

## Dumbarnie Links Upper Largo, Fife, Scotland

Architect: Clive Clark ( 2020 )

	Par	Rating	Slope	Yardage
Black	72	73.2	130	6940
Blue	72	71.0	128	6421
White	72	68.4	125	5901
Red (W)	72	70.6	127	5296

### Overview:

On a trip to the St. Andrews you want to extend your links golf pleasure by getting out of town to play places in close proximity like Carnoustie, Crail, and Lundin Links. Well make sure to add Dumbarnie Links to that list because only a drive and a mashie south of the old town Clive Clark has summoned from a piece of seaside rolling farmland all the features and feel of Scottish links golf at its finest.

The place has the manufactured feel of other new offerings like Kingsbarns and Castle Stuart but Clark, an accomplished architect of over 30 courses in the UK and around the world, made sure to give you the arbitrariness of blind shots, alternative fairway paths, encroaching burns, punishing revetted face bunkers, and wildly undulating green complexes that makes links golf feel old and distinctive.

From the clubhouse's promontory position the course unfurls beneath your feet as it makes its way to the Firth of Forth following two counterclockwise loops-to the west for the outward nine and back to the east for the inward half. This creates added intrigue as the wind direction will vary significantly from hole to hole making club selection an enigma as you pirouette around the circular trail of the holes on each side.

The course opens up with a pair of seemingly tame downhill holes but don't be fooled because both feature fairways truncated by an encroaching burn running up the left side off the tee and then crossing the fairway in the approach area. These winding brooks can capture a shot without adequate intent.

As the printable hole-by-hole strategic description embedded in the link at the end of this posting indicates, you have to pay attention to the topographical detail of these greens which often have bunkering on one side but equally punishing shoulders and roll offs on the other.

The third hole is the first of a number of seemingly driveable four pars you see during the round. The elevated tee gives you a good look at the risk/reward you are presented with if you decide to play the heroic line. More often than not discretion is the better part of valor so play for proper attack position on the approach shot.

On the Par 4 fifth you get Clark's other favorite strategic element, a split fairway on a longish par four which forces you to make a decision off the tee. The line results in a shorter shot to the hole is the far more harrowing carry where as the safer side will play two clubs longer on the approach shot to follow. I like the fact that the further back the tee a guy plays from it is incrementally more difficult finding the fatter portion of the driving area due it being 60 yards longer and a tougher driving angle relative to the landing zone.

There is one strategic oddity on this layout in that the one-shot holes are bunched in two 3-hole increments on the front and back and the first one is not until the sixth hole on this side.

The two three-pars on the outward half are diametrically opposed in both length and topography. The sixth is a medium length uphill right-to-left bias over a wasteland of scrub and sand into a green that is protected by deep revetted face bunkers. The eighth, which tumbles down toward the sea, is just a wee pitch on the shortest hole on the course, but the 40-yard long diagonally set green has three distinct tiers which makes it an absolute lawn dart challenge into the day's pin to avoid a dreaded three-putt opportunity.

This nine ends with another panoramic view of the Firth on the #4 handicap hole on the card, so it is no pushover. After fitting the tee ball into a driving area narrowed by a pair of deep fairway bunkers on the right you are faced with an uphill approach into a green naked of any bunkers with a deep heel print in the back section.

From the frying pan into the fire, the second half begins with the #1 handicap hole, a stunning looking truncated dogear right par four with more risk than you can imagine on both shots. If you succeed in finding the fat part of the driving area off the tee you have to negotiate the burn that bifurcates the approach line to cape-like setting of this sprawling putting surface.

Once again Clive tempts you with a drivable dogear left over a wasteland of hollows and brush on the 11th. The alternative drive is a 160 yard shot to the right edge of the fairway leaving a short pitch into another wildly contoured green.

After a fairly straight forward Par 4 the 13<sup>th</sup> is another partitioned three-shotter which makes you ponder alternative routes based on lay up positions in alternative fairways on your second.

Once again it has taken five holes to reach a Par 3 on this side. With the prevailing wind from the left, he complicates the task by carrying the burn up the left side of the green so you are encouraged to take an extra club to make sure you carry the penalty area.

The second Par 5 in the last three holes this one presents the split fairway off the tee instead of on the approach. The truly bold player can hit it up the right fairway to shorten the angle and the length for a second shot at the green. Most will play it as three shots up the left but be aware of the extreme false front of this 45-yard deep green which will reject any approach without sufficient energy.

Playing back toward the sea the last short hole plays downhill into the wind and requires a left-to-right line to play up the diagonal green setting. This is not a hole to go flag hunting because of the revetted bunker protecting the right side of the green.

Giving you one more chance for a heroic downwind tee ball the penultimate hole is potentially drivable but this time there is a 300 year-old stone wall playing into the decision. The lay up on this dogear right before the wall is a shot of about 180 yards leaving a 100 yard pitch into a mushroom shaped green pinched by pot bunkers. The more ambitious tee shot needs 200 yards of air to reach the other side and leaves a very short punch and run into this green complex.

The finish is a long and challenging dogleg right Par 4 which presents a semi-blind tee shot over a crested hill with flanking deep fairway bunkers on the corner. From the safe driving area adjacent to the bunkers the approach is a downhill look at a long green nestled in the hill below the clubhouse. What a satisfying finishing look to this splendid layout.

Once you are done take the time to sit behind a tall adult beverage in the clubhouse bar with a breathtaking view of the majesty of this course. Plenty of time to seed some big fish stories about all the amazing Dumbarnie Links challenges you took on today.

#### Hole-By-Hole Analysis: (Blue/White)

#1 Par 4 398/363 yards

Downhill drive to a generous wide fairway with a dent on the left. Second shot is complicated by a S-shaped stream that kind of bifurcates the approach line from the left and then across the fairway at 75 yards out. Two bunkers back left of green make for a good directional line in.

#2 Par 5 482/455

Similar feel to the first this par five is separated into three segments by a wandering stream from the left and then across the fairway at 145. Drive is to center with a lay up left center. The green is raised and has a steep face which makes going for the green in two an extra club or two. One pot bunker short left of the green will collect timid approach shots.

#3 Par 4 311/294

Short technical dogear left four par with a nest of bunkers in the dogleg and a center line bunker up the teeing line on the right. From the elevated tee hit it over that bunker which leaves a short shot into an amphitheater green complex with two bunkers guarding the left.

#4 Par 4 359/332

By contrast to the last this one has lots of static, 10 bunkers and a prevailing wind in your face to deal with. Drive is left center at the two greenside bunkers you see from the tee. Approach to the elevated green needs to avoid these two bunkers. Note that the bunkers you see on the right are a good 50 yards from the putting surface.

#5 Par 4 398/367

Challenging driving decision with a split fairway with furry mounds and bunkers in the middle. Left is shorter route by almost 40 yards but right has more fairway room. The bunkerless green is set on a diagonal from 5 to 11 and is very accessible from the right as a result. Note that the bunkers on the left are 50 yards short of the putting surface.

#6 Par 3 165/137

Kind of a middle length three par which is all carry over an abyss grass and sand. Two revetted bunkers front left and one of the right define the wide target. Back left is a tough pin where a draw would be the preferred shot shape.

#7 Par 5 510/477

Three-shot hole for most of the field hit drive left center away from the constellation of bunkers on the right. Lay up is to about 135 just short of the bunkers left and right. Bunkers at 80 and 30 are not relevant unless you are going for the green in two. This green sits on a 8 to 2 diagonal and has two bunkers in the face of the hill on the right.

#8 Par 3 138/122

Second Par 3 in the last two holes, this is the shortest of the short ones. Narrow stepped green surrounded by revetted sand bunkers on both sides. Beautiful look at the sea in the distance.

#9 Par 4 390/351

Another panoramic view from this tee to a slight dogear right down and up four par. Drive right center just off the bunker edge on the right. Somewhat uphill carry across two bunkers at 90 yards into a fairly naked green with a deep heel print back left.

#10 Par 4 474/423

#1 handicap hole is a tough Par 4 that is bifurcated by a burn that is out of the range of most players. Drive is to center and then the hole takes on a bit of a Cape Hole arrangement to the right. There are a couple of pot bunkers on the right between the hazard and the edge of the green. Two bunkers left of the green are likely your aiming point leaving you a short pitch up the green.

#11 Par 4 263/247

Potentially drivable Par 4 this dogears left around a constellation of three bunkers. If you decide to lay up it is a 160 yard shot at the bunker on the right edge of the fairway. Left with a short pitch over one pot bunker front right of a two-tier green. Two more bunkers frame the back section just above the transition in the putting surface.

#12 Par 4 382/332

Long straight away Par 4 has a generous landing area between bunkers on both sides. Hole turns right at the end of the approach into a 7 to 1 diagonal setting of the green so your best approach is with a shot shape left-to-right. Pear shaped green narrows as it moves away from you.

#13 Par 5 519/488

A long truncated five par with lots of visual distraction. Drive to center and then the lay up is to 100 right at the center of the fairway bifurcation. This green is tucked well up to the left behind the string of bunkers starting 50 yards short of the putting surface.

#14 Par 3 163/147

Once again five holes into the back nine before you see a Par 3. Wind direction should be out of the left so a draw working into the wind might be the right shot. The burn snakes up the hole and left of the deep green and has the Pat Ruddy vertical sleepers that makes the carry look intimidating so make sure you take enough club to carry into the surface

#15 Par 5 545/521

Second Par five in three holes. The split fairway off the tee tempts the longer hitter to hit it up the right for a shorter approach line to the green. For most mortals it is up the left and then a long club lay up to center just off the last of the six bunkers that define the transition on the right from the other fairway. The green has a false front and is almost 50 yards deep and sits on a 5 to 11 angle, so play aggressively in your club selection on approach.

#16 Par 3 185/159

Last one shotter in this 5-3-5-3 par sequence is a visual beauty. Shot is a bit downhill to a green as deep as the last one. It has a serious heel mark in the front and a revetted bunker half way up the putting surface on the right is a no-no. The back bunker constellation is for aiming only. Like a fade working into the wind on this one.

#17 Par 4 316/293

Another potentially drivable four par but it takes real kishkas to take this on. The driving area is cut off by a 300 year old stone wall with a furry surround so you have to decide to lay up with a 190 yards shot in front of this transition leaving about 100 yards or blast it over which is at least a 200 yard carry in the air. The green is 40 yards deep and shaped like a Halloween skull, pinched the first half by a pair of pot bunkers and then widened out like a brow in the back section.

#18 Par 4 423/393

Long four to finish which is a dogleg right with two bunkers on the right of the driving area. Carrying those bunkers is a huge carry so I like a tee shot up the left aimed at the distant fairway bunker on that side. Deep green is set to the right with two guarding bunkers on the left. I like a strong draw at the right edge which may leave a pitch up to the flag.