

# Golf in the raw

**Malcolm Campbell** discovers a new layout where the ancient traditions of the game of golf will be able to find a spirit of renewed awareness.



When Old Tom Morris made what must have been in 1876 a formidable journey from his home town of St Andrews to the southern corner of the Mull of Kintyre far in the west of Scotland to layout the classic links of Machrihanish, he declared the land to be “made by The Almighty for playing golf”. Nearly 140 years later another Scot, also with a formidable reputation for creating memorable golf courses, made the same journey and found the land just as inviting as had the old master. Dave McLay Kidd, a course architect with strong connections in both the Auld Grey Toon and in Machrihanish itself, not to mention an international reputation for great course design ➤

including Bandon Dunes, seemed a natural choice to layout a second course alongside the classic original. The result is Machrihanish Dunes, the first authentic 18-hole links course to be built in the west of Scotland for a hundred years and the first ever entirely on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It was the vision of Australian born, former Apple Executive, Brian Keating, who fell in love with the crumpled, ancient landscape when he first set foot upon it and recognised a unique opportunity to build a classic links truly reflecting the origins of the game itself. The terrain and setting were perfect; an expansive stretch of maram and fescue dominated sand dunes defying the Atlantic rollers that simply reinforced Old Tom's view on its creation. Dave Kidd knew he had been given something very special to work with and that what he would create, and how he would create it, would set the model standard not only for future golf developments on sites of such environmental sensitivity but for sustainable golf in the future. Keating and his design and construction team worked hand-in-hand with the environmental interests in unique co-operation to

prove that golf and the environment can not only co-exist but be a major positive for the long term benefit of both. Machrihanish Dunes is, therefore, more than a golf course, it is living proof that it is possible to reconcile the interests of what are currently too easily regarded as irreconcilable factions. It was a painstaking exercise. The construction demanded virtually a return to the days of Old Tom himself. No heavy ground moving equipment was used on the site; none was allowed. McLay Kidd set his routing plan through the valleys between the dunes and found no need even to lay drainage such as the free-draining quality of the land. Only the greens and tees were "constructed"; the fairways were simply cut down from their natural state in just the same process that Old Tom had supervised nearly a century-and-a-half before. The result is a natural and classic links layout, built by hand for the most part, and with a passion that few modern golf projects enjoy. This is golf in the raw, the way the game began and where the ancient traditions of the game will be able to find a spirit of renewed awareness.



**CARD OF THE COURSE:**  
Par 72 - Black (7,222yds); White (6,813yds); Yellow (6,463yds); Red (5,389yds).

**GREEN FEES**  
Day ticket £95  
Monday through Sunday

**“The first authentic 18-hole links course to be built in the west of Scotland for a hundred years.”**

**Machrihanish Dunes Golf Club**

Machrihanish  
Argyll  
PA28 6NU  
Tel: (44) 1586 554411  
[www.machdunes.com](http://www.machdunes.com)

**HOW TO GET THERE:**

By road from Glasgow (AA journey planner) takes approximately 3.5 hours from the City around Loch Lomond and through Inverary.

Loch Lomond Seaplanes fly charter flights seating a maximum of 9 passengers from their base on the Clyde in Glasgow - takes about 35 minutes.

[www.lochlomondseaplanes.com](http://www.lochlomondseaplanes.com)

Flybe / Loganair fly daily from Glasgow International into Campbeltown. Packages are available from Loganair which include return flight and a round of golf at Machrihanish (Old Course).  
[www.loganair.co.uk](http://www.loganair.co.uk)  
[www.flybe.com](http://www.flybe.com)

