

Wartime History of Golf - JLC Jenkins and Royal Troon

James Lawrence Christie Jenkins, or JLC, as he was known, is the only Ordinary Member of Royal Troon Golf Club to have won the Amateur Championship. He did so more than 100 years ago in May 1914, at Royal St George's Golf Club, Sandwich.

In the final, he defeated Major Charles Hezlet, an Irishman from Portrush, by 3 and 2. The match was a relatively close contest between two men of contrasting physique.

Jenkins was a small man described by Bernard Darwin in his article for *Golf Illustrated* as "alert, confident with an air irreverently described as perky". Darwin reported that "there was a great deal of very good golf played and in the end a very worthy champion emerged in Mr Jenkins".

In the same year JLC was winner of the Silver Medal in the Open Championship at Prestwick and eighth overall behind Harry Vardon who won for the sixth and last time.

JLC was born in Cambuslang and educated at Glasgow High School. The Jenkins were a golfing family: he was one of five brothers who were all scratch players or better. His brother Pat, who was killed in the 1914-18 war was a runner up in the Irish Open.



His sister, Dorothea Jenkins, won the Scottish Ladies Championship at Lossiemouth and also the Ladies Championship of South India.

JLC was a prolific winner of competitions and championships in Scotland and in addition to reaching the last eight of the Amateur Championship on three occasions, prior to his ultimate success at Sandwich; he was also a Semi Finalist in the Irish Open in 1911.

He represented Scotland against England in 1908, 1912, 1922, 1926 and 1928 and was four times a winner of the Hillhouse Cup as well as many other local competitions. He won the Silver Cross at St Andrews, the highest award at the R&A Spring meeting on two occasions, and his success at Troon was almost legendary.

Like many of his age, the First World War interrupted both golfing progress and working career. JLC enlisted with 5th Battalion Cameron Highlanders in September 1914 as a Private. He served in France and in September 1915, was severely wounded in action at the Battle of Loos, suffering a shrapnel wound to the neck. After recovering from his injury, JLC returned to the Front and was present at the battles of Arras and Ypres. He was appointed Acting Captain in July 1917 and was awarded the Military Cross when leading a successful trench raid.

It was reported in the press that "Second Lieutenant (Acting Captain) James Lawrence Christie Jenkins, Cameron Highlanders, was awarded the Military Cross on September 26th 1917 for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when commanding two companies in a raid on enemy trenches. Although there had been no chance of examining the ground beforehand he showed a fearless disregard of danger and by his splendid leadership he ensured the success of the raid. He was the last to leave the enemy lines and personally assisted in carrying back our wounded thus preventing any of them falling into the hands of the enemy."

JLC was demobilised on 21st June 1919 and returned to civilian life.



Shortly after the end of WW1 in 1920, there was a meeting between the USGA and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews to review the rules of golf.

George Herbert Walker, who was then the President of the USGA proposed the creation of an international match to promote goodwill among countries and agreed to provide a prize, called the "United States Golf International Challenge Cup". This was immediately dubbed as the Walker Cup.

The USGA had the idea of inviting all countries to compete but the war had taken a great toll and the response was poor.

However, the USA decided to put together a team to play in the Amateur Championship at Hoylake in May 1921 and to challenge the British golfers to a match before the event. Thus began the forerunner to the Walker Cup as we know it today.

JLC Jenkins was selected to represent Great Britain alongside Roger Wethered, Cyril Tolley, Ernest Holderness, Gordon Simpson, CC Alymer, RH deMonmorancy and Tommy Armour. The Americans

had amongst others Bobby Jones and Francis Ouimet. In the match Great Britain were well beaten and JLC Jenkins partnered by Gordon Simpson was defeated in his foursomes match by Chick Evans, the US Open Champion, and Bobby Jones.

For many years he continued to enjoy his golf at Troon, and at Glasgow Golf Club, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and Cambuslang where he was also a Member.

In many other ways Royal Troon owes a debt of gratitude to JLC Jenkins. He would be a distinguished Captain of the Club after World War Two, from 1945 until 1948, but before that was instrumental in bringing the 1923 Open Championship to his home course.

He was a Member of the Championship Committee of the R&A almost from its inception and was present at a very early meeting on May 19th 1922 when the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers wrote to say that Muirfield would be unavailable for the Open Championship.

James Jenkins, presumably sure of the answer, undertook to speak to the Committee at Troon and enquire whether they would be prepared to stage the 1923 Open. The rest, as they say, is history but without his intervention would Troon be the Championship venue it is today? Who knows!



J. L. C. JENKINS, M.C., Captain 1945-48

JLC Jenkins, who joined the Club in 1900, was for many years our oldest Member. He passed away at the age of 81, on 24 December 1964.

Royal Troon's Club Championship is still played for "The Jenkins Trophy".