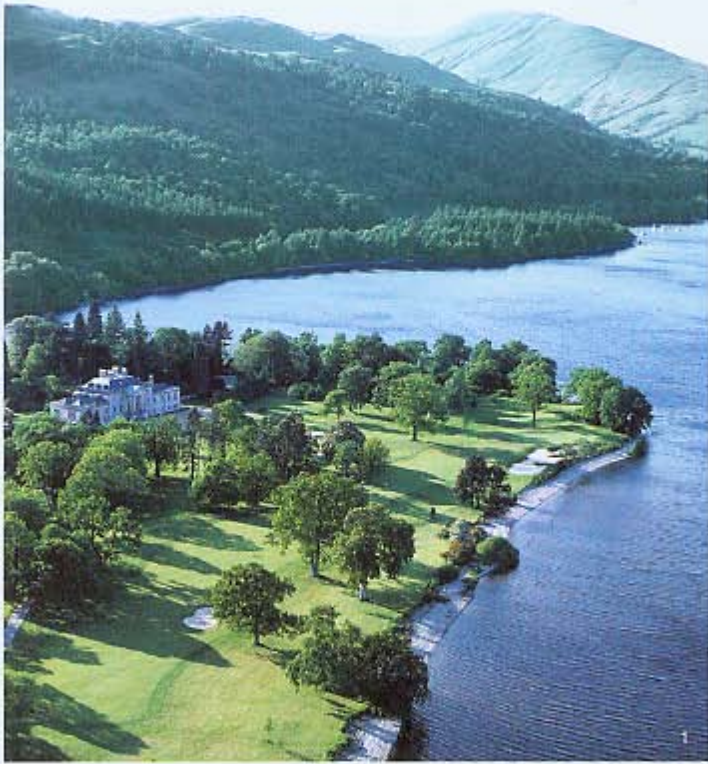
CHRISTIAN SLATER'S SECOND ACT
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An imposing portrait of Sir Lain Colquhoun hangs in the Clan Dining Room of Rosdhu House, Loch Lomond's 18th-century clubhouse





members only

Scotland's exclusive Loch Lomond Golf Club takes tradition seriously
by james y. bartlett

Some people collect golf club memberships like Tiger Woods makes birdies: in bunches.

You gotta have one near home, one in each of the branch locations, one near the vacation home, and then a few more just for the status of being able to say, "Oh yeah, I'm a member there!"

Except perhaps for the lucky few who can write off the membership fees because they have a plant in the booming "Silicon Glen" high-tech area between Glasgow and Edinburgh, the Loch Lomond Golf Club, tucked away on the bonnie, bonnie shores of the lake at the entrance to the Scottish Highlands, is convenient to nowhere. And the growing membership role at the club does not seem to be comprised of social climbers or those who join just to put another notch on their golf belts.

What does seem to be the unifying appeal for those seeking to join Loch Lomond is a simple appreciation for the game. This is, after all, the Home of Golf, where the sport is played by almost everyone, and truly private golf clubs are rare animals. At Loch Lomond, one feels an almost metaphysical connection to the roots of the game.

The grounds had a rocky beginning. The golf course, originally designed by Tom Weiskopf and Jay Morrish, saw its first rounds played in 1993, but shortly thereafter, the club was taken over by the Bank of Scotland, which oversaw the completion of the course.

A year later, enter Lyle Anderson, the Scottsdale-based developer of fine residential golf communities, including Desert Mountain, Desert Highlands, Las Campanas, Superstition Mountain and others. He saw the

potential at Loch Lomond, not as yet another residential community, but more as a golfer's club modeled after Pine Valley and even, perhaps, Augusta National. After purchasing the property, Anderson has very carefully and deliberately set about creating the infrastructure that would appeal to that kind of membership.

Certainly, the setting is spectacular. Loch Lomond, although just over 30 minutes from downtown Glasgow, is visually stunning, with the dark waters of the loch offset by the green shapes of the hills of Luss rising from its shores, and the towering eminence of Ben Lomond, often covered in snow, off to the north.

It was here that Weiskopf (for the most part) created a masterpiece design, with a routing that ducks into deep forests, emerges for several holes along the loch, drifts past the edifice of Rossdhu, the ancestral home of the chiefs of Clan Colquhoun ("Calhoun"), darts dangerously through a

Truly private golf clubs are rare animals. At Loch Lomond, one feels an almost metaphysical connection to the game

murky wetlands and emerges, finally, back along the waterfront to a final green built in the shadow of an ancient battlement tower.

The course, which has hosted the Barclays Scottish Open on the



PREVIOUS PAGE: 1. Aerial view of Rossdhu House and the 7th hole on the banks of the loch. 2. The 5th green at Loch Lomond Golf Club. THESE PAGES: 3. The Castle Suite in Rossdhu House. 4. The entrance

of Rossdhu House, an elegant Georgian mansion functioning as the clubhouse. 5. The Gentlemen's Locker Room. 6. Ben Lomond mountain standing proud at the head of the loch.



European PGA Tour schedule since 1997, is annually ranked among the best in Great Britain. Like Augusta National and other prime courses, it's tweaked often—the par-five 6th hole, which runs along the loch, has been stretched out to 625 yards from the pro tees, making it the longest hole in Scotland. Yet the short par-four 14th offers the risk-reward of a drivable green via a shortcut over Tom's Bog—where Weiskopf, during the early stages of course construction, went out early one morning by himself, fell into a quicksand bog and nearly disappeared without a trace. It's the same fate suffered by many a Titleist on the hole.

Anderson's first job on taking over was to upgrade Rossdhu House, an elegant Georgian mansion that functions as the main clubhouse. He brought in Scottsdale interior designer Donna Vallone, who not only created lavishly appointed locker rooms in the lower level, along with the informal and always busy Spike Bar, but added elegant refinement to the more formal public rooms, the main dining room, meeting spaces, library and the sun-filled sitting room overlooking the loch. With portraits of generations of Colquhoun greats hanging on the walls, along with stag heads from successful hunts past, the overall atmosphere is one of understated taste and Scottish gentility.

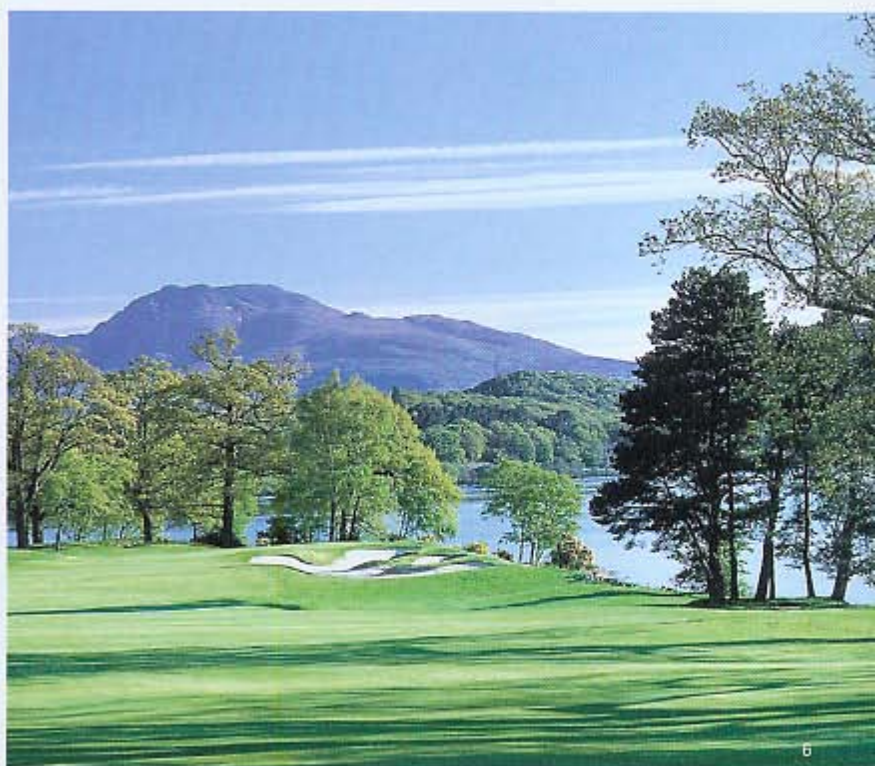
Rather than surround the fairways of the Loch Lomond course with homes, which would distract from the wild country appeal of the Highlands, Anderson has instead built a series of tasteful "lodges" in hidden glens along the shore of the lake for the use of visiting members. These mansion-sized structures typically consist of four very private bedroom suites

centered around a common greatroom area filled with comfortable sofas and chairs, a long dining table and a kitchen. Early each morning, the club staff arrives unobtrusively to lay out a continental breakfast, and the refrigerator is always stocked with cold drinks.

Of course, most golfers associate "Scotland" with "links golf," and while the club's efficient staff can make arrangements for members to visit any of the nearby seaside courses, in 2004, Anderson found the perfect complement to the parkland Loch Lomond course.

Down on the Ayrshire coast, about an hour's drive south of Loch Lomond, another developer had hired American architect Kyle Phillips—renowned for his amazing new links at Kingsbarns near St. Andrews—to recreate an ancient links course that had fallen into fallow disrepair following the Second World War, when an Army barracks had taken over the site. But just as Phillips was finishing up work at the course now called Dundonald, the developer fell ill and had to abandon his plans for a resort hotel and residential neighborhood overlooking the course, and put the place up for sale.

Anderson took one look at Dundonald and bought the place, knowing that, despite the drive, it would provide Loch Lomond members with that Scottish links-golf experience. The course is just inland from Royal Troon, but occupies the same machair terrain of rolling dunes, wind-buffed grasses, tiny winding burns and stands of thick, unforgiving gorse. And Phillips took full advantage of the site, adopting some of the existing old golf holes into his new design, and creating a seamless new golf course that offers rollicking good fun.



For membership information, contact:

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The wind whistles in from the nearby sea, demanding the traditional Scottish knock-down, run-up, hit-and-hope kind of golf that can be found nowhere else on the globe. A partially constructed clubhouse building will eventually house a comfortable and luxurious refuge from the wind and occasional rain for Loch Lomond members.

Back at Rossdhu, head chef Darren Harrison, recently honored as Scotland's chef of the year, nightly produces amazing cuisine in the formal dining room, with cuts of beef from the Duke of Buccleuch's estate, seafood fresh from the Irish and North seas, the famous Loch Fyne oysters, salmon from Scotland's fast-running rivers and produce from local suppliers. It's all complemented by a varied wine cellar.

Those who don't wish to spiff up for dinner can take advantage of the brasserie-style meals served in the Spike Bar, which also offers excellent cooked breakfast and hearty lunches for post-golf appetites. The staff throughout the club, drawn in large part from local towns, is fresh-faced and exceptionally friendly. Club chief executive Keith Williams has managed to find the right balance between personality and service in his staff.

Believing that, despite evidence to the contrary, man does not live by golf alone, the Loch Lomond club also offers all kinds of other diversions and activities, from brisk hikes and birding expeditions to boating excursions and even the club's own ghillie, who can organize fly-fishing on the loch or one of the nearby salmon rivers. In the fall and winter, hunting attracts other members in search of the wild roe deer that live in the surrounding rugged hills and braes.

The club's fleet of Range Rovers are ready to pick members up at the Edinburgh or Glasgow airports, take them to and from the cottages on the property, or shuttle them into Glasgow. That city, once a gray and dreary ship-building and manufacturing city on the River Clyde, has blossomed in a new renaissance built around the Arts and Crafts designs of native son Charles Rennie Macintosh with a smart downtown now filled with shops, excellent restaurants and cultural events.

And there's more to come for members at Loch Lomond. At the end of this summer, the club will unveil its new spa facility, being installed in the Walled Garden, the brick enclosure that once provided produce and herbs for the chieftan's kitchen. The facility will feature products and treatments from ESPA.

In addition, Jack Nicklaus, one of Anderson's longtime collaborators, has designed a signature golf course on another section of loch-front property. The club is working through the permitting process with the local authorities, and hopes to break ground on the course in the next year.

A few years hence, with that course installed, Loch Lomond will be able to boast some of the best golf to be found in the British Isles.

That, as well as Anderson's experienced and steady hand at the helm, should be reason enough for any "club collector" to add Loch Lomond to the roster. ■

James Y. Bartlett is a noted golf writer and former editor at Golfweek and Luxury Golf magazines. He has just published a book of his golf and travel writing, Back Swings: A Golf Omnibus (Yeoman House, \$19.99).