

This is a brief history of Arcot itself, and where the name comes from. Arcot is a locality and part of Vellore City in the state of Tamil Nadu, India. Which is in the south east of the country. Located on the eastern end of the Vellore City on the southern banks of Palar River. The city straddles a highly strategic trade route between Chennai and Bangalore, between the Mysore Ghat

The name is believed to have derived from the Tamil words, AARU (river) +KAADU (forest). However ARKKATU means 'a forest.

The town's strategic location has led to it being repeatedly contested and prompted the construction of a formidable fortress by Muslim Nawab of Karnataka, who made it his capital, and in 1712 the English captured the town during the conflict between the United Kingdom and France for the control of South India. The people who lived in the Arcot region, especially in and near the temple belonged to a clan called the Arcot's.

The Battle of Arcot took place on November 14th 1751 between forces of the English East India Company, led by Robert Clive, and the forces of the French East India Company. Clive's victory at the battle of Arcot marked a sea change in the British experience in India. France lost its colonial empire ambitions and it made Clive a very wealthy and illustrious man.

Incidentally 4th Regiment Royal Artillery, which were originally known as the 4th Royal Horse Artillery, are comprised of six batteries. Of which, one of which is called 6/36 Arcot 1751 Battery. The honour title of Arcot was granted in 1969 and commemorates the Siege of Arcot by Clive in 1751.

This brings us to the connection between Arcot Hall, here in Cramlington and Arcot in India. Robert Storey was a medical student and emigrated early in life to India where he became the Physician to the Nabob of Arcot, and was also involved in the Battle of Arcot. It was here that he made his fortune, and on his return to England purchased land at Cramlington from Sir John Lawson in 1791.

Robert Storey died on 21st Aug 1822 aged 90, and George Shum, purchased the land from Storey and built Arcot Hall in 1802. George Shum Jr was born in 1775, and he went on to work for the East India Company. In 1795 he married Ann the daughter of Robert Storey and following the marriage Shum changed his name to Shum-Storey. Their son Henry Shum-Storey had a daughter Emmeline Anne, born in 1841 and a son George Henry, born in 1842.

Emmeline was married on 12th June 1872 to a Captain Lawrence Shawe, a Royal Marine, They were married in Cramlington Village, they were obviously wealthy people as she was one of the richest women in Northumberland. Captain Shawe died in 1905 and Emmeline in 1937. By the time of her death she had moved to the south of England and was living on the Burlesdon Estate in Hampshire, having purchased it in 1873, but did return to Arcot, where up to 1899 staff and friends were the main residents of Arcot.

In 1890 the tenant was Andrew John Blackett Ord, although, the hall was still owned by the Shaw-Storeys at the time, in 1901, the principle tenant was a Howard Pease esq JP. He was an author, and wrote several books, mainly about Northumberland and between 1893 and 1927 he had wrote 13 books. In addition he was also editor of the Northern Counties Magazine between 1900 and 1901, whilst he worked as banker at Hodgkin, Barnett, Pease, Spence and Co, which was founded by his father in 1859.

Hodgkin, Barnett, Pease, Spence and Co was one of the biggest banks around the Newcastle area with 30 branches in 1903. The Pease family were Quakers, and were involved in the founding of the City of Newcastle Golf Club, originally where Newcastle United Golf is now sited on the Town Moor.

Howard lived at the Hall from at least 1896, as in one of his books, the foreword was dated 1896. However, he had a daughter born in 1894 in Cramlington, so it is assumed that he was there at that time. Again the Hall was still owned by the Shaw-Storeys.

In 1910 a Mrs Riddell occupied the hall, and records show in 1914, an E H Lockhart resided at the hall however Emmeline the owner was recorded as living there in 1925.

Hartley Main Colliery Company acquired the house in the 1930's. When shaft for Arcot Colliery was sunk at the start of the Second World War, it was at the top end of the car park where the practice area is. There were stables for six ponies, and 200 men worked there. The mine was worked east of the shaft and the seams worked up to the main railway line. While working the pit, the miners said that they could clearly hear the sound of the trains above them travelling down the lines. During the time the pit was open there was several underground fatalities. Dudley Colliery also mined underneath the future golf course, causing subsidence over an area of the 7th and 10th holes.

During the Second World War the hall was occupied by the National Electricity Board, and fully re-wired the hall in one week. The Scottish Highlanders and the Black Watch used some of the land at Arcot as a transition camp, before they went onto front line action.

However before the Second World War there were moves to change the use of Arcot Hall to what it is today

Benton Park Golf Club was originally established in 1909 in Benton in North Tyneside, when William Elgie Bland invited a number of like-minded gentleman to a meeting to discuss the formation of a new golf club. Plans proceeded and the first club was built at Benton Park, opposite the Black Bull pub, with the Longbenton Conservative Club being the original clubhouse.

It was open to both men and women, and its membership numbers quickly grew and by 1913 it boasted 350 members. The recession of 1927, however, hit the club

hard and there were questions about its continued viability, yet the club rallied, but different problems were to arise.

In 1939, the club was informed that its lease would not be renewed as the land was required for house building by Newcastle Corporation who issued a compulsory purchase order and the land was sold and used for housing.

The estate was named 'Fairways' in recognition of its former use. Closing the club was not deemed an option, so the decision was made to move it.

Following careful negotiations, the land at Arcot Hall was rented from British Coal by Benton Park Golf Club, although due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the move was slightly delayed and work on the new course did not begin until 1946

James Braid, a top class player as well as an innovative designer, was asked to design the new golf course at Arcot Hall at the ripe old age of 77. He is credited with the invention of the dog-leg hole and pot bunkers and is said to have created 250 courses during his lifetime! He died shortly after in 1950, just 3 years after completing Arcot Hall, with the cost of building the course at the time being £2450.

It wasn't until 1958 that Benton Park Golf Club changed the name to Arcot Hall Golf Club, with no opposition to the name change. But the club were still only tenants of the Coal Board and it wasn't until the late 1970's when the first chance to purchase the land and hall occurred.

However, the £70,000 the coal board were prepared to take was thought of as excessive, so the club declined. Over the next few years other opportunities arose but either the club couldn't or wouldn't tender, likewise the Coal Board wouldn't accept any offers.

Finally though in 1996, the golf club finally purchased the land and hall for £385,000.

The rest is history