

► Although numerous golf clubs are based in buildings that have been listed for their historic value, surprisingly only one 20th century purpose-built clubhouse is listed (at Knebworth, built in 1908).

Here are two possible contenders from the 1930s, a period whose architectural style seems well suited to the needs of golf.

The nautically inspired Art Deco clubhouse at **Royal Birkdale** – the third on the course since it opened in 1896 – was designed by George Tonge (architect also of the Grade II listed Garrick Theatre, Southport), who was himself a keen golfer.

At its opening in July 1935, the contractor John Tompkinson noted that ‘some of the older school are rather opposed to these new ideas,’ and claimed that this was the first clubhouse of its type. Certainly the only other known Modernist examples – for example at Hayling Island and Davyhulme – were later.

In true 1930s tradition, Tonge’s design allowed for two sunbathing decks and for tennis on the flat roof. But whatever the old school thought of such radical ideas, Tonge’s inspiring design, combined with the redesign of the course by Hawtree and Taylor, had the desired effect. Birkdale – which gained its Royal status in 1951 – has staged the Open eight times since 1954, with a further Open scheduled there for 2008.

Away from the coast, **Childwall Golf Club** (*right*), formed in 1912 and moved to its present location on Naylor’s Road, Gateacre, in 1938. Its immaculate Art Deco clubhouse was the work of Alfred Shennan, otherwise known for the Forum Cinema, Lime Street, and for his robust leadership of Liverpool City Council in the late 1930s and 1940s. The Childwall course was designed by James Braid.



◄ So far we have focused mainly on private golf clubs. However there are also municipal courses at Allerton, Bootle, Bowring Park, Hoylake, Kirkby and at Southport (*left*) – the oldest of them all – where the **Southport Municipal Links** were laid out on the seafront in 1911 in an attempt to attract those tourists unable to afford the neighbouring Hesketh course.

This charming, understated clubhouse, designed by a Mr Owens, the borough engineer, was opened in May 1935, two months before Birkdale’s rather grander effort. On the other hand, the municipal pavilion cost £3,900, less than half the cost of Birkdale.

Today the building is used as a restaurant by those playing on the golf links.

Finally (*below*) a rare 1960s golf clubhouse, ironically belonging to the oldest club on the Liverpool coast, the **West Lancashire Golf Club**, established in 1873 on Hall Road West, Blundellsands.

Built in 1962 at a cost of £75,000, as can be seen its design represented no less a radical departure from the norm than was Birkdale’s clubhouse in 1935.

Its architects were Tripe and Wakeham of London, who used broad terraces and curtain glazing on the upper storey to provide members with the best possible vistas of the links and coastline.