

The Golfing Rimmers

William Rimmer was born on 1st October 1863, in Formby, Lancashire, England, to Thomas Tyrer Rimmer (b. 1822) and Ellen Rimmer (formerly Neale, b. 1827). The Rimmer, (or “Rymer” as it was earlier known) family has its origins in the Formby area, and can be traced back to the Domesday Book.

As a young boy, William was Formby’s first Telegraph boy, and later became Formby’s first ever postman.

At 17, William went to sea, first sailing before the mast under Captain Flynn, on a trading ship plying between Liverpool and America for the Liverpool shipping line James Baines & Co. He then went on to sail on the SS “Lord Clive” between Liverpool and Philadelphia.

Leaving his life on the high seas, William returned to Formby, and in 1884 began the task of designing and building Formby Golf Links, at the time a 9-hole golf course, built on land known as “The Warren”, rented from local farmer Mr William Halewood, situated to the west of the Liverpool-Southport steam railway line.

A perk of the job of Head Green Keeper for the new course was a cottage, situated on what is now alongside the 14th fairway. At the time the cottage was called “Warren Cottage”, named after the farm on which it stood. Later, after a brief period when it was known locally as “McEvoy’s Cottage”, it was re-named “Golf Cottage”, a name it keeps to this day.

On 4th March 1889, William married **Margaret Porter** from Wallasey, in a ceremony conducted by the Rev. John Francis, at St Nicholas Church, Liverpool.

For 18 years William tended the greens of Formby Golf Club, and designed and built the first men’s and women’s courses. He left the Club in 1903 (to be replaced by Thomas McEvoy, who served the club for 30 years).

Moving only a short distance away, William planned, created and almost single-handedly built the Freshfield Golf Links, where he served as Head Green Keeper for thirty years.

He was also involved in the planning, designing and construction of Royal Birkdale Golf Club, although never left his beloved Formby links for a permanent position a few miles north.

An article from “Formby Folk”, published in the local newspaper, the “Formby Times” in 1902 best describes the life and times of William, who was a true Formby character:

MR. WILLIAM RIMMER

"I have two ambitions," said 79-years-old William Rimmer, of Massams Lane, Freshfield. "I want to live long enough to see Hitler beaten, and it is also my ambition to outlive this watch."

Mr. Rimmer's watch is almost as well-known as himself. The "boys" sometimes remark when they see him coming, "Here's Bill and his watch!"

The watch was made for Mr. Rimmer's 21st birthday. It has ticked its way through the long years with never a stop.

Mr. Rimmer has been a Jack-of-all-trades. He is best known, though, for his connections with golf. For eighteen years he was green-keeper at Formby Golf Club, and made the first men's and women's courses.

He then spent thirty years as green-keeper at Freshfield Golf Club, and it is no exaggeration to say he planned and very nearly made it.

It is little wonder that he is the father of a keen golfing family. They were brought up on golf links. Son Harry, who is now serving with the Royal Marines, was a golf professional before he joined up.

Jimmy, too, was a golf professional. He went out to Canada. When they opened the course at Jasper Park, Ontario, Jimmy teed off with Lord Byng. He did the first hole in one, and so impressed his lordship that he took out a gold pin and presented it to Jimmy as a memento.

Jimmy died two years ago in the terrific heat-wave which swept North America.

Like many other old Formby people, Mr. Rimmer prefers the Formby of the past to the present. He remembers the Southport-Liverpool road when it was full of ruts. He remembers the old thatched cottages dotted here and there, when nearly all were farmers.

In these same "good old days" he used to walk each morning to his work from Formby to the Crown Hotel in Birkdale. That was at 6 a.m.

On Sunday mornings he would walk to Liverpool docks and give a hand with the unloading, just for a change!

It was on one of these occasions that he nearly lost his life. He was loading a flat with flour when the guide rope caught his leg, lifted the chute, and threw him.

That wasn't the only tight spot.



At 17 he went to sea, and on his first voyage out the ship was involved in a collision off the Bar Lightship.

On his last voyage in the "Lord Clive," fire broke out while they were battling with heavy seas. They made the 1,700 miles to Liverpool with one rail often under water.

And Mr. Rimmer is proud of the fact that he has sailed before the mast. With Captain Flynn as skipper, he went trading for three years. With a good stiff breeze filling the sails, they could make the journey back to England from America in twelve days.

But before all that, there was a time when he was Formby's first telegraph boy. He finally gave that up. Why?

"Well, on a Saturday night my finishing time was eight o'clock," he explains. "But every Saturday night at a quarter to eight I used to get a telegram to deliver to Formby Hall. It was a long way. Anyhow, I didn't like it, so I left."

Later he became Formby's first postman.

Mr. Rimmer is a man who has seen and done plenty. May his two ambitions be successful additions to a life story that has been as full of interest as it has been varied.

William and Margaret had a total of 9 children, 5 girls and 4 boys, many of who were born in the tiny Warren Cottage on Formby Golf Links. They all attended St Peter's Primary School in Paradise Lane, Formby.

The girls were Ellen (Nellie), Margaret (Maggie), Anne (Annie), Ada, and my own maternal grandmother Elizabeth.

The boys were Thomas, Edward, Henry (Harry) and James. Four young men who, having been born and raised on a golf links soon took to the sport as if second nature, and continued the fine golfing tradition set by their father William.



William & Margaret Rimmer, with six of their children.

William Rimmer died peacefully at his home, 18 Massams Lane, Formby, on 20th February 1947, aged 84.

Thomas "Tom" Rimmer (b. 1890 – d. 1946, aged 56)



Thomas Rimmer served in the Army during WWI

Head Green Keeper at West Cheshire Golf Club

Head Green Keeper at Huyton Golf Club (now Huyton & Prescot Golf Club)

James "Jimmy" Rimmer (b. 1897 - d. 30.07.1940, aged 43)

Before the outbreak of WWI, Jimmy Rimmer worked as a labourer in a copper works in Liverpool. He joined the Army and enlisted in the King's Liverpool Regiment, being discharged on invalidity pension in 1917.

He then followed his love of golf, and became Golf Professional at Bidston Golf Club 1921 - 1925, a role later taken over by his younger brother Harry.

Renowned as one of the longest hitters of his day, Jimmy performed with distinction in the Open Championship of 1924, when he tied with J.H. Taylor as the leading qualifier.

Jimmy emigrated to Canada in March 1925 aboard the SS Lancastria, to take up a golf professional's job there on a new course, the Jasper Park Lodge course, designed by renowned course architect Stanley Thompson.

Jimmy Rimmer played at the opening of Jasper Park Lodge and teed off with Lord (Julian) Byng, then the Governor-General of Canada. Jimmy made the first hole in one, and so impressed his Lordship that he took out a gold pin and presented it to Jimmy as a memento. He was Golf Professional at Jasper Park Lodge, Alberta, Canada 1925 – 1933.

He won the Alberta Open at Jasper Park in 1926 with a score of 150. He came close to winning the Canadian Open on more than one occasion, but never gained the title.

He set a course record at Jasper Park Lodge of 63, which remained in place until many years after his death.

Jimmy is pictured here (in white shirt and tie) at the opening of Jasper Park Lodge, on 17th July 1925, with Lady Haig, General Earl Haig WW 1 Commander-in-Chief of British forces and Captain of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Stanley Thompson, Walter Pratt, General Manager of Canadian National Railways Hotels:



Jimmy married **Elizabeth “Bessie” Gray** in November 1928, and had one child, **Edward “Ted” Rimmer**, born in Jasper on 8th April 1930. (Ted also acted as part-time green keeper at Jasper Park Lodge during his holidays from school).

In November 1932 Jimmy returned to England with his wife Bessie and their son Edward aboard SS Letitia, to visit his family, before they all returned to Canada on the same ship in May 1933 for Jimmy to take up a new post in Halifax.

His wife’s parents did not approve of their move so far from Alberta, and insisted young Ted remain with them. Bessie followed Jimmy to Halifax, returning frequently to visit their son in Alberta.

Jimmy became the Professional at Ashburn Golf & Country Club, Halifax, Canada from 1934 until his death in 1940.

He won the Canadian Maritime Open 1934; 1937; 1938; 1939, and was runner-up in 1935 and 1936.

During the Canadian winters Jimmy travelled with his wife Bessie and son Ted to Bermuda, Jamaica, and Los Angeles and worked as Golf Professional at various clubs there.

A tragic accident resulted in the death of Bessie, from meningitis after falling in a pond on the golf course at Halifax. Jimmy was distraught at her passing, turning to drink, and not long after he took his own life.

LEADING GOLF "PRO" PASSES

Friends, particularly those in sports circles will learn with regret of the death of James R. Rimmer, well known golf professional, which occurred suddenly this morning at his home, 23 Stairs Place.

Mr. Rimmer was born 43 years ago in Liverpool, England, and came to Canada shortly after the last war. He had been engaged in his profession in Halifax for a number of years and had a wide circle of acquaintances.

He is survived by one son, Edward, who resides with his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Alex Gray, of Jasper Park, Alberta, also by his father and several brothers and sisters in England.

The funeral will take place Thursday at 2 p.m., from Cruikshank's Funeral Home, 416 Robie Street. Interment will be St. John's Cemetery.

Jimmy Rimmer Great With "Iron" Play

JASPER PARK LODGE, Alta., Aug. 1—Word of the sudden death of Jimmy Rimmer, golf professional at Halifax, was received here with general feelings of sorrow and regret.

Jimmy Rimmer lived at Jasper for several years and was the first golf professional at the Lodge golf course here which was opened by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig in 1925.

Rimmer remained here until around 1930 when he accepted appointment as golf pro in Halifax where he has since been employed.

He spent last winter as golf professional in Bermuda.

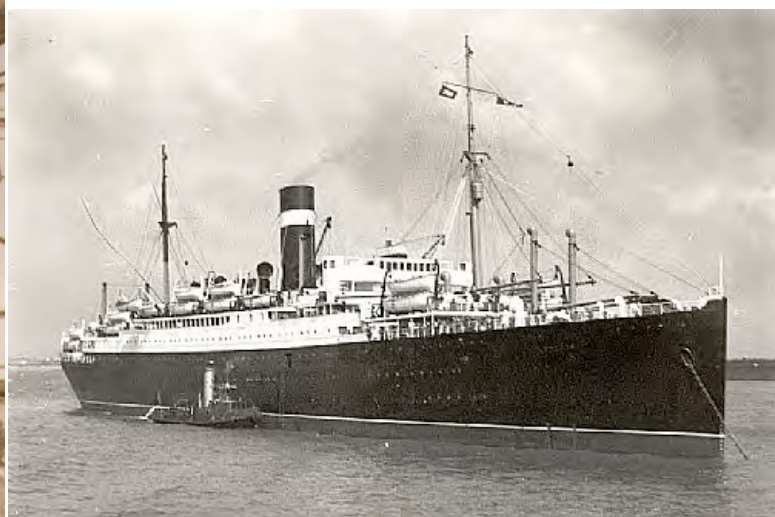
Rimmer was a great golfer and possibly one of the finest exponents of the iron play in Canada.

He was not a tall man but had broad shoulders and a perfect pair of hands and wrists.

He always said he was the worst putter in the world but seemed to do fairly well on the greens at that.

Shortly before leaving Jasper he established the remarkable record of 63 on the Lodge golf course here which still stands and is likely to for many years to come. His card was seven under par.

Jimmy Rimmer's Obituary articles from Canadian newspaper cuttings



James, Bessie & Ted Rimmer on board SS Letitia on the way home to Canada after a visit to Liverpool in 1933

Edward "Eddy" Rimmer (b. 1901 - d. 1979, aged 77)



Edward Rimmer served in the Army during WWI

Head Green Keeper at Freshfield Golf Club (taking over from his father William Rimmer)

Head Green Keeper at Leasowe Golf Club

Head Green Keeper at Widnes Golf Club

The family who lived for golf

A TALE of a remarkable local golfing family has come to light after the death of the last son, Edward Rimmer.

The whole family was born in Formby with father William, a greenkeeper and course builder at Formby, Freshfield and Birkdale.

There were four boys and five girls in the family and several of Edward's brothers were involved in golf throughout their lives.

Tom Rimmer, who died in 1946, was greenkeeper at West Cheshire and Huyton and Jim Rimmer was professional at Bidston before becoming professional at Jasper Park Lodge, Halifax, Canada.

Perhaps the best-known brother was Harry, who was the Bidston professional for many years before his death 11 years ago. The remaining member of that family is sister Mrs. Nell Birchall, now 88, who still

remembers Formby clubhouse burning down in 1897.

Edward, who died at his home in Surrey, aged 77, was a top-class golfer in his younger days. He became greenkeeper at Freshfield, Leasowe and Widnes before retiring to the village of Churt.

Edward's family is keeping up the tradition of golfing connections, the best-known locally being Jim. It is interesting to note that all nine children of William Rimmer attended St. Peter's Primary School, in Paradise Lane, Formby, and several relations still live in the area.

Henry "Harry" Rimmer (b. 12.01.1906 - d. 31.12.1967, aged 61)



Harry Rimmer, playing as a young man, and later practising before a tournament at Royal Liverpool just after WWI, watched by Sam King the Knole Park Professional

Professional and later (due to ill health) Club Steward at Bidston Golf Club 1925 – 1967, succeeding his elder brother Jimmy.

Known as a splendid natural striker of the ball, with "unlimited talent", but let down by his putting skills.

Harry covered the Royal Birkdale Links in 68, in what was then the second most important tournament after the Open, the Southport Dunlop event.

One of his little "trick shots" was to hit the ball high from the bunker, making the ball rise almost vertically. As the ball fell, he would take a second hit at it like a baseball bat, and having the eye of a hawk he always connected! Unfortunately, on one occasion, the ball struck the head where it joined the shaft, resulting in a permanent bow to the club!

This quote from "Golfing Gadds" recalls one of the more notable of Harry's golfing partners at Bidston:

One of the sporting headlines of 1928 was the goal-scoring feat of the Everton F. C. Centre-Forward Bill 'Dixie' Dean, who was born in Birkenhead on the Wirral and loved to play golf with local pros like Harry Rimmer of Bidston and Bill Davies, the Ryder Cup player from Prenton and later Wallasey. In his biography by John Keith, we are told that Dean got down to scratch in his teens and was a winner of the now defunct Wirral Amateur Championship; many who saw him play thought that he would have made a good pro.

Bidston lose a great club-man

Times' winged chariot moves inexorably, taking with it many sports characters who can ill be spared.

A day or two ago, for instance, Harry Rimmer, a professional golfer who served his club, Bidston, almost all his life was on duty; yet 24 hours later he died, aged only in his late fifties.

Rimmer, member of a large family of golfers whose home was at Freshfield, followed his brother, Jimmy, at Bidston at the time when the course had just been converted from nine to 18 holes and was miles from the industrial landscape of Birkenhead.

Now, unhappily, it is surrounded on three sides by encroaching bricks and mortar and is due to be encircled soon by the major Wirral road which is to serve the new tunnel.

All the Rimmer boys played golf—mostly on the now defunct Banking and Insurance course which became the site for Woodvale Aerodrome. Jimmy was one of the longest hitters of his day and performed with distinction in the Open Championship of 1924 when, if my memory serves, he tied with J. H. Taylor as leading qualifier.

When he left Bidston it was to take up an appointment at Jasper Park in the Canadian Rockies, and while in Canada he went close to winning the Canadian Open.

Harry Rimmer was barely past his teens when he came to Bidston. He was a splendid natural striker of the ball and with unlimited talent (except for his putting which was always rather suspect) might have gone far in the game.

But he lacked that little stability, off course and on, which most great players have, and so he was fated to end his days a club professional rather than a professional golfer—and I'm not sure that he preferred it this way.



I remember his covering the Royal Birkdale links in 68 in what was then the second most important tournament after the Open, the Southport Dunlop event. This put him almost in the lead against players of international class.

The next day he arrived to play with both hands badly lacerated, having had a slight altercation with a roadway when riding a bike on the handlebars of which was perched a bag containing half a dozen bottles of beer!

That was typically Harry Rimmer, a generous fun-loving, cherubic-faced boy who never grew up in the golf sense.

Not being a great putter he often used to borrow from the bag of some member a hickory-shafted putter which he thought had more magic than his own. On one occasion, having missed from two feet with this borrowed club, he slapped the club-head against the sole of his shoe, and promptly snapped the shaft in the centre.

The rest of the day had to be spent in his "shop" refurbishing the shaft and camouflaging the hickory to make it look suitably ancient...

Another of his exploits—

and I saw this for myself—was to hit a shot badly from a bunker, making the ball rise vertically from the face of the hazard. As the ball fell he took a swing at it, using his club like a baseball bat, and having the eye of a hawk he connected. Unfortunately, the ball struck the club where the head joined the steel shaft and the effect was to bow the shaft as markedly as any fiddler's.

Harry Rimmer served during the War with the Marines and from the time of his demobilisation he was plagued with arthritis in the hands. He became steadily worse and finally the dual effect of rheumatism and heart trouble forced him to give up playing and accept the offer of the job of steward.

For some five or six years he had been doing that work, despite his manifold handicaps.

It is sad that any club should lose, in the space of a fortnight, two of their oldest and most liked servants. Teddy Carr and Harry Rimmer, individually and as a golfing partnership, were among the unbeatables of club golf.