

## **KNARESBOROUGH GOLF CLUB: THE BIRTH**

A dramatic sketch for Founders' Day, December 19<sup>th</sup> 2019  
Written by Mike McKay, performed by Harrogate Dramatic Society

(Five men gather at the home of Arthur Kitching in Knaresborough in October, 1919.

They are Arthur, son of a family of local timber merchants, John Fountain, Harold Thompson, Alf Phillipson and 'Jim' Linn.)

Scene: Front room of 'Avalon'. Enter Arthur and the other four. They're laughing, chattering noisily.

JOHN FOUNTAIN: 'Ahm tellin' yer, it's true! True as I stand 'ere. 'E told me his self.

ALL: Gerraway!! Go on!

JF: Ah'm tellin' yer! You know Albert. Arthur, you know 'im! 'Ee's too soft to mek up a tale like that. Dun't 'ave the nous. Never got a joke in 'is life.

ARTHUR KITCHING: Aye, that's true...

JF: Yer could tell 'im Bert Sutcliffe's signed for Lancashire, 'e' -d believe yer.

ALF PHILLIPSON: So, go on then. He called in at Pannal, you say.

JF: Put a clean collar and tie on and his Sunday bowler. Calls in to see Mr Secretary, all dignified like. 'Ah,' says Secretary, ' You're here at last. We were beginning to wonder – you'd best follow me.' And off he sets with Albert trotting behind him, thinking, 'Well, this is right friendly'. Secretary stops at door of ladies' convenience. 'It's alright,' he says, 'We've asked ladies to stay out - *pro tempore* – you'll not be disturbed.'

Albert says, ' Err....Ah'm sorry, I've come to inquire about yer membership terms.'

'Membership?' says Secretary, ' I thought you were plumber come to clear the blockage in the ladies' convenience!'

(All Laugh)

AK: Ah, but do you see, boys? Albert had driven his pony and trap all the way over from Boroughbridge. Even if he'd been welcomed with open arms, he's spent half a day just getting there! Can't be doing with that, to play a round of golf every week....

(All voice agreement)

AK: We have business to attend to, some of us, customers to meet. Golf's a spare time thing, to be blunt about it.

JIM LINN: Aye, not many Gentlemen of Leisure among us – except maybe Harold!

HAROLD THOMPSON: Hey! I put a day's shift in like you or any one else here, thank you very much.

AK: Yes, you do, Harold. So it's like I've been saying – and why we're here tonight.

We all like our bit of golf and –

JL: A lot of golf if I could spare time and cash!

AK: And it therefore stands to reason: we need a proper golf club, here in Knaresborough, where we don't have to give up half a day to get to it and don't have to break the bank to play with our pals.

HT: Arthur, are you *sure* we're alright meeting here?

AK: How do you mean?

HT: Well, I don't think my missus'd be too tickled if I were downstairs gassing with the boys about golf while she were upstairs clutching hand of the midwife.

AK: Oh, Gert's fine! She's a hardy lass, she'll manage, no trouble at all. And I'm on the spot if there's an emergency, aren't I.

JF: You might be handy delivering timber, Arthur. Ah dun't know about deliverin' babies!

AK: I'll try me hand at anything, John, if I have to! Now look, I can't control Mother Nature when it comes to the arrival of a new nipper, but I can try and get you boys to make a decision. We've been talking about this for weeks now and we all know some thing's got to be done.

JL: It's a big undertaking, Arthur.

HT: Lot of money involved.

AP: And we'd need a groundkeeper to look after course and run the golf shop, repair and sell clubs. Give members golfing lessons.

HT: And what about a clubhouse? That could cost a pretty penny.

AK: We start small, Harold. I've got good timber in yard would make a basic shed-type structure, enough to get us started. I'd get a couple of my lads to help put it up. Could be done in days.

JF: It could get very crowded on rainy days!

AK: Oh, I know it wouldn't be St Andrews or Carnoustie –

JL: Or Harrogate or Pannal....

AK: Or Harrogate or Pannal. But they had to start from scratch, too, Jimmy.

JL: Aye, but they 'ad more to scratch with!

AK: I don't know – I wasn't there. But, boys, at end of the day, it's not the money that determines it. It's the will. The get-up and go, the – the – have a go spirit!

(A few moments silence as they consider his words)

AP: You've always said how a golf course would benefit town. Raise its prestige, put us on the map as it were.

AK: I have.

AP: So why shouldn't Borough Council set up a golf course? A civic amenity, like a public park or a band stand?

JL: Or a public convenience....

AK: Alf, if you can get borough to shell out for a golf course after we've just come through biggest war in history – then you deserve a medal! I tried, I spoke to a pal of

mine on council but there's no way. Money's just not there. They've other priorities. People crying out for houses and now the law says councils have got to step up and start providing.

HT: And we've no Lord Moneybags begging to hand over part of his fortune. Unless one of you fellows is keeping very quiet?

JL: Oh, well, yes. Since you mention it, I was planning to buy another yacht this summer, moor it down at Monte Carlo, and try my luck in the casino, don'cher know! But I could probably spare a million or two for a group of lads with their backsides hanging out their kecks and want to knock a small white ball round a farmer's field!

AK: Thank you, Jimmy, for that helpful contribution.

(Enter Midwife Audrey Greenhalgh)

AG: Mr Kitching, would you be so kind as to boil me up a kettle of hot water and bring it to the confinement room at your earliest convenience.

AK: The confinement room? – oh, the bedroom. Certainly, right away, nurse. And how's everything going by the way? Mrs K bearing up alright?

AG: Much as expected, Mr Kitching, Much as expected. You will be informed in due course. However, a little less noise would be appreciated from the company, if you please.

AK: Yes, of course, we'll try to keep it down, Nurse...?

MW: It's Mrs Greenhalgh. Audry Greenhalgh.

AK: Mrs Greenhalgh. Of course.

JL: We're all a bit excited, nurse. We may be about to 'give birth' to something ourselves!

AG: Then you'll be making gynaecological history, sir. You'll excuse me, I've a more imminent delivery to attend to.

(She disappears back upstairs and AK disappears to the kitchen)

JF: So anyway, have we all had chance to look at this draft letter Arthur's prepared for publication in the Knaresborough Post?

(He picks up the draft from a table)

All: Aye, yes. We have.

TL: He's a way with words, has Arthur.

AP: He has. It's well-phrased.

HT: It does strike the right tone.

JF: I thought so, too. Although - maybe could emphasise a bit how we want to welcome all-comers, not just for the gentry. No social distinctions, that kind of thing.

AP: A club for everyman.

JF: And everywoman. Remember half our wives are right set on this plan as well.

All assent.

JL: The friendly club!

ALL: That's it. That's good - the friendly club.

HT: I don't know – I still wonder if there are enough folk in the town willing to pay enough to keep a golf club going all year. As Arthur said – a war just over, thousands of Tommies back home looking for work. Making ends meet is first thing on mind of most people. Maybe we should give it a year or two, see if things take a turn for the better, before making any rash move.

(They fall silent for a moment weighing HT's words. AK appears from the kitchen bearing a kettle full of hot water).

JL: Hey up! Here's Doctor Kitching from the kitchen! Don't forget yer forceps, Doc.

AK: And I've a good idea what I could do with 'em, Jimmy Linn.

(Laughter as AK disappears upstairs with the hot water)

JF: I don't think he means using them to pick up your boiled egg for you, Jimmy.

AP: Harold, I can see you're a bit worried.

HT: I am.

AP: You know, there'll always be a reason for not acting now. There's always a risk, risk never disappears. But we've got to have courage of our convictions.

JF: Besides, we already know we've got decent show of support. Harry Martin, Percy Miles, Jim Parker – all that crowd. Arthur reckons there's about 20 have said they'd back us.

JL: Well, there's one way of finding out. Send that letter to the editor and let's get that public meeting. Then we'll know if it's thumbs up or thumbs down from the rest of Knaresborough.

(Re-enter AK)

AK: So, been having a look through that draft letter, boys?

All: Aye, yes, we have.

AK: And what's the verdict?

AP: It's fine, Arthur. Covers all the points. Nicely done.

JL: Aye, gets round all the links, right enough.

JF: We just felt it could maybe underline the welcome nature of the club a bit more.

AP: A friendly place - down-to-earth, as it were. For down-to-earth golfers.

HT: But with good standards, proper respect for one another and rules of the game.

JL: Aye -- If you can understand 'em.

HT: Somewhere you'd be pleased to bring a guest.

AK: Right. Let's see. (Picks up the draft from the table & studies it for a moment)

AK: Yes, well here, maybe. Yes. If, instead of 'I know I am voicing the feelings of many when I say Knaresborough should have a golf course of its own with the widest appeal to local and visiting players' (He begins to scribble with a pen at the bottom of the draft )

AK: If we were to say – er – ‘Knaresborough should have a golf course of its own, run on modest, unpretentious lines and devoid of all class or clique distinction.’ How would that be?

All: That’s grand. Hits the nail on the head. Sums it up well.

AK: But you’ve still got your doubts, Harold, haven’t you. Think we’re moving too soon and should wait awhile?

HT: I don’t want to see us go off half-cock, Arthur. Fall flat on our faces at the first jump because we’re not ready. Well, not us but the town in general. Lot of people still looking for work or worrying about pay packets or what’s coming into their tills.

Things might look a bit different in a year or so.

AK: Lads, we’ve been paying old Clapham a few coppers nearly every week to play a bit of golf on his land, trying to pretend it were the real thing. Like Ilkley or Ganton or those other courses around Leeds.

JL: Aye, where the only lambs they see are on their dinner plate.

AK: Or we’ve paid through nose to play at local courses already in business and doing well enough, thank you.

AP: To be fair, when Arthur and I had a natter with him, he was quite sympathetic when we mentioned about maybe starting our own golf club. I think – we both think – we might be able to negotiate a proper lease from him. Set up nine-holes at any rate.

AK: We’ll have to talk to a few land agents, of course. See what other options there might be. But let’s see what response we get from this letter. It’s worth a try, isn’t it?

ALL: Yes, yes. Go for it.

AK: I’ll get the letter finished off tomorrow and drop it round to the Post. At least, our Gert’ll stop giving me what-for for not acting on all this talk!

(Suddenly we hear the cry of a new-born child from upstairs)

All: Whoaah!

JF: Sounds like Gertie’s sending you another message just now.

HT: Well, someone is. That was a very healthy yell.

AP: Congratulations, old man.

AK: Oh, goodness.

(All join the congratulations. Then midwife Greenhalgh appears in the room)

AG: As you may have deduced, Mr Kitching, you’re the father of a very healthy new infant. It’s a girl.

AK: Er, right, yes. Thank you, nurse. Goodness me. What a moment.

AG: If you want to see baby and mother you’d best follow me then.

AK: Of course, Mrs Greenhalgh. I’m right behind you, right behind you. Oh, Alf, will you get those bottles of beer out for the boys. I’ll join you shortly.

(Alf disappears off stage to the kitchen; Arthur follows Nurse Greenhalgh)

JF: Ahm telling you, boys. This is a good omen. A new baby, a new golf club. We'll be dangling her on our knees in the clubhouse next year!

JL: Aye, then she'll be crawling all over the greens chasing baa-lambs.

HT: Hey, now, let's not get ahead of ourselves. One thing at a time.

(Alf Phillipson returns with the bottles of beer and hands them out)

JF: So, Harold, where do you think we should hold this meeting – if it happens.

HT: I think Hickling's Café would let us have room.

JF: Who would run it? Arthur?

HT: No. Arthur doesn't think he should. He says we'd need someone with standing in the district to show we're serious, with a bit of clout. I've got a mind to approach Col Collins, lives over at Helperby, and a bit of a golfer himself.

AP: Royal Scots Grays, isn't he?

HT: He is – and a distinguished military record to his name, too.

(Arthur reappears, beaming)

JL: Now then, papa. How are they? All well?

AK: Oh, grand, Jimmy, just grand. You never saw such a smile. Least I say it was a smile, nurse Greenhalgh says it was wind. But she's bonny, to be sure.

HT: And Gert?

AK: Hunky dory, Harold, hunky-dory. She did say: 'I hope you've made your blessed mind up about that golf club.' I said I was posting letter to the paper tomorrow.

JF: Hey, time for a toast.

All: Yes, a toast.

JF: A toast to the new bairn.

All: To the new baby!

JL: I want to propose a toast. To the new Knaresborough Golf Club!

All: To the new Knaresborough Golf Club!

(All raise their bottles and drink in unison)

ENDS