

THE LONG GAME

NEWSLETTER OF THE
GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



No 40, APRIL 2012



Young Golfers at GSA's museum tent

GSA at the Women's Open at Royal Melbourne

by Ian Rennick & Paul Burgess

The main focus of our exhibit during the Open at Royal Melbourne Golf Club this year was a demonstration by one of our members, Ross Baker, who made an 1800 Play Club using tools of the era, traditional materials, and the skills of a craftsman he has acquired over many years.

Ross is employed at the Lost Farm golf complex in Tasmania. Whilst busily working on a new club, he is more than happy to talk to everyone who shows interest in his work, or golfing history. His historical knowledge of the game is extensive and he enjoys sharing it with anyone interested in learning about the game.

Another of our members, Max Findlay, lent a display of woods from his collection ranging from 1880 to the 1930's which highlighted how the shape of the clubs had changed over that period. Max explained to interested patrons how the technique of attaching the heads to the shafts had also changed during that era. Earlier clubs were spliced to the neck of the head, but later they were joined by the shaft being fitted into a hole drilled into the head which was called a socket joint.

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FOR THE DIARY

7th May

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22nd May

Don Lawrence Trophy at
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18th June

Golf Historians at Ballarat

30th July

Presidents Trophy at
Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Early Development of Golf in Tasmania

By Norman Richardson.

It wasn't until the 1860's that golf began in Tasmania. The earliest primary source of evidence is a letter published in The Mercury in July 1890 after the Scottish Governor of Tasmania, Sir Robert G. Hamilton, addressing a Caledonian Society meeting, expressed the desire to see golf introduced to Australia.

The letter was written by Jane Williams, eldest child of Alexander Reid. In 1829, Jane married an Army Captain, William Williams and in 1830 travelled with him to India where he died in 1834. Jane returned to Bothwell where she spent her remaining years with her parents at Ratho.

William Wood, who Jane Williams acknowledges introduced golf to Tasmania, was the son of Captain Patrick Wood who led a party of Scots to settle in the Bothwell area in 1822. The Wood family returned to Edinburgh in 1839, where William Wood was educated. William Wood returned to Tasmania in February 1860, to settle on the family estate, Dennistoun.

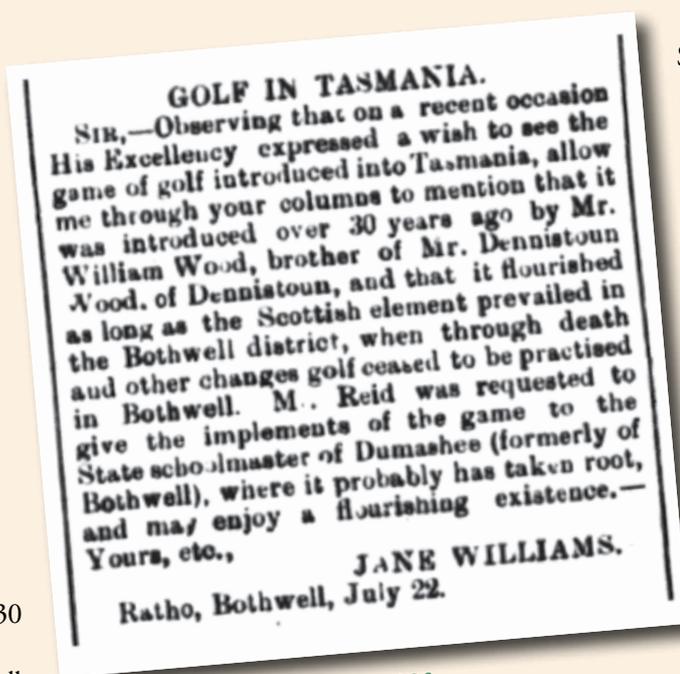
In *The Mercury* of July 21st, 1892 a report on the committee meeting for the Tasmanian Racing Club, at Elwick racecourse, in Hobart's northern suburbs, mentions,

"A letter was received in reference to the use of the grounds at Elwick for a golf club, but it was decided to ask for more information before coming to any decision in reference to the matter".

In *The Mercury* of November 7th, 1895, under the heading 'A week in Carnarvon, the beauties of Port Arthur', was the following extract,

"Carnarvon boasts of having started the first golf links in the colony, and as at present, the only one in the south."

On June, 4th, 1895 the Launceston Golf Club became Tasmania's first club; the Reverend W. H. Webster was appointed Secretary / Treasurer.



Jane Williams letter 22nd July 1890

Mr Edmund King granted permission for the use of his ground above the South Launceston reservoir, they also played on Lawrence's paddocks. The Club's first matches were played on Saturday, June 8th, 1895. Dr. Gutteridge was President. The Club flourished for two seasons before interest subsided, partly due to the distance of the course from town and only a few dedicated enthusiasts were left playing on Lawrence's and Newstead's paddocks. Efforts were made in 1897 to find links closer to town.

Another club was established in Launceston in July 1899, playing on links at Mowbray Racecourse, before moving to Kings Meadows in June 1901. The Mowbray Golf Club would later be called the Tasmanian Golf Club and finally, as it is currently known, the Launceston Golf Club. Their course appears to be the oldest in the state.

In March 1896 a club was formed at Devonport, playing on ground owned by Mr G.E. Harrap. The links were formally opened on April 25th, 1896. By 1900 a second club, the Mersey Golf Club, was operating on the eastern side of the river.

Sheffield followed soon after, forming a club in December 1896, Mr Roberts and the Hope brothers being among the founding members.

In September 1898 the Longford Club began playing at the local racecourse and then later at Mr T.C. Archer's estate, Woolmer. In 1903, *The Mercury* was reporting "that there were thirteen golf courses within the same number of miles of Longford."

The Sassafras Club started in October, 1899, playing over links on Mr John Rockcliff's estate, Westfield. In 1900 the Club's links moved to two paddocks owned by Mr Charles Rockcliff.

In the south at Hobart, Mr Macfarlane laid out a short course, approximately 1½ miles in length, at the rear of his property, Newlands on Augusta St, New Town. He sent out circulars to prospective members and a club was formed in April 1896. Dr W. Giblin was foundation Secretary. The Club was in existence until 1907 when the Newlands property was sold for building lots. The members of the Newlands club commenced play at Mr H. Wright's property Grove, at Glenorchy and the name changed to the Grove Golf Club, which survived until the First World War.

By October, 1896 Newlands was organising to visit the Jericho links and the Tinderbox Bay golfers. A small course was also in existence in 1897 at Bellerive. The Lindisfarne Golf Club commenced in August, 1900 at Beltona.

The Hobart Golf Club was formed in December, 1900, on the Blink Bonny estate at Sandy Bay. The Club lost these links when it was commandeered by the Defence Department and an internment camp was created when war broke out.

In 1916 the Rosny estate was purchased and a 9 hole golf course was laid out to the design of C Fawcett and Mr L.A. Cluff. The Club was granted Royal status in 1925.

In the Midlands, in August 1897, golf clubs were sent up from Hobart for the newly formed Bothwell Golf Club. Play soon commenced at links on the Dennistoun Estate. This Club didn't last long and another club was formed in 1902. The Club played first on the Logan estate until 1910, then temporary links were used at Cluny estate.

Research by GSA member Ross Baker has found a reference to a course, and play, at Ratho in August 1901; this is the earliest documented evidence of a golf course at Ratho.

Oatlands Golf Club was formed in April, 1902 after members of the Club had been playing on the paddocks of Messrs. Sturgeon and Jones the previous year. Also in 1902, the Midlands Golf Club was formed in Ross playing on the Chiswick links.

Other clubs playing golf in Tasmania prior to 1914 include Deloraine 1898, St Leonards 1899, Evandale 1899, George Town 1900, Ouse 1902, Swansea 1903, Swanport 1903, Glamorgan 1904, Brighton 1905, La Trobe 1907, Stanley 1909, Ulverstone 1911 and New Norfolk 1912.

The Northern Tasmanian Golf Association was formed in 1900, and the Southern Golf Union in 1902; together they inaugurated the first North and South matches and State Amateur Championships in 1902. The Tasmanian Golf Council commenced in 1908.

In 1902 Mr H.N. Giblin won the first men's state championships and Miss D. Nicolas won the Ladies' event. Eustace Headlam won the first Tasmanian Open Championship. Early Tasmanian success at Australian Amateur championships includes Miss Elvie Whitesides in 1906, Clyde Pearce in 1908 - as well as the Australian Open that year, Mrs Harrison in 1913 and Len Nettleford in 1926 and 1928.

James Hunter from Edinburgh was the first professional in Tasmania and was attached to the Hobart Golf Club; during his time there he laid out the Sandy Bay links. Amongst his pupils were Clyde and Bruce Pearce. James Herd was the first professional in the north of the island working for the Launceston Sports Depot.

In more recent times, 1954 Australian Amateur Champion, and GSA member, Peter Toogood has won the Tasmanian Open eight times and the Tasmanian Amateur ten times, among his many achievements, and was the founder of the Australasian Golf Museum at Bothwell; well worth a visit for anyone interested in Tasmanian and Australian golf history.



Potential golfers admire Ross Baker's handy work

GSA at the Women's Open at Royal Melbourne *continued from page 1*

Max also provided several sets of hickory clubs for display that enabled our display team to explain to visitors the various features, including cleek marks, of individual clubs such as the club maker, where they worked and the approximate year when the particular club was made.

A new display stand recently purchased by the Society was used to display a set of hickory clubs recently donated to the Society by John Snell. These clubs bear the name of R S (Dick) Banks, a professional golfer in Victoria in the early 1900's. Another display featured a set of clubs used by Lindy Goggin when she won the Australian Women's Open in the 1970's.

Together with a comprehensive display of vintage photographs from newspapers and magazines from the GSA collection other interesting golfing memorabilia from another of our members, Leon Rowbell, received a number of pleasing commendations.

Patricia Bridges, a Sydney based member of the Society and after whom the Australian Women's Open trophy is named, visited the display as well as a number of other members, all of whom the display team were pleased to meet during the four days of the event.

On the final day Ross Baker donated the long nose club he made during the tournament to the Pike family for them to use as a fund raiser for the Fiona Pike Skin Cancer Awareness Campaign.



Ross Baker presents his hand made club to Kay Pike



A future lady golfer

Golf Historians meeting at Royal Park Golf Club

Ian Rennick, the Chairman opened the meeting by thanking Royal Park Golf Club for allowing the Society to use their meeting room. He explained that similar meetings are held regularly so that historians from all Clubs can meet and exchange ideas, and share knowledge about collecting and storing golf history.

Denise Hilton spoke of her experiences in compiling a booklet on the history of Royal Park Golf Club. Denise joined the Club in 1999, and after hearing that the Club's centennial was in 2003 decided to collect its history and print the result. The job became daunting when she found out that a fire in 1969 had destroyed all the Club's records. After the fire the City Council decided to alter the terms of the lease and take over the maintenance of the course because it was Crown land. The members did not agree with this with several members leaving and joining other clubs. Denise contacted as many former members as possible and interviewed them to construct the earlier history. She also went through public records, newspapers and the State library searching for news of the Club.



Denise Hilton

Two members who stayed at Royal Park, Roger Thomson and Douglas Lee, were of great help.

Denise applied to Melbourne City Council and obtained a *Community History Publishing Grant* of \$8,000. This helped pay for part of the printing, publishing and design costs and setting up a web page.

The booklet was launched at a special dinner in 2003, with Peter Thomson, and the Lord Mayor John So, attending. Peter Thomson, who is probably the best known former member, donated a golf club to the Club, which he used in one of his Open victories. Another three of his clubs were presented to the Club by childhood friend, and former RPGC member, Russell McNair. The driver and two wood were used to win the 1948 Victorian Amateur Championship, and the sand wedge was one of two identical clubs he had when he won The Open in 1954. During the 'Return to Royal Park' event in 2008, Peter's cousin, Douglas Lee, offered our Club a sand wedge, used by Peter in the 1956 Open at Hoylake.

These four clubs are now on permanent loan to Victoria Golf Club, which he joined after Royal Park, and are displayed in the Bachli Thomson Room.

Each year Victoria Golf Club donates to Royal Park Golf Club the prize of an evening at their Club, including dinner, bed and breakfast, and golf the following day. This is raffled at the Royal Park trophy presentation night for Club funds. Denise kindly gave a copy of her book called *A Centenary in the Park* to all who attended the meeting.

Brendan Moloney spoke of some of his experiences at Royal Park. Brendan who is a proud member of the Club stated that the Club was about to have a reunion of the 1954 pennant side, which did not lose a match when they won the Pennant that year.



Brendan Moloney

He related that John Munroe had gone through that season without losing a hole until the final. Jack Dillon, the main golf writer of that era came to the final and asked John Monroe about his record of not losing a hole for the season. Jack followed the match asking John every second hole if he was still winning. On the 12th green John had a putt to win his match but Jack's consistent questioning got to him and he three putted to lose the hole.

Brendan also told some stories of how Peter Thomson and his brothers played the course as young boys, and another about a club member who was a tram driver who stopped his tram one day to give some friendly advice to a golfer playing the course.

Brendan was asked his thoughts on whether to store history on tape or disk, or publish a book; he said a book will last forever but a tapes and disks should be updated every few years.

He also mentioned that he was writing the history of Northern Golf Club and hoped it would be ready for the centenary celebrations later this year.

When Northern started in 1913 most of their members had previously played at Essendon on leased land and were forced out by encroaching housing development.

Michael Lawn, the Professional at Royal Park, has been there for 30 years. Michael stated that the greatest change to the course came in 1994 when the City Council was sacked by the Kennett government. The Council was replaced by three Directors and Liz Proust, the Executive Director, came out to the course and authorised the removal of trees along the 9th hole. This area was converted into a car park for the Zoo. The change to the course was major. A new green was necessary and the 9th hole, shortened by 100 metres, had to be realigned, and now there is a 300 metre walk between the two holes.

Michael said the course is not as busy as before, mainly due to the variety of other golf courses available, but the condition of the course is much better. The Council has maintained the course using council staff, and recently employed a contractor to do it, and the course has improved.

Moira Drew spoke about her research on War Medals. She explained that a Red Cross War Medal for sale on eBay in 2007 was the beginning of her search and that she had consulted the VGA as well as Red Cross records. Copies of some of those records were available, including lists of golf clubs who contributed to the VGA War Medals funds. Her research had shown that the Red Cross War Medals, featuring the letters VGA superimposed over a large red cross, were played for during 1915 only. Several medals from both WW1 and WW2 were on display, courtesy of the Golf Society member Leon Rowbell.

The Chairman gave a brief history of the Victorian Golf League from its start in 1932 when there were five clubs. It is interesting that many clubs that started in the League later joined the VGA, and some clubs like Royal Park went from the VGA to the League.

At present there are 38 League clubs. The League has a 13 room motel at Mirboo North Golf Club and affiliated golf club members can use it on golf packages. The motel is also used by Golf Victoria for junior golf camps.

Peter Gompertz showed a book entitled *A Journal through the Annals of the Golfing Annuals 1888 to 1910*, available to golf historians in Australia for a special price. Cliff George had a hickory club which he had repaired, stamped Rowley Banks who was a professional golfer in Victoria in the 1920's.

John Boundy, from Riversdale Golf Club showed a book that his Club had produced mainly for new members. Riversdale produced a Club history in 1992 but currently did not allow new members to read what has happened since that date. The next Historians meeting will be at Ballarat Golf Club on the 12th June 2012.



From The President

Our programme of events this year is off to a good start, with a successful dinner at Woodlands, where over 70 members enjoyed wonderful food, conversation and Paul Rak gave an excellent presentation about the Presidents Cup, held late last year at Royal Melbourne.

Our historians met at Royal Park early in March and were presented with a book on the history of the Royal Park Club, the original club of our patron, Peter Thomson AO CBE.

The Al Howard Hickory Challenge was held at Tocumwal at the end of March and the Golf Heritage Society in NSW prevailed, retaining the trophy. Members are encouraged to join in the fun of playing with the traditional clubs and it is recommended as a great way to improve your game. The next Hickory challenge will be at Kingston Heath on April 22.

In recent years there has been debate as to the oldest golf course and oldest golf club in Australia; our Research Committee has been given the task of sifting all of the available information to more closely define where, and at what club, our great game started in Australia.

An update on the "Words and Terms Used in Golf" is being completed, and reprinted, and we aim to circulate all members with a copy very soon.

Members are reminded that our very capable Secretary, Paul Burgess would like to hand the task to another member at the next Annual General Meeting later this year. Paul does a great job, and would be pleased to hear from any member interested in becoming more involved with the Society.

Members are also reminded of our next dinner being held at Kingston Heath on May 7 when Malcolm Speed will be our guest speaker.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to

John Hobday

Sandra McCaw

Roger Westwood

Claytons' Corner

with Michael Clayton

I have often wondered whether we spend too much time playing golf with a scorecard in our back pocket.

We play so much competition golf at our local clubs and we learn very early on that 'it's not how, but how many' and that they 'don't put pictures on the scorecard'.

Of course, that is all true, especially if you are playing the game at a high level, but the game can be so much more enjoyable if, occasionally, we try an approach that champions the thought that 'it's not how many but how.' Indeed it would probably be a lot more fun if we always played that way and never paid attention to what we scored.

The early Scots were much more focused on the playing of matches. The total score was of little importance and the two National Amateur championships that made up half of the Bobby Jones' Grand Slam were decided by playing matches.

Have you missed a dinner but would like to hear the speech?

In most cases, when the speaker agrees, we record the after-dinner speeches at Golf Society functions.

If you have missed a dinner and would like to hear any of the presentations, they can be made available on cd for playing on computer or cd player.

Contact: The Secretary

The Last Word

GOLF

One of the best things that can be said about golf is....

that it isn't compulsory.

Inevitably television has changed the game and we have descended into a week-by-week schedule of professional tournaments where the lowest score is paramount; no network executive was going to take a chance on two no-name players fighting out a match play final when Hogan and Snead or Nicklaus and Palmer were already on the sidelines.

Unfortunately golf today has a handicap system that forces us to record the score of every round we play and we surely ignore that golf is very often best played without regard for adding up the total of the shots played.

Young golfers who turn into decent players are always out on the course trying shots from all over the course and around the greens. It is the only way to learn the game. The practice fairway is important but it is not where golfers who want to improve really begin to understand golf and learn the shots.

No matter what level you play, or what age you are, there is nothing as good as getting out on the course and playing like a child just learning or re-learning the game.

Just being in the company of friends, playing a beautiful course, perhaps including a little cross-country golf

(the golf from the 2nd tee to the 3rd green at Kingston Heath makes for a terrific hole) or hitting a few extra shots, just to learn and maybe perfect a new shot, are all things we should do more often.

The Nine best cross country holes in Melbourne. Try them sometime when there isn't anyone around, or yet another Stableford comp is taking place.

1. 2nd tee to 3rd green, Kingston Heath
2. 1st East tee to 8th West Green, Royal Melbourne
3. 11th Women's tee to 9th green, Metropolitan
4. 8th tee to 2nd green, St Andrews Beach
5. 3rd Women's tee to 4th green, Portsea
6. 10th tee to 11th green, Spring Valley
7. 15th green to 14th green, Kingston Heath
8. 12th tee to 13th green, Victoria
9. 18th tee to 1st green, Commonwealth



15th green to 14th green at Kingston Heath with permission of General Manager Gregg Chapple

Dinner at Woodlands Golf Club

by Geoff Vincent



Paul Rak is welcomed to Woodlands by Geoff Vincent and GSA member John Worrell

Over 70 members and guests journeyed to Woodlands Golf Club for a dinner in February and were entertained with a very interesting presentation by Paul Rak, General Manager of Royal Melbourne Golf Club, on his experience of being intensely involved in the recent Presidents Cup, held last November over a Royal Melbourne composite course.

Although the International Team did not prevail, the event was world class and succeeded in raising several million dollars for charity. There is no prize money awarded at the Presidents Cup.

Paul related that the event is held bi-annually as a teams matchplay event, of 12 players each side, hosted alternately in the US and in countries represented by the International Team. This event differs from the Ryder Cup in having more matches and excluding European players. Both sides are made up of the top 10 ranked players, plus two captain's picks; it is essentially a team of champions.

The most contentious choice was Tiger Woods who did not qualify on form; was a Captain's pick. That decision proved to be decisive as Tiger prevailed in his match against Aaron Baddeley on the last day, providing the US team with the winning point.

Apparently the initial event was held in 1994 with US President Gerald Ford being Honorary Chairman.

Paul outlined how the planning for the event started several years ago with PGA representatives visiting Australia two years ago, with hundreds of volunteers recruited from numerous Melbourne golf clubs to help with the event

Special attention was given to the grass as the drought and lack of water had devastated the playing surfaces at Royal Melbourne a few years ago. Paul spoke about how Royal Melbourne ground staff worked hard to restore the course to world class. RMGC found a way to successfully harvest water from a large stormwater pipe that runs through the property.

Under licence, RMGC was able to extract ground water from a number of bores and dug out a 35 megalitre lagoon to store the water for irrigation. This, together with a large water treatment plant, ensures high quality of water is used. Paul explained that this has gone a long way to making the Club self sufficient in meeting irrigation demands.

The construction of grandstands, arranging of catering, and all the other detailed infrastructure for such an event meant borrowing staff from several golf clubs and organising event hire equipment on a massive scale. The clubhouse was the nerve centre of the event, and Paul, and his team, had many long days ensuring things ran smoothly.

These behind the scenes activities were crucial to success, such as the use of the Sandringham Golf Course; leased by RMGC and invaluable as a practice facility, car parking space, and an attractive venue for the Opening Ceremony; a real challenge for all involved.

The practice area used by members was turned over to a village of corporate facilities necessary to help stage such an event. Only Royal Melbourne has the space, and infrastructure, to stage such an event, and they did it well.

The next Presidents Cup will be in the USA at Muirfield Village and after that, in 2015, South Korea will be the venue. With so many overseas countries seeking to host the event, it may be many years before we see it back in Australia.

We are indeed grateful to Paul for giving us his time during the Women's Australian Open, and for such a comprehensive, and well illustrated, presentation.

Geoff Vincent AM



Al Howard Trophy teams at Tocumwal

AGHS retains the Al Howard Trophy at Tocumwal

by Paul Burgess

The Australian Golf Heritage Society successfully defended the Al Howard Trophy recently with a score of eight holes up after 14 entrants from the Golf Society of Australia and the Australian Golf Heritage Society gathered on the wonderful Captains course at Tocumwal Golf Club on the Murray River.

The Victorian based team generously provided two players to the AGHS team to enable every entrant a match, using their old hickories.

The teams were resplendent in period golfing attire as can be seen in the accompanying photo.

After the first ten matches were completed, the contest was square and everyone gathered behind the 18th green to cheer their colleagues to victory. Alas the body language did not look good from the GSA players as Tom the Terrible and Tony the Great strode up onto the green with looking a bit smug. They were collectively 6 up and then dropped in a couple more winning putts to finish 7 and 1 up respectively. A great win of 8 holes up by the AGHS to retain the Trophy for another year.

That evening players and their partners gathered in the Board Room of the Tocumwal Golf Club for a most enjoyable dinner. Players were welcomed by G.S.A. President Geoff Vincent, Captain Mal Bray responding on behalf of the A.G.H.S. He then presented a Tocumwal logo golf ball to each match winner. Mal was gracious in his winning speech, thanking the GSA for arranging the tournament and suggested that next year, a return to the Australian Capital Territory might be on the horizon. Some G.S.A. representatives were heard to say they would be going into training immediately as two defeats in a row was unacceptable. Replies from a couple of those from north of the Murray were not considered suitable for printing.

Players were invited to share highlights, and lowlights, of the day which were related in good fun and accepted accordingly. 'Sockless' John, whose surname escapes the writer, was reported to have struck his "equipment" as the rule book says, on two occasions, so he will have great difficulty next year retaining his position, whether he turns up fully dressed or not.

Two other players admitted to having air shots and a further one found an unplayable lie in a pine tree. The fact that all of the above misfortunes happened to GSA members explains, in part, their less than successful attempt to wrest the trophy back.

Each day, some of the ladies accompanied the players and others explored boutique shopping in downtown Tocumwal and Cobram and experienced the delights of various eateries such as the nearby Strawberry Farm and the Antique Tearooms. Social golf on the second day using modern clubs was played on the Presidents course.

As can be gathered, the event was a pleasure to attend, a delight to meet old friends, an experience to use the old hickory clubs and just generally enjoy the camaraderie of our wonderful game. If you can, try and participate next year.