

Dear Douglas

I am emailing to let you know the good news that your review of Machrihanish Dunes posted on December 13th has been selected by the Golf Monthly course rankings panel as the best entry in our Top 100 courses competition.

MACHRIHANISH DUNES



For many years I was fortunate to live beside and play Machrihanish regularly. I very rarely came off the course without feeling privileged to have enjoyed the golf course, the sense of history and the place. Early mornings and late summer evenings being the most uplifting. The shushing of the surf with the views across the sea to Islay and Jura with the occasional sightings of dolphins in the bay adding to the magic.

Last year I returned to Machrihanish after an absence of a few years with 3 friends. Two Machrihanish virgins and my old friend Peter Fjallman (a Swedish golf course architect) and a Machrihanish member . It is always a pleasure to play with Peter. Not just for his Billy Connolly impressions, but he opens your eyes to the subtle architectural details of a course.

We played Machrihanish first and despite the lashing rain the magic was still there. The virgins were bloodied but still fell in love.

The next day we arrived at the Dunes and met by our guide we set off from the 'club' house. Our first 'blind' shot was the walk to the first tee. Once on the tee the views and the course opened up.

A year later I can still remember every hole. After the run of holes along the dunes, where you are often more aware of the sea and the views than you are at Machrihanish, comes one of the most dramatic golf holes I have played. A blind tee shot, daunting long second over a ravine up to an elevated green protected by a huge bunker. Clever smoke and mirrors use of the land to mess with your mind increasing the difficulty of the shot. The course is a traditional natural links, but unique and original in that the layout is not always obvious. Arriving on some of the tees you wonder where on earth the hole is taking you? Once played, you marvel at the architects imagination in visualising the hole and the shots required.



Sometimes the distances between the greens and the tees were long and disorientating, but it all added to the sense of adventure and wildness.

The natural bunkers were a delight-see the picture. How often do you see an amateur so happy to be in a bunker!



From tee to green you need to use your imagination. Particularly around the greens where sometimes you could use the subtle contours three different ways to achieve the same result.

On one fairway we all simultaneously looked at each other and burst out grinning. Why? Maybe the combination of the layout and the surroundings, but the most important thing was the sheer unadulterated fun we were having playing this sometimes classic, sometimes quirky natural links situated in the most fantastic scenery.

Machrihanish has given me many "I am so lucky to be alive" euphoric moments.

The Dunes has the same feel good factor in spades.

We can't wait for our next 'Machrihanish' experience.

