

# ON THE RIGHT TRACK?

## ABERDOVEY, GWYNEDD

Way out west, does Aberdovey's stellar reputation ring true for our travelling fourball?

### OUR UNDERCOVER PLAYERS



**CHARLES BRISCOE-KNIGHT**

**Age** 73 **Handicap** 14 **Lives** Reigate  
**Best golfing moment** Playing Kiawah Island the day after the 1991 Ryder Cup... and making the putt that Bernhard Langer missed on 18!

Washed out images?



**LINDA ROCKETT**

**Age** 64 **Handicap** 31 **Lives** California  
**Best golfing moment** Playing above the clouds at the world's second-highest course (9,000ft) – La Cima in Colombia. Stunning.



**JEREMY WALTON**

**Age** 59 **Handicap** 14 **Lives** Northants  
**Best golfing moment** Breaking par – for the only round in my golfing career – which included an eagle on a par 4!



**DENISE BELLAMY-WALTON**

**Age** 57 **Handicap** 12 **Lives** Northants  
**Best golfing moment** Being a European fan in the crowd at the Hazeltine National for the 2016 Ryder Cup – awesome atmosphere!

### NEED TO KNOW...

**Founded** 1892

**Designers** Harry Colt, James Braid and W.H. Fowler.

**Yardage** 6,091-6,535 (par 71).

**Summer green fees** £55-£70.

**Where it is** West end of Aberdovey on the A493, adjacent to the railway station. Postcode: LL35 0RT.

**Star holes** Pick of the holes include the memorable 'blind' par-3 12th 'Cader,' – a short hole with its green perched atop the dunes – and the glorious risk-reward par-4 16th beside the railway line.

**Contact** 01654 767493, [www.aberdoveygolf.co.uk](http://www.aberdoveygolf.co.uk)





***'The 16th is a fantastic hole – it's a short, drivable par 4 that I very almost made'***

This is a well maintained, historic and true links but leave your ego at home when deciding which tees to play from – there's a 500-yard difference from the back white tees to the yellows, so be realistic.

The tees themselves were in great nick and the greens were true and quote quick. The course conditioning overall was near-perfect and I really enjoyed the traditional links feel to it. It's generally played on gently undulating ground, behind and between the dunes and railway line. It has a few holes like that – the 3rd and 12th swiftly spring to mind.

We played without the usual wind so the chief challenge was dealing with sloping fairways and peculiar bounces. I loved the drivable 16th, a fantastic short par 4 where I almost made it, but for a small sandy complex of humps and hollows!

Practice-wise, I also loved the logical way of putting in front of the clubhouse, then moving to the chipping/bunker area before teeing it up on the 1st. The long game practice area runs parallel to the 1st so is a bit out of the way.

Sadly, we played when Covid-19 was affecting the social side of golf, but the sandwiches and beer both went down well while the restaurant staff were exceptionally friendly and efficient during such a stressful time.

In my opinion this has to be one of the best value for money courses in the UK and if I were to leave my club to join another, Aberdovey would be the first to get my letter of application!

The course is located on the edge of town, almost the furthest west players can travel in the principality. I loved the fact you walked from the car park across the railways lines to the terrace between pro shop and clubhouse.



Measuring over 6,500 yards off the back tees, pride comes before a fall.



**'The tight lies and odd bounces of links golf give me shivers, but I cannot wait to return'**

From my all too rare experiences of links golf, Aberdovey was a delight and right up there with another top Welsh seaside course I played a few years ago – Royal Porthcawl.

The tees were very good, but one – the 3rd – was actually quite difficult to find for a newcomer to the course. And then it required a 'blind' tee shot – tricky for a high handicapper, but I got lucky with my chip and made par.

Links golf is a real challenge for me as the tight lies and odd bounces give me the shivers. I like some grass under my ball so it sits up so I wasn't ever too downbeat when I found the semi-rough! I loved the holes which weaved in between the dunes...

To be honest, we didn't do too much practising, but the chipping area and putting green were readily accessible on the way to the 1st tee so a quick warm-up was easy. I've never walked across railway tracks to tee it up before so this was a memorable start to the day.

As we played in Covid-19 times the locker room was OB so I can't comment on their ambience, although the upstairs bar and restaurant – serving good, honest golf club fayre and a great variety of white and red wines – was bright and airy with a friendly atmosphere. Watching the sunset on the balcony overlooking the 18th was an added bonus.

In terms of value-for-money, I didn't pay – my partner took care of that! – but I will say that everything about Aberdovey reeked class and style. I can't wait to return.

## YELLOW TEE CARD

HOLE	PAR	YDS
1	4	414
2	4	313
3	3	153
4	4	372
5	3	194
6	4	329
7	5	469
8	4	312
9	3	155
		34 / 2,711
10	4	409
11	4	373
12	3	132
13	5	504
14	4	379
15	5	477
16	4	279
17	4	404
18	4	423
		37 / 3,380
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>6,091</b>



**'This is authentic links golf at its best. Its opening holes can destroy your round'**

I've been lucky enough to visit Aberdovey several times now and every time I've found the course to be in excellent playing condition. I've never left feeling disappointed.

It's everything you'd expect from a premium golf venue; teeing areas that are flat and tidy while the greens clearly receive a lot of care and attention throughout the year – they also feature bewilderingly subtle breaks that can defy the laws of physics!

This is authentic links golf at its best, where nature, sand dunes and marshland meets manicured aprons and greens. The opening couple of holes are tough but if you can keep your card intact then you'll get opportunities to recover around the turn. The signature 12th is a place to forget your round for a few moments and just soak up the beauty of the surroundings.

The fairways offer tight, peaty lies that call for precise ball striking so bring your iron A-game. Also, with the sea on one side and mountains on the other, be prepared to do battle with all that nature can throw at you.

Aberdovey offers solid value for money for a quality golfing experience. Throw in the stay and play option with dormy rooms and breakfast and you're talking about a serious bargain. I struggle to find any negatives, although holidaymakers have a couple of public rights of way that cross the course to the beach and relaxed beach-goers ambling across can slow down the pace of play. You should also be aware this is a popular holiday route, so build



Aberdovey sits at the mouth of the Dovey Estuary, guaranteeing epic views and testing wind.



***'Sheep meander with no real urgency across the course and add rural ambience'***

Aberdovey boasts a stunning position, sat on the edge of town, sandwiched between the dunes of the Irish Sea and Snowdonia National Park. The local sheep occasionally add to the rural ambience, meandering with little urgency across the course! The railway station directly behind the clubhouse provides a convenient travel alternative.

I've played here before and it was, as usual, in excellent shape... it's playable year-round. I particularly enjoyed the elevated tees at the par-4 2nd, 4th and 17th, providing superb panoramic views. When the wind is up, they're a real challenge. The greens are immaculate and though generous in size, they're a real test of your feel for the longer putt!

Getting to them isn't easy though as danger lurks everywhere. Even though the rough wasn't too high it can be brutal, while a marked hazard waterway system zigzags alongside several fairways and is perfectly placed to catch loose balls when concentration waivers.

The par-3 12th was a highlight and is the signature hole for a reason. It plays out to sea with the wind drawing the ball back onto the green and lives long in the memory.

The short game facilities are excellent, with a double green chipping area and bunker, and the two-tier putting green is immaculate and generous and very accurately reflects those on the course.

Sitting outside the modern, airy clubhouse on a sunny day, you're afforded wonderful views of the course. It must be great to be a member here. Roll on our next visit!



## THE UNDERCOVER VERDICT

Local legend has it that Aberdovey was originally laid out on the natural North Wales coastal terrain using flowerpots for holes. Those distant days at the back end of the 19th century were before Harry Colt, James Braid and W.H. Fowler arrived on the scene and turned Aberdovey into one of Wales' leading links – 1991 Masters champion Ian Woosnam rates Aberdovey as one of his favourite courses.

Our four-ball were unanimously in agreement with Woosie and gave Aberdovey, flanked by breathtaking Snowdonia National Park scenery on one side and the Irish Sea and striking dunesland on the other, the resounding thumbs up.

Sure, the breathtaking scenery and views blew them away at times... but not as much as the course and club itself – although they did concede that Aberdovey's early holes proved to be tough nuts to crack.

Nevertheless, the quartet enjoyed a memorable day out and seriously struggled to find fault with both the layout and the off-course facilities. In their view, this was the closest you can possibly get to the perfect golf day, particularly when factoring in the very modest green fee for such a quality links.

"It has got to be the bargain of the season," said Charles. "If I were to leave my club to join another, Aberdovey would be the first to get my letter of application!"

**NEXT  
MONTH**  
Cleeve Hill,  
Gloucs