

Centenary Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup



Saturday 11th
April 2026



*A History of
the Gold Cup*

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The Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup at 100 ...

Foreword from

Catriona Matthew OBE



Winning the Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup in 1989 (shared with Cathy Panton) propelled my golf career to another level. At that point I had not even represented Scotland, but I did go on to represent Great Britain and Ireland in the Vagliano Trophy later that year. Success in this led to further success in the Scottish Amateur Championship, winning three times in 1991, 1993 and 1994; and appearances in the Curtis Cup in 1990, 1992 and 1994. I then turned professional winning eleven times around the world including the 2009 British Open at Royal Lytham. I played in nine Solheim Cups and was captain of the European team in 2019 and 2021.

Following my last professional event at St Andrews in 2023 I have found giving back to amateur golf to be most rewarding. The R&A asked me to be the first professional to captain the Curtis Cup team for the home matches at Sunningdale in summer 2024, which Great Britain and Ireland won. I have been asked to continue as captain for the forthcoming Curtis Cup matches to be held in Los Angeles this summer.

I hope this brief synopsis of my golf career will inspire future winners of the Gold Cup and shows all competitors what is possible and to have big dreams!

The Gold Cup has had numerous great winners over 100 years and success in this event can be a springboard to a successful future in the game of golf.

I hope the centenary year of the Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup is very special and I wish everyone in the field good luck!

A History of the Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup

Steve Riedlinger, Roehampton Club Archivist

The Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup stands out as one of the most distinguished fixtures in ladies golf for professional and amateur players. The competition on Saturday 11th April 2026 offers a timely reminder to look back at the origins of the event and the evolution of women's golf.

At the time of the inaugural tournament in March 1926, it marked not merely the beginning of an enduring sporting tradition, but a significant milestone in an era when women's golf was asserting its rightful place in the sporting landscape.

The timing of the first Gold Cup coincided with a period of extraordinary growth for women's golf. By the early 1920s, the Ladies Golf Union, established in 1893, had seen its affiliated clubs exceed to more than 900 clubs by 1922.

By 1926, ladies golf was an established, nationally governed amateur sport with a dense network of women's sections and clubs, strong championship structures, and a small group of elite players (notably Cecil Leitch and Joyce Wethered) whose standard invited direct comparison with leading male amateurs.

Leading golf journalist Eleanor Helme, writing in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, recognized the significance of this new tournament immediately, declaring it 'the first Open event for the season' and predicting it would become 'one of the most coveted challenge trophies'.



Eleanor Helme

Her affection for Roehampton Club was evident in her description of the event as home to the 'glittering Gold Cup', and her regular visits to Roehampton Club produced consistently complimentary reports about the venue. Eleanor Helme herself was no mere observer; a low single-figure golfer at Leatherhead Golf Club, combining her playing prowess with journalistic excellence and also playing in the Gold Cup on many occasions.

Her love of the game and her keen sense of humour shines through in her writing as she records an account of a pair of gold cufflinks which she had acquired as a reminder of her playing in the Gold Cup showing her outgoing and incoming scores of 48 and 33 respectively etched on the cuff links. She goes on to recall that she lost the cuff link with her lowest score and saw this as a reflection of the downward path of her game in her declining years.

Her affection for the game is also highlighted in her book *After the Ball* published in 1931 in which she records her experiences as one of the leading women golfers in the 1920s including humorous and insightful sketches of people and places in the world of golf. Her legacy endures to this day in Surrey golf with the playing of the inter-club team trophy named in her honour.

The inaugural competition in 1926 reported at length by Eleanor Helme in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* publication presented a fascinating spectacle that revealed both the challenges facing women golfers and their determination to excel. Despite a field studded with 'the golfing giants of ladies' golf', the scoring fell below expectations, with players facing a par of 75 yet struggling to break eighty.



Mrs McNair

Among the notable competitors was Molly Gourlay, fresh from victories in the Surrey County Ladies Competition and the French Ladies Open Championship at Chantilly, yet even she succumbed to putting difficulties and carded 84. Molly Gourlay would later make her own remarkable contribution to golf, following in Helme's footsteps as a golf journalist and Surrey golf administrator, and earning recognition as the first female golf course architect.

The tournament's first victor, Mrs Roderick James McNair nee Winifred Margaret Slocock, emerged from this competitive field in unexpected fashion.

Ladies' Open Gold Challenge Cup

1926	Mrs WM MCNAIR	1960	Miss E PRICE
1927	Miss M GOURLAY	1961	Mrs L ABRAHAMS
1928	Miss C LEITCH	1962	Mrs L ABRAHAMS
1929	Miss I DOXFORD	1963	Miss R PORTER
1930	Miss E WILSON	1964	Miss RC ARCHER
1931	Miss V LAMB	1965	Mrs AD SPEARMAN
1932	Mrs A GOLD	1966	Mrs G BRANDOM
1933	Miss A RAMSDEN	1967	Miss A IRVIN
1934	Miss J HAMILTON	1968	Miss A IRVIN
1935	Miss P BARTON	1969	Miss A IRVIN
1936	Miss B NEWELL	1970	Miss M EVERARD
1937	Miss P BARTON	1971	Miss BJM HUKU
1938	Miss P BARTON	1972	Miss A IRVIN
1939	Miss P BARTON	1973	Miss C REDFORD
1940-47	NO COMPETITION		Miss A IRVIN
1948	Miss M RUTTLE	1974	Miss L HARROLD
1949	Miss F STEPHENSON	1975	Miss WH PITHERS
1950	Mrs ME GARRETT		Miss C REDFORD
1951	Miss J BISGOOD	1976	Miss A IRVIN
1952	Miss J BISGOOD		Miss V MARVIN
1953	Miss J BISGOOD	1977	Mrs WJ UZIELLI
1954	Miss I BROMLEY DAVENPORT	1978	Mrs C CALDWELL
1955	Mrs L ABRAHAMS		Mrs IC ROBERTSON
1956	Mrs L ALLOM	1979	Mrs IC ROBERTSON
1957	Mrs M ROBERS	1980	Mrs A BONALLACK
1958	Miss P MOORE	1981	Mrs IC ROBERTSON
1959	Miss M GLIDEWELL		

Roll of Honour

1982	MRS IC ROBERTSON	2003	MISS T LOVEYS
1983	MISS B NEW	2004	MISS A COFFEY
	MRS V THOMAS	2005	MISS S HEATH
1984	MISS B NEW	2006	MS J OLIVER
1985	MRS V THOMAS		MISS T LOVEYS
1986	MISS K HARRIDGE	2007	MISS C AITKEN
	MISS P JOHNSON		MRS K TAYLOR
1987	MISS D BARNARD	2008	MISS D MONTGOMERY
1988	MISS A JOHNS	2009	MISS S WALKER
1989	MISS C PANTON	2010	NO COMPETITION
	MISS C LAMBERT	2011	MISS R DRUMMOND
1990	MISS K IMRIE	2012	MISS G HALL (A)
1991	MISS K HURLEY	2013	MISS CL ELLIS
1992	MRS K MARSHALL	2014	MISS EM TAYLOR
1993	MISS B NEW	2015	MISS H RALPH
1994	MISS C HALL	2016	MISS AR PETERS
1995	MISS S GALLAGHER	2017	MISS S WALKER
1996	MISS J MORLEY	2018	MISS H DAVIS
	MISS J SOULSBY		MISS I MEHMET
1997	MISS J FORBES	2019	MISS A DIMMOCK
	MISS J OLIVER	2020	NO COMPETITION
1998	MISS K LUNN	2021	NO COMPETITION
	MISS J HEAD	2022	MISS H DAVIS
1999	MRS K TAYLOR	2023	MISS A DAWSON
2000	MISS S FORSTER	2024	MISS H SCREEN
2001	MISS T LOVEYS	2025	MISS E BUTTERISS (A)
2002	MISS F MORE		

Having first found fame as a tennis player before turning to golf, McNair began disastrously with eight shots on the second hole, yet displayed remarkable resilience to recover to level par at the turn. Though she missed numerous short putts on the back nine, threatening to undo her good work, she steadied herself to finish with 42 shots and an overall score of 82, which proved sufficient to win by a single stroke.

Mrs McNair had no inkling she was in contention, believing the winning score would be in the seventies, which made her victory all the more remarkable. Her long Wimbledon career and her gold medal for Great Britain in the 1920 Antwerp Olympics winning the women's tennis pairs with Kathleen 'Kitty' McKane secured her place in a small group of early 20th-century British sportswomen who excelled in more than one sport with the golf reporters at the time treating her as a distinguished all-round athlete rather than a newcomer.

The competition attracted an illustrious roll of honour in the following years as shown in the list of winners from 1926 to date. Molly Gourlay won the event the following year despite the weather. She went on to forge her career in golf course design working with renowned 'Golden Age' architect Tom Simpson in the UK, Ireland and continental Europe where she worked on a significant of significant clubs including Camberley Heath (where she



WATERPROOFS FOR EACH OF HER WOODEN CLUBS, AND NONE FOR HERSELF! MISS MOLLY GOURLAY WINNING THE ROEHAMPTON GOLD CHALLENGE CUP IN ATROCIOUS WEATHER.

Miss Molly Gourlay won the Roehampton Gold Challenge Cup with her score of 84 last week. The tournament took place in atrocious weather. Our snapshot shows Miss Gourlay taking her brassy from her caddy. It will be noticed that, though the player has neither waterproof nor hat, each of her wooden clubs is supplied with a nice little waterproof bag, to prevent it being spoilt by the wet.—[Photograph by S. and G.]

was a member), Liphook GC, Sunningdale Ladies, Ballybunion GC, County Louth GC, Calow GC, Kilkenny GC, Golf de Morfontaine in France and Schloss Mittersill in Austria.



Miss Enid Wilson, the English Champion, took part in the Roehampton Gold Cup Meeting and returned an 83, three strokes behind the winner, Miss Vyvian Lamb

Cecil Leitch held the trophy in 1928 – winner of twelve national titles including the French Ladies Amateur Championship and Canadian Women's Amateur. Enid Wilson, who dominated British women's golf in the early 1930s with three consecutive British Ladies Amateur Championships from 1931 to 1933, also competed at Roehampton Club.



The tournament's most successful competitor proved to be Ann Irvin, who won the coveted trophy on no less than six occasions between 1967 and 1976.



Ann Irvin

Other multiple winners worthy of note were Belle Robertson, the formidable Scottish amateur who captured the British Ladies Amateur title in 1981 and played in seven Curtis Cups. Pam Barton, winner of the Ladies Amateur Championships in the US and the UK was a four-time Gold Cup winner in 1935, 1937, 1938 and 1939.

Carol Archer holds the unique distinction of being the only Roehampton Club Member to win the competition, achieving this feat in 1964.



Carol Archer

Other amateur winners worthy of note include Angela Uzielli (1977), Angela Bonallack (1980) and 16 year old Miss Georgia Hall (2012), later to turn professional and win the Women's British Open in 2018. In recent times, there have only been two amateur winners, namely Georgia Hall and the current holder Ella Butteriss from Beaconsfield who intends to defend her title this year before joining the professional ranks.



Georgia Hall



Ella Butteriss



Christine Langford

The modern era has seen other distinguished players in the event including Christine Langford – pioneer in Women’s Golf and the Ladies European Tour.

Appearances have also been made by professional tour players Dame Laura Davies, Trish Johnson and Sky golf presenter, Inci Mehmet who was a joint winner of the Cup in 2018.

The trophy itself carries its own fascinating history. It was presented in 1933 by Mrs Miller, wife of Lieutenant Colonel ED Miller – one of the three brothers who founded Roehampton Club in 1901.



The original cup (image left) was stolen from a subsequent winner’s home in later years but was replaced by an old silver polo cup plated in gold. This replacement trophy continues to be contested to this day, connecting the present competition to a bygone era.

The Centenary Ladies’ Open Gold Challenge Cup marks a significant milestone in women’s golf, allowing us all to honour the players past and present and their efforts in establishing this enduring event and its place in golfing history.

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