



## Frances "Bunty" Smith

Golf was always part of Frances "Bunty" Smith (nee Stephens) life as her father Fred was the Bootle Golf Club professional while she was growing up.

A frail slight girl with tremendous capacity for practice, she was taught by her father who was devoted to his daughter but a hard task master.

Bunty's consistent play and exceptional short game was soon making her one of the top golfers in post-war England.

In 1947 she made her first appearance as an England international and became English Champion in 1948 when the Curtis Cup selectors disappointingly omitted her from the team when the match was played at her own club, Royal Birkdale.

She won the British and French Ladies' Open Championships in 1949 and went on to play in the next six Curtis Cups winning many valuable points for Britain.

In 1951 Enid Wilson, Daily Telegraph golf correspondent described Bunty as "*The most consistent woman golfer in Britain since the war. The secret of her success is her ability to pitch and putt better than any of her rivals*". To prove this Bunty won the British Championship in 1949 and the English Championship again in 1954 and 1955.

Bunty won a record 10 Lancashire Championships between 1948 and 1960. She won the Northern Foursomes with her friend Jean Donald in 1962 when they beat Lancashire's Gill Cheetham and Julia Greenhalgh in the final.

In 1955 she was County Captain and married Roy Smith, an airline pilot. Two years later their daughter Caroline was born. Only week's later Roy was tragically killed in a plane crash in Africa.

In the 1960s with a young daughter to bring up she could not continue playing international golf but was able to captain British teams in the Vagliano and Curtis Cups several times.



Bunty devoted considerable time and energy to the development of junior golf in England, especially Lancashire and the North West. She was one of the first ELGA County Junior Organisers and Area Managers taking a tremendous interest in girl golfers of all abilities. She organised the formation of the Lancashire Girls' Golf Association in 1974, her daughter Caroline being one of the first members.

In 1977 she was awarded the OBE for outstanding services to golf as a player and administrator.

Bunty never had a strong physique and struggled with ill health for some years before she died in 1978 when she was President of ELGA.

The LGU launched a fund in her memory to raise money for the hospital where she had been treated for cancer. In 1979 Britain's top golfers and her friends played a tournament in her memory at Royal Birkdale where £5500 was raised for the Frances Smith Memorial Fund.

Dr and Mrs Benstead, Royal Birkdale members, donated the "Frances Smith" trophy to Lancashire Ladies' County Golf Association in her memory.

The competition is open to all LLCGA clubs, one representative from each one competing annually in a stroke play handicap competition. This was first played at Royal Birkdale in 1980.

*Adapted from 100 Years of LLCGA Golf 1900-2000 by Sylvia Tiffany*

