

Adam Barker - Cambridge University Golf Club Tour, USA, Summer 2014

For three weeks towards the end of summer 2014, I travelled around the USA as part of the Cambridge University Golf Club tour. We spent eight days around New York before travelling to California where, we spent the remainder of the trip working our way down the coast towards San Diego.

We began the trip playing Yale alumni at Bayonne, a recently built course on the New York docklands with fantastic views of Manhattan and had terrain similar to the courses of South Wales. We then travelled up to New Haven, Connecticut, the home of Yale University where we had a two-day match and stayed in their accommodation which is not too dissimilar to the buildings we find in Cambridge. The match was fairly one-sided, with Yale claiming a 12-0 victory however we had a great time and strengthened the links that were already present between the universities.

An early morning followed as we drove down to New Jersey to play what is often recognised as the best course in the world, Pine Valley GC. We played with some hosts that have connections to the Oxford and Cambridge Golf Society and had a friendly match where the CUGC claimed victory, and helped heal the wounds of our scalping at Yale. A day of rest was spent in New York City where we could take in some sights and prepare for our match against Baltusrol the following day; we also happened to bump into one of our most recent CUGC graduates who was doing some job training in the city. Peter Green, a Cambridge alumnus, hosted us for a friendly match at Baltusrol and rounded up other O&C alumni to make up the numbers against our touring side of 10, including a CUGC Blue of 2010, David Normoyle. The CUGC stayed around in the Philadelphia area for our match with Merion GC, where Justin Rose won the US Open a couple of years ago. We were thoroughly beaten by its narrow fairways, small greens and enjoyed seeing the plaque where Ben Hogan hit his infamous 1-iron that hit the flag on the final hole; although the developments in clubs and balls meant that even us mere mortals were hitting 5-irons.

It was time for us to head West and on to San Francisco where we would play the first of our matches. Pasadera GC, the club of Sydney Burlison who played for the CUGC two years ago, hosted us for our first match which they narrowly claimed. It was a fantastic fixture and established lots of new links and contacts for years to come. Pasatiempo were next to welcome the CUGC and it certainly lived up to its reputation: the dry fairways and hard greens were too much for us, as we are used to significantly wetter conditions, resulting in a monumental defeat! With our tails between our legs we headed down to Monterey where we played Bayonet and Pacific Grove clubs and had our first taste of seaside golf on the West coast.

We followed the Pacific Highway en route to San Diego and took in the spectacular sights including elephant seals, golden eagles and condors; also meeting up with an old CUGCer in Santa Barbara.

Two days golf in the blazing heat at Sycuan GC, which is located in a desert canyon, had us longing for the beach and cooler air which was gratefully received at our fixture at the Bridges GC. The course is set amongst the hills and orange groves of the Santa Fe area and is simply spectacular. The Tuscan mansion-style clubhouse with hot air balloons flying overhead left us thinking 'how much better could this get!'

An early morning get up to queue at Torrey Pines left us feeling pretty drained but nonetheless glad we had played such a famous course and stood in the same spots as Tiger Woods when he played his approach to the 18th in his record win. One more fixture was remaining at La Jolla Country Club, where we were hosted by a member of the touring CUGC squad. After a great morning in the sun, with some of the best rounds of the tour, it was time to pack up and get ready to head back to the motherland.

The 21 rounds in 20 days certainly left us feeling a little drained, but very well prepared for the coming season! The purpose of the trip was to reinforce links with universities and clubs that the CUGC has had, and to build some new ones on the way. I am certain that we have accomplished this and now have great contacts across the pond for years to come. We are truly grateful to everyone who has helped us in organising our trip and to those who have invested their time and money into making sure we were made to feel welcome.

After the best pre-season training we could have possibly wished for, we have no excuse for not beating Oxford this year!
