

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL SCOTT

The Honourable Michael Scott was the Drouin Captain when he won the inaugural Australian Open in 1904. He then followed it up with a second victory at Royal Melbourne in 1907. On both occasions he listed Drouin as his home club despite being a member of both Royal Melbourne and Victoria.

He enjoyed considerable success as a player both in this country and overseas. In 1905 he won the Australian and Victorian Amateur titles. In 1907 he repeated this while also winning the Open. In 1908 he won the Victorian Amateur. In 1909 and 1910 he won the Australian, Victorian and New South Wales Amateur titles. In 1912 and 1922 he won the French Amateur title. His crowning glory came in 1933 when he became the oldest player (55) to win the British Amateur title.

Scott was born in 1878, the youngest son of seven to the Earl of Eldon. Other sources are not as emphatic but the January 2012 edition of *The Hacker Golf* magazine reports that the family arrived in the district in 1904 and took up farming in Drouin West. In some ways this is a pity because no doubt we would have been more impressed if he had proved to be a black sheep of the family banished to the Colonies to mend his ways. Can you imagine playing with an Honourable? Would you have to walk ten paces behind and tug your forelock at his good shots? Of course, our Federal parliamentarians are all Honourables - some are even Right Honourables - but there's not always a lot of respect for them. (Sorry Barry Cunningham but the truth must be told)

He helped establish the Drouin Golf Club after we got going in 1902 and was then elected, or perhaps selected, as our Captain. He did this while maintaining membership of Royal Melbourne (where he won four successive Club Championships) and Victoria Golf Clubs.

You might think that he must have found conditions here pretty tough in comparison but maybe not. Royal Melbourne was founded in 1891 and initially was located near the Caulfield Race Course and could well have been bush. In 1901 it moved to Sandringham but it wasn't until 1926 that Dr Alistair Mackenzie designed and developed the world class course. Victoria was established in 1903 with their first home at Fishermens Bend. Presumably then it wasn't the industrial site it became but no doubt conditions were tough.

In those days it must have been an advantage to be a member of Royal Melbourne. The 1907 Open was played at that course and was not without controversy. The Royal Melbourne officials refused to act when it was claimed that Scott hit off outside the tee off area. The Royal and Ancient was adamant that he should be penalised but nothing eventuated. In 1911 Ivo Whitton, another Member of Royal Melbourne, was embroiled in controversy and was not penalised by the Royal Melbourne officials. Whitton was an extraordinary golfer becoming a life member while still a teenager. In those days being local was obviously an advantage.

Victoria Golf Club does not especially claim him as its own although, when their club history was being written, correspondence was entered into with us seeking information. It is worth noting that he is part of their history in an unusual way. Peter Thompson won five British Opens. In 1955 he formed an unusual double when he won because Doug Bachli won the British Amateur the same year. Both were members of Victoria at the time. Scott's win in the British Amateur in 1933 surely gives the Club some sort of bragging rights especially when you consider that Geoff Ogilvy, another member, won the U.S. Open in 2006. How many Victorian golf clubs can claim this sort of pedigree? Of course it is some comfort for us to know that we were established prior to Victoria even if was only by one year.

The newspaper *The Sydney Gazette* described Scott as a "pocket Hercules" although this hardly matches with a contemporary description where he is said to be "sandy haired and slender build."

This same contemporary correspondent went on to say his greatest attribute was deliberation. “If a pedometer was placed in your pocket ...your pace would not vary a fraction.” Associated with this was “a rigid self-discipline and self-control.” More recently *The Age*’s Martin Blake said he was a superb iron player. Blake described a bet for a “fiver” that Scott made that he could hit a square metre sign on the full from 150 metres away within six shots. He did it in two shots. Think about that next time you haven’t even hit the green from 50 metres out.

In 1911 Scott returned “home” and continued with both his golf and his business. He served in the Great War with distinction winning gallantry medals from France and Portugal. In 1918 he was made an officer of the Order of the British Empire.

Scott was a member of a distinguished golfing family. His brother, Osmund, was runner up in the British Open in 1905. His sister, Margaret, won three British Ladies titles. Over the course of his life he found time to marry three times so certainly didn’t let the grass grow under his feet. There is no mention as to whether his children inherited his golfing genes but you would like to think so.

He continued to play golf right up until his death in 1959. It had been a life of extraordinary achievement and one that Drouin should feel proud to have made a modest contribution. Think about that the next time you trudge up the hill of the 11th the Michael Scott course.

However, spend no time at all thinking about this: there is absolutely no truth in the rumour that Doug Scott is a relation. And thank goodness for that! Imagine how we would all suffer if that was true?

Written by George Shand