

Carnoustie Country Local Legends



PROFILE

Name: Alan Crow

Role: Ambassador – Montrose Golf Links

Handicap: 17 (best was 4)

Clubs: Royal Montrose, Edzell

Lived in Carnoustie Country for 47 years

After more than 30 years of service, Alan Crow has become part of the fabric of Montrose Golf Links. Now one of seven golf ambassadors who perform a personalised meet-and-greet service, Alan has carried out numerous roles at the famous Angus links cultivating an intimate understanding of the fifth oldest golf course in the world.

Tell us about your role and what you enjoy most about it.

"We meet and greet visiting parties whether they are two, four or 24. We welcome people to Montrose and make sure they are properly accommodated. It's a general look-after-you job, but it builds up a rapport. The response is very good and the feedback has been tremendous. Some of our ambassadors have played with single players who don't know the course, or they fill in a space on a three-ball and guide them round. My favourite part of the job is meeting the people and looking after them – making sure their experience of Carnoustie Country and Montrose in particular is the best possible. There is nothing but pluses."

What is your greatest memory of The Open?

"Well 1999, that was Van de Velde, which was a real mess but a great result. That year, Montrose hosted Final Qualifying with the strongest field. Per-Ulrik Johansson appeared on the Sunday night straight from the Scottish Open at Loch Lomond and proceeded to walk the course backwards – from the green to tee. He went out the following morning and hit a course record. He'd never played the course before. He'd never even hit a shot on it, but he planned out his round. It was amazing. It was a hell of a field and I was the chief starter. The whole of Angus came to watch because the field was so good. We had a playoff with five players going after the last spot at The

Open. We had to use ropes across the fairways to hold back the crowds. The atmosphere was electric. One guy chipped in from the back of the second green to get the final spot. It was just fantastic.

"My main memory of 2007 was this precocious little Irish man. I followed him for three or four holes and this guy wasn't fazed by anything. He knocked it on and just missed his birdie at six. I had heard about him, but he really was something special and that was Rory McIlroy."

How would you describe golf in Carnoustie Country?

"As far as Montrose is concerned, you won't get a much older or more authentic links course anywhere. Fifth oldest golf course in the world. Third oldest royal club. Ninth oldest club – I can churn out!

"The final layout was done by Harry Colt in the early 1920s, but that golfing ground has been used for more than 450 years. It is a true, honest-to-goodness golf links. It's got a feel about it. It's a real golf course. And the same is true of Monifieth and Panmure. They encompass the best of authentic, real, fundamental golf. Edzell is another treat for visitors. Of the inland courses in Carnoustie Country, it is one of the most picturesque. The scenery is fantastic."

What is your top insider's tip when visiting Carnoustie Country?

"Taste an Arbroath Smokie. It's a whole haddock cured and smoked, and it falls off the bone. It is beautiful.

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PROFILE

Name: Ian Hutcheon (Hutch)

Handicap: +1

Club: Monifieth Golf Club

Lived in Carnoustie Country all his life.

He won the Scottish Amateur Championship in 1973, played in four Walker Cups and has been described as one of Scotland's greatest amateur golfers. A member of Monifieth Golf Club for more 60 years and a long-serving member of the Monifieth Links Management Committee, Ian Hutcheon is without doubt a local legend. Now retired, he busies himself looking after his garden and, you guessed it, playing golf.

What is your greatest memory of The Open?

"The Open wasn't high on my agenda because I needed all my time to play in amateur tournaments, but I did try to qualify twice, once at Panmure. I was in a play-off but didn't get through. There were about a dozen of us going for one place. It's pretty tough to qualify for The Open, even back in 1970! That was the year Doug Sanders qualified at Panmure for St Andrews.

"In terms of The Open itself, I have memories of things that were going on when Ben Hogan was here. Hogan was a big name and made as big an impact on Carnoustie as anyone. He came over here, won it and never came back!

"I also remember quite a bit about the Gary Player Open and the Watson one, which was 1968 and '75. The thing that stands out was not who won it, but who threw it away. In 1968, I remember the last day was quite stormy and I think Gary Player shot 72, but Billy Casper took 78 and lost by a shot. That was a difficult day.

"I think Player was fortunate, and the same could be said for Tom Watson. In 1975, Bobby Cole, who won the British Amateur at Carnoustie, had shot 72, two 66s and finished up with 76 and lost

by a shot to Watson and Newton. Johnny Miller was in the hunt as well. I remember watching him take two to get out of the bunker on the right-hand side of the 18th. He finished with a 74. These guys threw it away, but that's Carnoustie. It's a difficult finish."

What is your abiding memory of winning the Scottish Amateur at Carnoustie in 1973?

"I can remember that alright. I remember I had a great match in the semi-final with David Greg who is a very good friend of mine and a very good golfer. I don't think I've seen so many people out watching an amateur game than on that Friday afternoon. David should have probably won, but for the famous Carnoustie finish. I was two down with three to play and I won the last three holes, which can always happen at Carnoustie. I finished with three pars and won them all."

For someone who has never been to Carnoustie Country, how would you describe it?

"In terms of links golf, there is not a better stretch of land than between Monifieth and Montrose. You've got Monifieth, Panmure, Carnoustie, Montrose – which are all very good links courses. As good as you'll get anywhere in the country. There is so much on offer with different types of golf. We've got top-class links courses and top-class inland courses in this neck of the woods. We've got a great selection."

How would you describe links golf?

"Some people can't believe the difference you can get from one day to the next on a links course. One day you could be hitting a drive and a wedge, the next you need a drive and a three iron. Every day is different, so you can't just stand up and hit standard golf shots. There's so much more decision making and management of your game involved, from one day to the next."

What makes playing golf in Carnoustie Country special?

"There's a lot of history here. The clubs go back hundreds of years. What makes playing at Carnoustie special is the history of the Open Championship. It's a great attraction that we take a bit for granted. A lot of the visitors who come here appreciate the history. They appreciate the old-style clubhouses, because that's the way golf was, and maybe still should be.

"It's a great golfing area. I've played all over the world and I think I've enjoyed myself just as much on the courses around here as anywhere."

What is a local inside tip when visiting Carnoustie Country?

"Take a tour round the coast as well as going inland, there are a lot of things to see. Glamis Castle, for instance, is the ancestral home of the people who owned the land around here at one time or another. These were the people that granted the ground on which the golf courses were formed."

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PROFILE

Name: Craig Boath

Role: Championship Head Greenkeeper – Carnoustie Golf Links

Handicap: 9

Club: Carnoustie Golf Club

Born in Dundee.

Now in his 23rd year at Carnoustie Golf Links, Craig Boath has spent most of his working life at the famous Angus venue. Now in charge of preparing the notorious Championship course, he describes his job as a privilege

Tell us about your role and what you enjoy most about it.

"I look after the Championship course and am in charge of 13 guys. My job is to make sure the course is in good shape looking after tightly mown areas, bunkers, rough and hazards. I also keep an eye on the health of the turf, manage feeding when and if required and stay on top of water management. It's a brilliant job. Looking after the Championship course you feel a bit of pressure, not necessarily from the pro golfers that come here, but for the visitors who come here day-in-day-out. It's on many of their bucket lists, so when they play here, you want to make it a special day for them. My favourite aspect of the job, however, is being out in the fresh air. Being outside every day means I've got one of the best offices in the world. It's a great environment to work in."

What is your greatest memory of The Open?

"My first Open was 1999. I remember it being announced back in 1996 and having the feeling of having something to look forward to. But when it eventually came, everybody remembers Van de Velde. I remember the play-off and Paul Lawrie's shot into the 18th. We were at the side of the green. The crowd was amazing. It was the buzz of the whole town. It was a big thing.

"In 1999, the week before the tournament when there wasn't any crowds, we really got up close with the professionals. Seve was here a couple of weeks before the Open. On the third fairway, he'd played about five balls off the tee and we helped him look for his balls in the rough. I remember that!

"In 2007, I was hand-cutting the greens and 18 was my green. It was a privilege to cut it. I was cutting it on the Sunday morning knowing that later that day, somebody was going to be presented with the Claret Jug on that green. That was a good feeling."

How would you describe golf in Carnoustie Country?

"There is whole range of courses in Carnoustie Country from links to parkland to heathland. There is so much choice. There are so many different courses and layouts. There aren't two golf courses the same. Every golf course in Carnoustie Country is special."

What is unique about playing golf in Carnoustie Country?

"Hogan played his practice rounds at Panmure before playing at Carnoustie in 1953 and Paul Lawrie qualified at Downfield before 1999. You have James Braid who designed courses here like Forfar and Edzell. There are a lot of greats that have either designed or played golf in Carnoustie Country."

What is your top insider's tip when visiting Carnoustie Country?

"Visit Arbroath Abbey and learn about the Declaration of Scotland. And there's a good chippie down the road called Peppos – it's the best in Arbroath. I go for the standard fish supper. That's all you need. You're at the harbour; you have to eat fish!"

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PROFILE

Name: Hayley Wilkes

Role: Chef/Owner of WeeCOOK (based at Broughty Golf Club in Monifieth)

Handicap: Room for improvement!

Club: Broughty Golf Club (honorary member)

Hayley Wilkes was a chef at Gleneagles resort before she set herself up as a freelance cook offering private dining services and event catering. Three years ago, Broughty Golf Club offered her a kitchen and a remarkable partnership began, underpinned by delicious, award-winning pies.

Tell us how you got involved with the golf club?

"A lot of the members liked local food and I got to know them at farmers' markets. The club hadn't had a caterer for three years - they used caterers from other clubs or a nearby hotel. So they offered me their kitchen. It's a chef's dream to have their own kitchen, so I based myself here, continued with the Forfar farmers' markets and private work, and provided a catering service to the golf club. It worked for both parties. We built it up from nothing.

"It's been great. We've had a five-star food review in the Telegraph newspaper and a review in The Courier. My apprentice won The Courier's Menu magazine's rising talent award. We also won the BBC Good Food Show Producer's Bursary Award for our pies.

"We sell pies through the window - we call it the Pie Flap. Golfers and passers-by come along and ask what pies we have on today. The flap is right next to the pie machine, so the pies are always freshly out of the oven. In the summer, we set a pie stall up next to the bacon rolls and I put up a sign saying Pies This Way!"

What do you most enjoy about your work?

"I like cooking properly from scratch. I believe that tasty food cooked with passion and care is something that should be for everybody. Food and ingredients are valuable commodities that

should be treated with respect, care and attention. Using what I learned working at five-star hotels and at high-end restaurants and caterers, my dream for WeeCook was to offer consistent, tasty well-prepared and presented food and friendly service to everyone.

"The golf club gives me the opportunity to be part of a community and give people jobs, which I love. But my favourite aspect of what I do is the cooking. I love cooking, serving customers and seeing them enjoy it. I take great satisfaction from that. If I can give someone what they want and exceed their expectations, then I know I've done my job."

What is your greatest memory of The Open?

"My abiding memory of The Open is when Padraig Harrington won. I remember it being such a big thing. I didn't know too much about golf until I came here, but I remember we were glued to the television when it was all happening down the road at Carnoustie. That is my main memory. I like watching sporting events whether it's golf, rugby or football - it's a great excuse to be with people. That day we were drinking Irish cider so it might have been a lucky drink!"

How would you describe the golf in Carnoustie Country?

"It is absolutely beautiful. Just going for a walk out there, even if you're not playing golf, it is so enjoyable. And it's all-year round. But there is also a lot going on in golf clubs as they try to innovate.

"We've increased footfall to the club by promoting the food and our service, and I am constantly looking for ways to adapt and take advantage of the wonderful location we have at the Monifieth Links. The Broughty Golf Club is known as the friendly club. That fits perfectly with WeeCOOK as we are inclusive to all. You can't limit yourself by stereotyping a restaurant or a golf club. You've got a venue; use it, improvise, be brave and try new things. There's a lot of truth in the saying: 'Build it and they will come.'"

What have you learned about golf in Carnoustie Country?

"I went out with my clubs recently and borrowed some spare balls from the starter. It was the first time I had played for a long time. I only played seven holes and lost nine balls, so there's definitely room for improvement on the course. Off the course, I've learned how precious some golf and club traditions are, and I've learned how to work with committees."

What would you advise visitors to Carnoustie Country to do after their round of golf?

"Try to visit one of the Angus farmers' markets. This area of Scotland is like a larder. The producers and the produce that is created here is amazing. Whether it's the fish; the smokies, our pies, gin or the strawberries; what is grown and made here is marvelous. I sometimes get my friends from the farmers' market to come to the golf club and have a mini market outside. It's brilliant. We get strawberries, homebakes and pies, and donate some of the profits to local charities. Visitors should try to visit some of the smaller shops and businesses while they are here. There are some really good small businesses in Angus."