



TRUMP'S VISION

DESPITE LOCAL OPPOSITION, DONALD TRUMP WAS DETERMINED TO BUILD WHAT HE SAID WOULD BE THE GREATEST GOLF COURSE IN THE WORLD ON SCOTLAND'S NORTH SEA COAST. NOW IT'S OPEN FOR PLAY AND, IT SEEMS, HE JUST MAY BE RIGHT. TOP GOLF COURSE PHOTOGRAPHER JOHN HENEGBRY SHOWS US WHY. BY THOMAS HYDE.



The 18th hole at Trump International Golf Links, a classic Scottish links course that threads its way through towering dunes beside the North Sea.



Donald Trump and Scottish golfing great Colin Montgomerie share a joke after the opening of Trump International Golf Links. Photo: Getty Images

Donald Trump is part Scottish. His mother was May Anne MacLeod from the village of Tong, on the Isle of Lewis, in the Outer Hebrides. As a property tycoon and golf aficionado who owns a handful of the best golf courses in the United States, it was probably just a matter of time before Trump returned to his mother's homeland to do the same there.

In 2006 he bought Menie Estate, a 600-hectare property of corrugated dunes on the North Sea just north of Aberdeen. The coastline and the marram grass-covered dunes made it the perfect place to build a classic old-world links – or what Trump predicted would be “the world’s greatest golf course”.

Trump took advice from the folk at the venerable Royal

and Ancient Golf Club at St Andrews, who suggested that, rather than importing a notable American designer, he hire Dr Martin Hawtree. Hawtree may be less well known outside the UK, but he has pedigree. His father and grandfather were accomplished golf course architects who specialised in traditional links. His grandfather, in fact, was one of the partners who designed Royal Birkdale, a course that has hosted eight Open Championships. Today, Martin Hawtree is a designer in his own right and a course consultant to the Royal and Ancient. No one understands or appreciates links courses better.

But there was a hitch. Part of Menie Estate was protected land and, because Aberdeenshire folk tend to be conservative, the local council rejected the original plan. Not to be put off, Trump took his case to the British

Government, which cited the potential for tourism and reversed the decision. Protests erupted and one man who refused Trump’s generous offer of a million dollars for his farm was named Scotland’s Man of the Year. It would have been funny had not so much been at stake.

But Trump prevailed and now Trump International Golf Links in Scotland, as the course is formally called, is open for play. And by most accounts it may well be “the world’s greatest golf course”. The *Robb Report* called it the “best of the best”, while no lesser personage than Scotland’s own golfing hero, Colin Montgomerie, had a round and came away stating: “It’s one of the best, if not *the* best, links course I have ever played.”

Sandy Jones, chief executive of the British PGA, said it would rate among the top three courses in the world,

Up for a challenge? The 3rd green emerges from a corrugated fairway framed by tussock. Accuracy is all.



TOP: The 4th fairway leads to a green well protected by a string of deep bunkers. Course views are sensational.

ABOVE: The 12th green. Surrounding dunes provided photographer John Henebry with perfect high locations from which to shoot the course.

adding: “But I don’t know what’s going to be number two and number three.” Joe Passov, a senior editor at *golf.com*, turned up and concluded: “This time Trump is completely believable. His new course is without peer.”

That’s why one of the world’s best golf course photographers, John Henebry, who lives in California, persisted in his bid to shoot the course. He was one of the first professional photographers to do so. As he told *World*, “I was aiming to shoot a handful of the iconic courses in Scotland but waited for permission to shoot Trump International Golf Links before I went over. Once I got permission I turned up in an RV I had hired there and the weather was absolutely perfect. I saw those dunes and went: ‘Oh my God!’ What a choice piece of property it is.

“The staff could not have been more helpful. They gave me a cart and let me do my thing. I often use a cherry picker to get up high, but I didn’t need one here because the dunes are incredible. The great links courses there have a history and are usually linked to a charming village, but they will have only two or three great sea views. This course had 14. I’m an average golfer but I looked at this course as a photographer and with so many sea views I can honestly say it may be the world’s greatest golf course! Mr Trump, a man of great detail, wants me to go back to shoot it again. The course has multiple tees for all handicaps, so, among other different angles from what I shot before, he specifically asked me to shoot the 14th hole from a different tee.” **W**