

HOW OUR CREST EVOLVED

The foundation of Troon Golf Club in 1878 was secured by reaching an agreement with the landowner – the 5th Duke of Portland – who granted permission for Members to play golf over his ground between the Craigend and Pow Burns. The 5th Duke died in December 1879 and his successor, the 6th Duke, took great personal interest in the developing Club, made occasional visits from his home in Nottinghamshire, and was elected a Member. In 1921 the Club was given an opportunity to purchase from the Duke all the ground which by then encompassed the Old, Relief and Ladies courses. There can be no doubt that Royal Troon owes its existence to these two Dukes of Portland, and this link to the past can be observed in the crest with which we are familiar today.

It would appear that our Club's first crest, which incorporated the motto, originated very early in our history though the designer's identity remains unknown. A hand engraved depiction can be seen in the main corridor glass case, where the set of a cleek and iron presented by past Captain W. A. Robertson as a prize, is on display:



Although this prize was first competed for in May 1884, hallmarks on the clubs date them back to 1883. At time of writing we cannot be absolutely certain that an even earlier version had not existed.

In our Centenary year when we achieved Royal status, the Committee, with the agreement of Members, decided it appropriate to commission a new crest. Accordingly a petition was made to the Lord Lyon requesting the granting of Ensigns Armorial '*as might be suitable, and according to the Laws of Arms*' and in August 1979 our much grander new heraldic insignia made its appearance. The Lord Lyon's documented authority is displayed in the Clubhouse entrance hall.



Crest prior to gaining Royal status



Today's crest

By comparison with the original crest (above left), even greater emphasis was now put on historic references to the Portland family by adding Arms directly attributable to their ancestors.

A brief Portland history - Henry Bentinck, of Dutch ancestry, was created 1st Duke of Portland in 1716. Below are illustrations of a Bentinck 17th Century Coat of Arms, showing their Cross, plus an enlarged detail showing a Coronet sitting just below the pair of vertical arms. In 1743 Henry Bentinck's son William, 2nd Duke of Portland, married Lady Margaret Cavendish of the Devonshire dynasty (Cavendish Coat of Arms below) thus uniting the two families.



Bentinck Coat of Arms 17th C

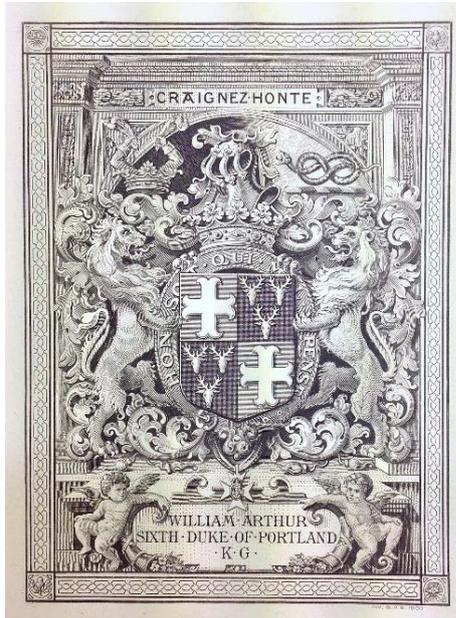


Enlarged detail of Coronet



Cavendish Coat of Arms 17th C. Note coiled snake, coronet and shield shape

Now that the Bentinck and Cavendish families were united, the Portland family crest was redesigned to include armorial elements from both their Coats of Arms, some of which are to be seen in Royal Troon's crest.



Crest of 6th Duke of Portland showing how elements of the Bentinck and Cavendish Coats of Arms had been brought together. Detail shows the Bentinck Cross, the Cavendish Coiled Snake, and Coronets from both Houses are all incorporated.

Two particular aspects of our modern crest have stimulated discussion for many years – firstly that the crown represents our Royal status, and secondly that the presence of the serpent coiled around the clubs is symbolic of Dr John Highet's association with the medical profession. Closer scrutiny of historic facts reveals a different slant.

The three pointed 'crown' sitting atop the five golf clubs is not a royal crown. It is a ducal coronet, and is so described by the Lord Lyon. As previously mentioned, a ducal coronet in the same style had long ago appeared on the Coats of Arms of the Bentincks and the Portlands.

Local doctor John Highet, who was TGC's first Secretary, was by all accounts widely respected in the town and an efficient servant of the Club. However at the time the crest first appeared he had only been in office for a relatively short time. Recognising the importance of cementing close links to the Portlands, the Committee in May 1880 had invited the new 6th Duke to become first Patron of Troon Golf Club and, given that a coiled snake had long been a central element of both the Cavendish and Portland Coats of Arms, its presence on TGC's first crest would have seemed entirely appropriate.

If you have any information which might add to this article please get in touch with me at douglasmccreath@hotmail.com