

one-quarter mile east of the Irish Sea, which remains a testament to the appearance of the most famous golf course in the world. Designed by George Low and opened in 1889, its holes have challenged players by requiring shots onto or over them, and its history is rich. Despite an unparalleled pedigree that includes hosting the British Open since its first Open until 1954—only Turnberry's arrival in 1916 broke the links, it has been the subject of frequent revision. The course was largely rebuilt following complaints raised at the 1991 British Open. It was completely rebuilt following complaints raised at the 1991 British Open, thanks to a 2005-06 renovation. The renovation, added new tees to nearly every hole and incorporating existing ones.

#### THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Royal Birkdale's clubhouse offers a brilliant collection of artifacts in glass cases and its walls are covered with photographs and memorabilia from past Opens and British Amateurs, Curtis, Ryder and Walker Cups. The dining room and lounges provide panoramic views of the course. But its exterior is at once painfully modern and hulkingly out of date, akin to a south Florida condo development, circa 1970.



**THE TROOP**  
 The day after his Canadian-born U.S. Open champ Lee Trevino concluded his 14th consecutive victory. Trevino one-putted seven greens (10, 25, 12, four, 15, 16) and ran six ahead of Lu-Liang Liang. Trevino held on for a one-shot victory, finishing a 7 at the 17th. That field represented, eight in the top 20.

#### THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Australian Peter Thomson, the 20th century's only three-peat champ, captured his first and fifth (last) titles here. Seasoned on the U.S. winter tour and only 24, Thomson took Birkdale's first Open in 1954 while paired with Bobby Locke for the 36-hole final day. In the last round Thomson hit out of a bunker at the 16th green to within 18 inches, then made a five-foot putt at the 18th to avoid a four-way playoff. Eleven years later he shot a third-round 72 in the week's strongest winds, then that afternoon birdied the last when he needed a par to win.

#### ALL THE WAY TO THE SEA

Perhaps the biggest change since the 1998 British Open is what's missing: scrub poplars, pines and other growth that had taken root through the last few decades. It's now possible to see the Irish Sea from the clubhouse's second story—and an oil platform rising above the water—not to mention the 16th green and its grandstand. An absence of trees will make it more difficult to gauge lighter winds, thereby contributing to indecisiveness (and potentially slower play).

#### WAS: 354-535; BECAME: 535-455

That "was" par of the last six holes on the Open scorecard in 1961, for Arnold Palmer's one-shot victory over Dai Rees, and what it "became" in 1965, after almost 200 yards were added as Birkdale offered the sixth Open longer than 7,000 yards. Some of the length of the erased 17th was given to the 18th and the present 12th was introduced at 190 yards. "The finish is now Tigerish," The Times of London noted in 1965, "with three holes out of the four more than 500 yards long, and the remaining one, the 16th (the old 15th) stretched to 401 yards."

Hole	20
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Out	
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In	
Total	

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