

Writing a Golf Club History

Some Experiences

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A GOLF CLUB'S HISTORY WRITER needs to consider is **what kind of historian** they are and this helps to provide a framework in which to write. Are you a *chronicler* and describe the records of year-by-year events? A lot of the golf club histories are just one year at a time.

Or are you a *narrator* and plan to tell a story? There is nothing wrong with telling stories but there is a limit to what any one storyteller knows. To rely on one's own ability to tell a story can have very serious limitations. You might tell half the story or get half the story wrong. Narrative, while it is a buzzword, is not simply about 'wandering into the forest collecting nuts and berries' and putting them into some kind of order but without a framework or a shape. A lot of histories are just that.

Another way of writing a golf club history is as a *reconstructionist*; from a collection of memorabilia, notes and cuttings you try to reconstruct what was there and what happened. In part I consider myself a reconstructionist: for the Monash History there were no archives, almost no documentation and we didn't have the Board Minutes for 1950-64.

Then there are *constructionists* – they want to know not *what*, they want to *how* and *why*. Why was this place selected and not in some other locality? I tend to call myself of this group.

The next type is a *deconstructionist* – like a forensic pathologist who does an analysis to know how it works, how did it get there, does it function well, what are the parts that make up the whole, what are the relationship of the

parts to each other? You might ask 'how did the Club get to be in A Grade pennants in 1996?' What were the avenues, obstacles and problems?

The Importance of Context

In my approach to writing a golf club history, I am most interested in *context*. I think that golf club histories divorced from context other than golf, become fairly sterile. Very few people, apart from the members, are going to read them. One thing you have to decide is: Is it strictly for the members? Is it strictly for the records? Is it strictly for the dusty bookshelf? Is it to inspire new members as they join, or juniors, in order to understand something of the ethos, the traditions, the *soul* of the Club?

When I say I'm a *contextualist*, I have chosen in my writing career to write something that reveals a context of some sort. For a golf club history we need to understand the context in which the club was formed, developed and exists.

Context is mixture of conditions and circumstances – the facts that surround an issue. What were the conditions and circumstances in 1930, in the locality, for transport and employment, when this club was built? What were the interrelated conditions and circumstances that explained the choice of this place twenty miles out of town? You can't just place a golf course in the middle of the forest and scrub and say 'it exists' – you need to know why it exists in that place and in that time. That's what I mean by the interrelated conditions that can deal with religion and faith, war experiences, it has to deal with relationships to other clubs, the whole cultural map that helps to explain the context.

Firstly, what is the **political** climate of the time? What are the issues? Is the State undergoing a period of nationalistic survival? Is there an identity crisis? Do we belong to mother Britain? Are we beginning to define an Australian nationalism in our own identity? What is the nature of the nation – a multicultural nation or does it want to be a homogeneous nation? Do we dislike and not want foreigners? All these things are relevant.

What was the **social** climate of the time, what were the values of 1913 or 1882 or 1893? What was the attitude to religions, to ethnicities, what were the levels of tolerance and intolerance in our society?

Governance issues – were there notions of equality or inequality? Was it against the law to discriminate against certain groups of people or was it acceptable to exclude Chinese, Koreans and Japanese?

Economic issues. Was there recession? Was there depression? Was there undue prosperity? Was there poverty? What was the working wage? Who could afford to belong to a golf club or this golf club? Was the Club exclusive or inclusive when considering the financial status of members? Those sorts of issues are highly pertinent when you are looking at the history of a club.

What about **geographic** considerations? What about terrain? What about drought? What about safety? What about the effects of war, even though Australia has been remote from areas of conflict?

The issue of **personality**: Who were the personalities of the time? The Royal Sydney history contained biographical detail about the founding fathers of the club. They were the legal and commercial establishment of Sydney at the turn of the century – the barristers, judges, bankers and the top law firms. These were interesting men with personality, charisma – what we would call ‘high profile’ people today.

All of these things, though perhaps not every one, are part of the mix that goes into your history. You can’t divorce this Club from the place in which it resides, because it becomes meaningless. We are not talking about any old place – we are talking about a specific place in a city or town, on the edge of a city or in the northern suburbs or the eastern suburbs. Wherever it is, these things have some claim in larger or smaller measure on how you write your club’s history.

Personal Experience

I have had two experiences of golf club history. The Royal Sydney exercise was fascinating and it still interests me as I am supposed to be writing a ten or fifteen year update. A periodic update in a little slim book means the next historian doesn’t have such immense bulldozing, groundbreaking work. Clubs should not wait for the next 50 or 100 years and the next historian. In spite of archives policies, there can be fire and staff changeover and things of value can disappear.

Royal Sydney is an example of a club being built in the middle of a westernised, modern, industrialised democracy. But Royal Sydney is about class, caste, privilege, social status and deference. Royal Sydney was about exclusivity based on profession, family and income. Juxtaposed to this becomes issues of the mass, a general population, issues of minority status, issues of prejudice, issues of intolerance.

There is a very interesting point about the Royal Sydney history. When

I had finished. We had a celebratory drink. I said to some Club members and the supervising committee 'Why did you let me write about your anti-Catholicism, your anti-Jewishness, – how come? And they replied 'You told us we were not allowed to tamper with history, and we didn't'. I was rather astonished.

The Monash book is the exact opposite – it's about a club that was based on a philosophy of inclusivity because Monash was founded in 1931 by the Young Men's Hebrew Association, a cultural and social club with a small sporting arm called Monash Golf Club. They couldn't get a game or a membership anywhere in this city, except at assorted municipal courses. They got a block booking on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning, they had their own tee times, they had their own competitions that were reported in the newspaper on Monday morning with the golf results.

When the War ended these guys said 'to hell with this, we didn't fight the war to come back and not be allowed to play at a private golf club'. So the Monash guys decided to build a golf course and the first thing they said 'this course is open to everybody', where you wouldn't expect that. One of their reactions would have been 'we have an exclusive club just for our guys and not for anybody else'.

The best contextual history I've every read is by an American political journalist called David Halberstam who wrote *October 1964* – about the World Series Baseball in 1964. But the book tells you about every single slice of American life in 1964 as funnelled through a set of lenses focussing on the World Series Baseball. The book is absolutely brilliant because with it you have that compass which shows you where baseball fits the USA and where USA fits baseball. That's the trick with the history.

Technical Issues

There are some serious technical issues for those who might commission a history.

Solo or Shared Authorship: If you're going to write a history, do it solo or do it with a partner who you like, love, respect and trust and that trust must have evolved before you start writing, don't rely on the history to make the partnership. Avoid joint authorship if you can.

Research: I had four research assistants for the Monash book. There were either no records or very few records; we had to do things from scratch. I needed research assistants prepared to travel to look up the Fire Brigade

reports, Council submissions, documents about land holdings and so on. It's very good when club members volunteer for this work. I didn't have any for the Royal Sydney book, but I had the Women's Secretary of nearly 50 years who became their archivist. She gave me all the materials and information I wanted.

Remuneration: The Royal Sydney book was done for fees and this needs a contract covering milestones when chapters have to be delivered and when portion of fees have to be paid. It is not a question of a lump sum up front or at the end. The writer and the Club both need lawyers to go over the contract.

Committee of Privilege: This is a parliamentary idea, in case there is a major issue on ethics, censorship, what it is allowable or not allowable or simply to define a word. A special committee will arbitrate in the event of a conflict between the author and the commissioners of the work.

Publishing: I persuaded Royal Sydney not to publish it privately as they might have – one of the Centenary Committee was in the printing business. If you want your history to be respected in the professional and golfing world then you want a reputable commercial name on your front cover. You may consider this an expensive idea but there are also benefits in the entrée to book designers, layout specialists, editors, proof readers and access to the market place through their distributor.

Copyright and intellectual property: Who owns the history? With Monash, I insisted on being the copyright holder and responsible for any complaints with a statement to that effect in the front of the book. Royal Sydney insisted, because they commissioned the book for a fee, that they hold the copyright. Royal Sydney is the first and only time in 45 years of writing that I have ceded the copyright to somebody else.

Intellectual Property: IP is that of the creator not of the Club. You may want to reproduce all or part of the book somewhere else and you don't want ask the Club each time for permission to reproduce your own words.

Distribution: Decisions are needed on the quantity, the paper quality, colour, binding and more. Are they to be sold or given away? Will the cost be recovered by a levy on fees? What is a club prepared to invest in its history book? Royal Sydney bought 6,000 copies at about \$40 and was going to sell them to members for \$60 a copy amortised over three years against fees. Then the President got cold feet on the eve of the delivery and wrote to members saying 'Please buy it'. But demand was low with many copies unsold.

Monash printed 2,500; 1,200 went to members, 600 were retained for incoming members and 600 went to the commercial market. Monash posted the shrink-wrapped copies to members with a letter saying 'Open if you want to keep the book; \$40 will go on to your fees at the end of the year,' – a good idea. However, the Cranbourne GC did the same and 450 were returned, which is very high. Perhaps there is a different climate in Melbourne.

The Prejudice Against History

The variation in club histories is all to the good. I am not saying my way is the best way to do it. This is the way I chose to do it. You can afford to be somewhat demanding – it pays to be a difficult author at times. You are demanding standards.

The most important thing you have to battle is that we live in an unhistorical and anti-historical age. 'History' is what happened three weeks ago. 'Contemporary' is only what happened last week. People don't want know about history in Australia, except Gallipoli. It's about the only thing we want to remember. We don't want to remember black history. We don't want to remember any of this stuff that seems to be out of date, out of fashion. Only the present and the future count.

So you've got a problem in any golf club history. Apart from decorative value, do any of the members really revere the history? There is one answer: golf club memberships are aging. In Monash it's about 64 years of age. Where are the juniors coming from? Which 30-somethings have got the money to pay a significant entrance fee and a few thousand dollars a year subscription? How do you encourage and keep new members? And when new members come in, what do they know of the history?

If people don't read this Monash history when they join, especially Asian members from Hong Kong or Taiwan or wherever the case may be, Monash may as well not have had a history; it's just a place to hit little white balls a certain distance, have a drink and go home. They may as well be at the local Sports Centre where you go and play squash, have a shower and go home. There is no sense of loyalty or tradition and more important, no sense of soul. This is the message that comes from a good golf club history.

Writing Manly Golf Club's Story

Jeannie Walker

WHY WRITE A HISTORY? Why write a book? What kind of history do you want to write? Colin Tatz's history of Royal Sydney history was inspirational for me when starting out on Manly's. The reason? He showed how to write a golf club history with themes, historical context, and analysis. It was not just a boring list of facts ... you know what I mean: this happened, that happened, date, golf score, and so on.

Manly is a lovely seaside suburb. It was a tiny fishing village in nineteenth century Sydney:

The first explorers discovered what the aborigines already knew, that Manly is a sublimely beautiful place. In those days, the bush flowers – boronias, flannel flowers, native roses, rock lilies, Christmas bush and waratahs – grew in profusion on the narrow isthmus between Manly Cove and ocean beach. Coming down from (the top of Eastern Hill), the explorers went around the cove and along the harbour foreshores. The view of Sydney Heads was spectacular from the Fairlight area where the first golf was to be played at Manly just over 100 years later. They climbed, then, to the top of Kangaroo Hill with its wildflowers also growing in abundance. From there they would have seen a wetlands area surrounded by a natural amphitheatre of hills, with reeds and rushes and a lagoon at its northern end. Of course, they were not to know that this place would become the Manly Golf Links. (*One Hundred Years of Golf at Manly*, p8)

I believe in the importance of the concept of context within a golf club history: the golf club within a specific social area, and members living through events that included golf. Our dates went from 1901, when we knew the first golf was played by men who went on to form Manly Golf Club, to 2003, the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Club. Members played their golf there through two world wars and an economic depression, as Manly developed from a village to a residential suburb with beaches (both surf and harbour), 'seven miles from Sydney and a thousand miles from care'.

Golf changed too: In the early days, the **gentlemen** at Manly worked in their professions and played their golf on Sundays. Most good male golfers in this category remained amateurs. Other **young lads** who came from poorer families caddied for these men, then went on to become teaching professionals. They were regarded as hired staff, to clean members' shoes, to play golf with them on demand, and so on. Younger **women** may have worked, or not, until they married. When they married, they stopped working in a job. They joined the Club because their husbands belonged. Many went on to hold positions for many years on Associates Committees, carrying out administrative roles that today's woman would be undertaking in paid employment.

It seemed obvious to structure our history book into two halves – the development of the Club and golf activities up to World War II, and then all the changes afterwards. We were fortunate to have another history of Manly Golf Club, written by CH Bertie and published in 1946. I have to say that without this book, the modern history could not have been written. But it was also helpful in what it included, and what it excluded. It concentrated on the men golfers, the acquisition of the golf course, and two clubhouses. The ladies, wives of the men who were already in the Club, were mentioned as being permitted to join. The golfing achievements of these ladies were given one page near the end of the book. Golfing professionals (and these included those of the calibre of Dan Soutar and Joe Kirkwood) were totally excluded, absent from the pages of this first history. In the current book they have a chapter telling of their history, and three are included in the group we called *Manly Golfing Greats*.

I was determined I was not going to write a chronological history – in 1923 this happened, in 1924 that happened, and so on, with the hapless reader trying to connect the various activities across the years. My chapters had their internal chronology, where you have one on the development of

the Club, another on how the golf course evolved, yet another on men's and women's golf, and so on. But I was determined on one thing: that the activities of the men and women were to be intertwined, and that the women were not shoved in near the end of the book where you could read that chapter if you could be bothered getting to that point in the book.

The other questions I had to ask myself were: would I deal with racism, with sexism, with class; I decided I could not, not overtly, that is. Those issues are there if the astute reader wishes to find them, but I had to tell myself over and over that I was not writing a PhD; I was writing an account of the activities at the Golf Club that would provide a pleasurable read for the members. So hence the reference to fiction, above. It is predominately a happy book; a book without the in-fighting, clashes, injustices and scandals which I, and a number of others, knew had occurred.

But I always had to consider the two historical questions: HOW, and WHY, when constructing the text.

Working With a Committee

This raises the issue of a **committee** working to produce the book. My committee was already in place – elderly gentlemen, sweet people, but with certain prejudices and with their own agendas for the project. Given Manly Golf Club has no established archive, it was necessary that a group work on the project.

Good points in working with a committee:

1. The author cannot do all the research himself/herself ;
2. Writing takes a huge amount of time – for me, three days per week for a number of years, including ten re-writes;
3. I had great help from one committee member who had writing and editorial skills – we would pore over the text during a number of sessions.

BUT

Bad points:

1. I knew what I was looking for when I researched the women's sections by going through their minute books – the others had never done primary research from documents prior to this;

2. While I wasn't banned from searching through the club's minute books, I wasn't offered this facility, and I knew I was treading on dangerous ground – a male member of the committee went through the board minutes;
3. Personality clashes. I had to argue strongly to get my point of view accepted; this was made more difficult because I was female. The disagreements were stressful. I was accused more than once that 'I would write it in a feminine kind of way' .

Ultimately, however, all this debate made the book much better.

Another problem was the changes to the Board membership during the period of the project. After getting the green light in 1998 for the structure of the book, subsequent boards kept changing the goalposts. However, two of the Presidents were particularly constructive on content of the book.

It takes a huge amount of time and effort to write a golf club history book. It took us some eight years from start to finish – I joined the committee in 1997, believing the book would be published in 2001, date of the centenary of golf at Manly. The Board extended it to 2003, the actual centenary of the Club. During those years, two committee members had suffered serious illness and couldn't follow it through to final stages. Another left the Club in 2002. I was fortunate I had worked at commercial art and publishing during my career. So I and one other Committee member worked with the designer on the finished book over the last two years.

I was also determined not to become the junior typist as well, and adamantly refused to type up the golf events champions lists; one gentleman huffily said he would do it, but there were numerous typing mistakes in the lists, many of which had to be done again.

Conclusion

Am I sorry I did it? I don't want to put anybody off, but yes and no. It took a lot of time and energy, and my golf suffered as a result during this period. Yet in the long-term, it is a book that satisfied all members of the History Book Committee and, from comments made, was enjoyed by many of the Club members.

It takes, as I said, a huge amount of work, so I would like you to be aware of this. Plan how you are going to do it, and be sure why you are doing it.

And, if you can, choose colleagues who bring good skills and knowledge to the various aspects of producing a history of your club.

And produce a history of which you can be proud.

Producing a Club History – A Beginner’s Experience

John Pearson

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE to write the centenary history of The Golf Club? Some accounts suggest that this question is often asked of a distinguished past-captain with time on his hands, usually in public when he has little opportunity to back off.

I was not distinguished, had never held office in my club, and had the demands of a lively young family. The classic response to the question seems to be like that of the Speaker of the House of Commons on his election – protesting while being dragged to the position of responsibility. Cyril Powell, our distinguished Vice-President, had asked me because of my reputed interest in the history of golf, and membership of the British Golf Collector’s Society. Far from protesting, I accepted immediately. This was an opportunity not to be missed. It might never arise again.

On the down side, there were few obvious sources of information. A clubhouse fire in 1969 had taken the bulk of the records, minutes and much interesting memorabilia. We had printed annual reports from 1930, handbooks from 1924, and the minutes of the ladies section from 1906. But two members from the early 1900s had recently died, taking their memories with them, although another nonagenarian, the grandson of a founder member, was still alive and well. At least it was a start. Another prominent member, David Dowsett, had sketched an outline history based on these limited sources and I had one or two other references from my own library.

The experience in 1989, of writing the York Golf Club history was followed in the period from 1997 to 2002, by co-authoring the history of Silloth on Solway Golf Club. The circumstances of the Silloth commission were very different from the York one. I was not a member of Silloth, although the course had always been a teenage favourite of mine. In organising the annual hickory match between English and Scottish members of the British Golf Collectors' Society for the 1996 match, the venue was very much my shout. We were made very welcome at the Club, and had a great match. When I announced our arrival to the Secretary, I asked if the Club had written a history for their centenary year in 1991. It had been started, but then aborted. Knowing a little of the history of this fine old club, I was not backward in coming forward: 'Sorry to hear that' said I, 'If you want anybody to do it, I will', adding in the vernacular '- for nowt'. I later confirmed my offer in a short note - including a copy of the YGC history. I was in luck. John Proudlock, the Secretary, was a former captain of the Club and was keen on the project. He supported my offer at Committee and arranged two excellent researchers/fixers within the Club: Peter Cusack, the centenary Captain, and Davina Sim, past Ladies Captain, both of whom were to become good friends.

Research

The long process of investigation began at York with analysis of other club histories; subject-headings were drawn up. We assembled a small research team and concentrated initially on the early history of the Club, about which we knew so little. Jobs were shared out, either on the basis of a specific source or of an issue to be investigated.

Items appearing under 'golf' in the index of the excellent local history section of York City Library were depressingly few. Local handbooks and guides yielded the odd mention. A sports shop selling golf equipment had opened in 1892. Sketchy curricula vitae and obituaries give background details to some of the early personalities. The local newspapers of the 1890s were unhelpful. There was no index, and they appeared to be devoid of references to the Club.

Our first break came in response to an appeal for help which we published in the local newspaper. Several people phoned in with stories about the original course on the City stray. Another gentleman referred us to newspaper articles about the Club which he had uncovered whilst

researching the development of bowls in the City. From this we learnt that the references were there. They just needed digging out, which entailed a lot of hard work. It involving taking bound or microfilmed copies of the newspaper, and going through them day by day, for every year between 1890 and 1914 – over 8000 copies after taking into account the weekend sports editions.

Victorian newspapers have their own fascinations and I soon realised that it was unprofitable to be distracted by the lurid accounts of violent deaths, hangings and the progress of the second Ashanti War. A rhythmical technique soon developed for rapidly turning the pages without tearing them, and for rapidly scanning the likely spots where the two to three interesting items per year were likely to appear . Most of the time it was plain hard slog. But occasionally the nuggets would be uncovered, and gradually a pattern emerged.

Specialist golfing publications were the other major documentary source. My own modest library did not contain the comprehensive runs of annual golfing handbooks which gave valuable information on membership numbers and Club officers. Nor did it contain any bound copies of early magazines which provide such valuable references to the general development of the game, articles about individual clubs and personalities, and specific club activities.

Our York librarian did have a valuable reference source, however, The British Union Catalogue of Periodicals (known to librarians as BUCOP), which gave (admittedly slightly out of date) details of the public libraries in the UK containing such unusual handbook and magazine runs. In the end we settled for the National Library of Scotland, which has an extensive golfing reference section, and contains full runs of *The Golfing Handbook*; *Nisbets Golfing Yearbook*, *Golf* and its successor *Golf Illustrated*. Staff at Edinburgh were extremely cooperative in reserving the books in advance of the two one-day visits which I made. The problem again was extracting the maximum amount of information in the limited time available. The handbooks were easy: club details were checked out; changes from the previous year were marked down; and any general references investigated. I found the bound copies of *Golf* to be well-indexed, and am reasonably sure that most relevant items were picked up. The problem again was one of distraction: every single page cried out to be read –even the advertisements.

Golf Illustrated followed on from *Golf* in 1899. It was bigger and glossier,

with amazing reproducible photographs which were well out of copyright. However, potential researchers should be warned off total reliance on its misleadingly incomplete index. (Some keen historian with time on his hands will one day earn the gratitude of his fellows by providing a more comprehensive version.) After noting down any interesting items from the index, the only technique is to flick through the various pages, again resisting the frequent distractions.

On my second day at Edinburgh, I was doing a last check for un-indexed items, when, five minutes before closing time, I found a two-page article about the Club in 1910, which was completely unexpected, and which provided some lovely photographs of Ted Ray, Alex Herd and two of our local pros, playing an exhibition match.

The Edinburgh material also filled in lots of gaps in the pattern of development up to the Great War; some revealing pen-pictures of early captains; and other useable pictures.

One early lesson was that across a wide number of sports, there is a fraternity of researchers which can be immensely rewarding. Many fellow-researchers volunteered information and references at only the slightest invitation and often at inconvenience to themselves. We decided to do the same even when there was little chance of reciprocation.

Fellow centenary researchers at Ganton and Beverley were able to give us useful information and photographs from their sources, after we had supplied some from ours. We wrote to one lady in Canada who had asked the local librarian about a family of York professionals which had emigrated in the 1920s. She didn't acknowledge the letter, but we did hear a few weeks later from someone else she had written to in the York area, who had some nice early photographs.

Some of the most memorable experiences came from personal contacts. One of our first professionals, Ted Cheal, had served the Club for 44 years up to 1947. His family still lived within a quarter mile of the clubhouse. I had never met them before, but was treated to buns and hot cocoa when I called round. More was to follow. Not only did Mr and Mrs Cheal turn out a boxful of clippings and photographs, but wonder of wonders, a letter of recommendation to the Club in 1903 from Jack White himself, together with other fascinating correspondence that is produced in the book. Even more was to follow in later visits by way of early photographs of life at the Club. One of the most rewarding aspects of the whole research was to discover that Ted Cheal had been apprenticed to Jack White at Seaford, and was one of a

whole clan of golfing Cheals which was well known along the South Coast. Miss Maura Cheal, a cousin of Ted, was still a member of the Seaford Club and through the good offices of David White, then Editor of the British Golf Collectors' Society magazine *Through the Green*, it was possible to re-establish family links which had broken down over twenty years previously.

Ted Cheal was succeeded by Arthur Howell, whose family were equally generous in opening their scrapbooks.

It was soon evident that there was not much continuous family membership of the Club from its earliest days. Nevertheless several local families had provided early office bearers or prize winners. A little ringing around followed up by a polite note of enquiry, often produced surprising results. Stamped addressed envelopes encouraged early replies. A little perseverance in following up the enquiry was often useful. One unrewarding initial contact eventually led through to the son of one of our most eminent players in the immediate pre-Great War era. He still had the wonderful personal golfing diaries his father had kept as he developed from an eight handicap schoolboy at Rugby to +3 member of the 1912/13 Oxford teams. The diaries contained minutiae of the golden era of English golf, as well as personal thoughts on the progress of what clearly became a highly effective game.

Researching the Silloth book was less onerous than the York experience. Davina Sim assembled a small team to summarise the ladies' records – including a full set of minutes dating from the formation of a separate section in 1909. Perhaps even more important, Davina put me in touch with the family of Cecilia Leitch, the hugely-important and dominant personality within the Club, who had a long career at the beginning of the last century, a fist-full of national championships – a truly great personality who changed the course of Ladies' Golf. Cecilia (or Cecil) had four sisters, two of whom were also nationally important. The huge family archive of correspondence, typescript, images and cuttings was rich in content and a delight to explore – one of my greatest thrills in golfing heritage,

The general Club archives were less rewarding – but at least we had full minutes from 1903, a golden era in the Club's history. The usual sources in contemporary magazines, newspapers and journals yielded good material – much of the local detail being provided by my co-author Peter Cusack, who gave much of his valuable free time in a weekly trip of 25 or so miles to Carlisle, to explore County records. Annual national handbooks were also a valuable source.

The Contents – Writing the Narrative

A career background in Marketing and Publicity had given me occasional experience of writing reports, presentations, scripts and press releases. But I had never written long articles, or in the York case, a relatively short book.

I had no conscious idea of style. I remembered James Herriott once mentioning in a radio programme that he had always tried to keep his writing simple and had tried to avoid self-consciousness. Also, Peter Alliss wrote in one of his books of how much he had learnt of the importance of word economy from Henry Longhurst. I tried to be informal, simple and economic in my writing.

The other resolution was to have a consistent narrative through each section and chapter, relating to the overall theme of the book. (Many golf club histories seem just to be boring collections of facts.) I gratefully acknowledge the heavy influence of Charles Cruikshank's 1986 history of Royal Wimbledon, where he demonstrates a wonderful facility for teasing out a good tale overlain with colour and personality from what could very easily have been a dry précis of committee minutes.

A friend from the tap room of the local pub provided other authoritative, but practical guidelines on maintaining continuity of narrative; parcelling up the chapters into headed segments; and providing links between sections and chapters.

The chapter on our Professionals was an example of how the theme and sub-themes were attempted. Over the whole, it was a record of the career patterns of golf professionals from four district eras:

- the last of the old caddie professionals from Scotland, with humble origins, gambling, a string of appointments, tournament success, and eventual stability and respectability;
- the early English caddie-professionals, triumph over adversity, and a life of service;
- the last of the clubmaker craftsmen, post-war acceptance and respectability;
- the modern professional as leisure manager .

Similarly the chapter on the course dealt with, in logical order, its natural history, design and layout, and changing methods of maintenance.

However interesting the narrative, we always recognised the importance

of a good number of interesting illustrations. Most were likely to be photographs. These had to be interesting in their own right, and relevant to the narrative. They also had to be of good quality. We tried to scale down in size rather than up from originals in order to retain fine detail, and were fortunate to be loaned original prints of many of the original personalities. We only needed to resort to books for a few standard reference photographs – most of which we tried to make as contemporary to the narrative as possible. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust had been very helpful with respect to the detailed natural history of the course, and also provided a very useful contact with a specialist wild-life artist who did some line illustrations for us. In all cases we had to ensure that permission was obtained from the originators, for all illustrations which were likely to be in copyright.

Writing the book was never easy. The main problem was non-availability of time. Nothing was possible while the kids were buzzing around the house, and it was usually too late by the time they had gone to bed. Writing in the evening all too easily produced thought patterns which disrupted sleep later on. The practical answer was to retire early and get up around six, allowing at least an hour before the porridge had to be made. A steady routine of early starts, and the occasional weekend blitz was sufficient to knock off the 20,000 word target in a reasonable time. The scarcely-legible script was then ready for Lucy and Samantha, my word processing experts. Over the six months of writing, they steadily converted my pencilled scrawl into a single old-fashioned five-inch floppy disk – a format that seemed so cool then, but is now almost completely obsolete.

After feeling my way with the York history, I was more confident in identifying the themes and structures for Silloth. The character of the Club had changed markedly over the period covered by the book. In Edwardian days it was very much an exclusive, male-dominated, county club playing over wonderful heroic seaside links. The playing strength of the Club came from the local working men, who played in the artisan's section. But increasingly, after the Great War, the good players were accepted into the main club and provided a string of county champions that continues to the present day. These changes provided a major recurring theme throughout the story. Reading through the stories of so many of the Silloth Champions, it became clear that the ever-present wind had helped shape their games – just like it had helped create the course itself. Their shot-making abilities were required by the wind; this too became a recurring theme in the narrative.

By the time of the Silloth book, my word-processing skills were very much up to speed. Early morning startson the laptopwere again useful in converting the 30,000 or so words into electronic text.

Book Design and Production

In an early issue of the British Golf Collector's Society magazine *Through the Green*, David Hamilton wrote a beguiling account of his private press printing activities. He finished by asserting 'we are all typesetters now', a reference to the highly-accessible facilities of desk-publishing technology. The technology is now even more powerful than he indicated. Moving from typesetting into typography and book design is a short, but immensely fulfilling step. David Hamilton was also correct in extolling the tactile attractions of a good letterpress type biting into a high quality paper. Those attractions are not available with the cost-effective off-set lithographic process that is appropriate to most golf club histories. But on the other hand, litho does offer a large number of type faces and high quality reproduction of both black and white and colour photographs.

The main requirement of the would-be book designer is to have a clear idea of the effect the book is to produce: its size, proportions, layout and overall appearance. At York, we were after an impression of tradition and quality, but with good design and progressiveness were necessary – like we saw the Club itself. We didn't want the book to be too long, but it was to be interesting and substantial enough to be kept and valued by our membership.

Some introductory reading on typography was very useful, but not essential, and represented recent but not absolutely state-of-the-art authority on book design: Oliver Simon's 1963 edition of *Introduction to Typography*; Sean Jennett's *The Making of Books* (1951); and Ruari McLean's *Modern Book Design* (1958). To help with the Silloth history, I invested in a copy of Robert Bringhurst's excellent *The Elements of Typographic Style* (version 2.4, 2001). For the York book, we found a local full-service printer, Maxiprint, who had some experience of book production to reassuringly high standards, and whose typographic ideas were closely aligned with our own. We had previously asked for quotations from a number of local firms capable of doing the job. The initial specification consisted of little more than dimensions and number of pages, together with general indications about the quality of paper and covers, type of endpapers, and (non-) requirement for dust-jacket.

The number of photographs was also important, together with the critical question of print-run. Our Centenary sub-committee had agreed that a small levy would be made on the membership to cover the entire cost of the year's celebrations – including the cost of the book.

This implied a print-run of 500 solely for the membership. We were fairly sure of selling a hundred copies to visitors and friends, so based the initial specification on a print run of 600. This was later upped to 950 after taking a more optimistic view on our ability to sell on extra copies outside the Club. Taking on board David Hamilton's comment, the word processing disc holding the text was to be software-compatible with typesetting facilities. Three quotations on this outline specification were obtained to give initial reassurance on the financial viability of the project, on either a soft-back or hard-back basis. The outline costings were attractive, and confirmed in more detail when a more precise number of words and photographs were known. The extra cost of the hardback cover, compared with softback, was acceptably low. Suddenly and excitingly we were in business.

Final specification details were agreed, and formal acceptance was given for a quotation. The text and photographs were delivered to Maxiprint, whose admirably swift response was to suggest a page layout. The principal points agreed were the size of the de luxe page margins and the size and nature of the type face. From a number of classic faces in keeping with the 'traditional' character we were seeking, we chose Bembo, for its elegant, light characteristics. David, our typesetter, suggested a slightly larger twelve-point type size than was normal for book work, because of the page dimensions. Nigel, the designer, assembled a full page of text, together with running heads (the titles at the tops of pages) and the pagination, for approval of the page layout.

Next, the pair of them ran off the entire text, and assembled it with scans of the illustrations to give a rough idea of book length, and overall contents design. The major decision at this stage was to choose between photographs let into the text, or more traditionally, grouped together on individual pages. We compromised by separating them singly or in groups from the text, but not necessarily taking up whole pages. This allowed us to locate the illustrations close to the relevant sections of the text. The next stage was to produce a more exact set of galley proofs with text and photographs as close as possible to the position and size in the book – after taking account of various typographical conventions. This revealed a problem. What was

supposed to be 80 pages had turned out to be nearer 88. But some judicious text amendments and photograph cropping soon reduced page numbers back to target, the tight budget being unable to cope with the cost of the extra pages.

It was at this stage too that the majority of typographical inconsistencies were erased. The printer suggested some key conventions to be observed and we worked out a consistent policy on other aspects. Numbers up to twenty were to be referred to in text (eg sixteen) while higher ones were given digits (eg 24). Golf scores and handicaps were conventionally given in digits. References to publications were to be given in italics, as were the few foreign language phrases. Despite lots of attention at word-processing stage, I was ashamed at the number of spelling and grammatical errors which had slipped through. The worst mistakes and potentially the most embarrassing were the initials and name spellings of club officers and prize winners in the Appendix. Transcription of these from early handbooks and a set of annual reports was a dreadful tedious business, which no doubt accounted for so much of the inconsistency. But there were other errors. The original sources themselves were sometimes wrong. This point is so important as to be worth repeating: names are sensitive and people notice mistakes. **Be very careful about name spellings during proof reading.**

Eventually the corrections were detailed; the photographs and text were arranged to our aesthetic satisfactions. Finally, page-proofs were produced some two weeks later. The last opportunity to fine-tune the text and arrange the photographs. Thankfully little further adjustment was necessary. The book was very close to its finished form. David and Nigel had produced a nice simple title page. The whole thing felt very good. A few more nervous inspections. The odd (by now unnecessary) correction. We were ready to produce plates and go to press.

The twelve or so years between completion of the respective York and Silloth histories had seen huge changes in typesetting technology. The rapid increases in processing power of the home computer now permit do-it-yourself typesetting and graphics manipulation. The practicality of designing and setting a book is well within the grasp of the layman. Commercial printers are still a valuable source of skills and experience in design layout, editing and proof-reading, but it requires effort and significant cost. Maxiprint, who had since been taken over and renamed as The Max, still specialise in small print runs, and won the Silloth contract with a good competitive quote.

The production process was much the same for the two books. This time we chose 11 point Palatino – an elegant, modern typeface that was dark and easy-to-read (it has also been used in this small booklet in 10-point size). We had lots of good photographs to choose from – some of which were generally important in golfing history. I was particularly pleased with a series of vignette head-and-shoulders portraits of the county champions from the Club – all local heroes – a good idea pinched from national newspaper byline illustrations.

Conclusions

Producing the histories of York and Silloth on Solway Golf Clubs was just as time-consuming as I expected it to be – but was never intrusively so. The single most important lesson is to start early, because research takes such a long time. We allowed twelve months for York, when 36 were really necessary. For Silloth, the centenary deadline had already been passed and we were able to take as long as we wished.

Any club anticipating centenary publications could usefully start by organising a scrapbook, and trawling round the last few precious old members before they pass on. Even with just a few references, an outline account can soon be put together which provides the working structure for more detailed research.

Although research was time-consuming, it was often great fun, and occasionally exhilarating. Real processes of investigation and detection are needed to uncover and cross-reference details; to pursue leads and personal contacts; to discover the pattern that makes up a good tale.

Writing had other satisfactions – the creation of the narrative from the facts; the illumination of the interesting and relevant themes.

If writing is to do with the identification and presentation of facts and ideas, then book design is the process by which the concepts are converted into impressions – the harmonisation of appearance with touch; of text and illustrations with paper and cloth; the creation of the satisfying whole that is the finished book.

I guess it is unusual for any one person to be involved in all three stages. Yet the potential golf club historian is in just that position. It is an immensely rewarding experience! It should not be missed!

References

Typography and Book Design

Jennett, Sean	<i>The Making of Books</i>	Faber & Faber 1951
McLean, Ruari	<i>Modern Book Design</i>	Faber & Faber 1958
Simon, Oliver	<i>Introduction to Typography</i> (Revised edition ed David Bland)	Faber & Faber 1963
Bringinghurst, Robert	<i>The Elements of Typographic Style</i> version 2.4	Hartley and Marks (Vancouver) 2001

Local Sources

Club records, including club handbooks.

Memories of the older members, including photographs and scrapbooks. The local library, and particularly, the local newspapers. Other local clubs, particularly archivists and centenary celebrations organisers.

Families of former members and club staff.

Regional Sources

Regional and county magazines.

The Victoria County Histories.

Local handbooks and guides.

County golf associations, both for gentlemen and ladies.

National Reference Books

<i>The Golfing Handbook</i>	1888- 1910
<i>The Golfers Handbook</i>	1898 onwards
<i>Nisbets Golfing Year Book</i>	1905- 1914
Ladies Golf Union Annual Yearbooks	1893 onwards

National Magazines

<i>Golf</i>	1890 - 1899
<i>Golf Illustrated</i>	1899 onwards
<i>Golfing</i> (London)	1898 - 1970
<i>Golfing</i> (London and Glasgow)	1895 - 1897
<i>Golf Monthly</i> (Glasgow)	1910 onwards
<i>Country Life</i>	pre -1914 onwards
<i>Sporting and Dramatic Newspaper</i>	1890s onward
<i>The Field</i>	1880s onwards
<i>Fairway and Hazard</i> (for Ladies Golf)	1930 - 1972

Finished Results

Cruikshank, Charles. *The History of Royal Wimbledon 1865-1986*. Private. 1986

Pearson, John. *York Golf Club 1890 – 1990*. Private. 1990

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Centenary Celebrations at York Golf Club

John Pearson

AROUND 2,000 GOLF CLUBS and societies were established in the UK between 1890 and 1900, as the game became fashionable with the late Victorian middle-classes. Some of the clubs succumbed early to building developments, and to the financial difficulties associated with two world wars. But many of them survived to the leisure-rich 1990s, and were soon to celebrate their centenaries .

Such a club was our own in York, which was formed in 1890, and enjoyed a full program of celebrations in its centenary year .

The Programme

As with most centenary clubs, we had little experience to draw on. The brief to the Centenary Sub-committee was sensibly short: the programme was to appeal to as wide a spread of the membership as possible, and it was to be self-supporting on the basis of a 4% levy on subscriptions . Over the last twenty years our Club had changed substantially in character. It was no longer the quiet, leisurely, gentlemanly place it had been for some considerable time after the War. It was increasingly sociable and competition-oriented.

The separate interests of course and clubhouse were reflected in the programme of events:

New Years Day: Eight Hole Competition with Shotgun Start

This format was designed to accommodate as many members as were able to turn out after the traditional Hogmanay celebrations. The competition was followed by a buffet reception for competitors and one or two long-standing friends of the Club, then by the ceremonial raising of the centenary flag. It turned out to be an extremely relaxed and pleasant lunchtime gathering.

6th May: Match vs Fellow Centenarians, Ilkley GC

This was our first match against Ilkley, who were keen and entertaining adversaries .

24th May: Centenary Invitational Day

Teams of four representing 21 local clubs were joined by four from the Club, in a fourball competition (two best scores to count per hole) .

7-8th July: Members Centenary Weekend

Competitions were held for both ladies and gentlemen. A cricket match was held on the Saturday evening between the under- and over-30s, on a temporary wicket in the middle of the sixteenth fairway. This most enjoyable event was followed by an informal social evening in the clubhouse.

14-15th August: Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs Senior Championship

17th August: Centenary Competition for Juniors

20th September: Yorkshire Ladies Autumn Meeting

24th September: Club Match Play Finals

These were followed by a mixed foursomes in period costume, between the gentlemen's and ladies' captains, against their vice-captains, using gutty balls and hickory shafted clubs. Costumes were obtained from a theatrical dress-hire company; clubs borrowed; and balls were specially made from an old gutty press. Suitably disreputable caddies were in attendance. This was a colourful and enjoyable event which attracted a substantial gallery, and generated coverage from local and regional newspapers. With better preparation it could easily have generated TV coverage as well. The match was followed by a barbecue and dance in the greenkeeper's barn .

6th October: The Golfing Antiques Roadshow

A slide presentation on the history of the game was followed by a demonstration of golfing memorabilia by the British Golf Collector's Society. Members were intrigued by displays of ancient clubs, balls, bags, trophies, books, postcards and general ephemera. This was an unusual evening, which the audience of around 70 thoroughly enjoyed. In other subsequent celebrations at other clubs, the BGCS has often turned out in period dress, playing hickory-shafted equipment, against the club side. Sometimes the clubs themselves have even had a go playing with hickories. The BGCS also have a number of slide presentations on various aspects of the history of the game, which can be used along with the 'Golfing Antiques Roadshow' in the evening..

20th October: The Centenary Dinner

The Club returned to its original home, York Knavesmire, for dinner in the banqueting suite of York Racecourse. Various guests from local clubs and organisations were entertained by speeches from the Captain, Vice-Captain, President of the Yorkshire Union of Golf Clubs and Dean of York Minster .

28th October: The Staff Dinner

Members of the respective ladies and gentlemen's committees put on their aprons, rolled up their sleeves and prepared and served a sumptuous meal for Club staff in recognition of their great efforts, not just over centenary year, but in the period leading up to it.

Additionally, throughout the playing season, each of the eight monthly competitions was for a special centenary medal struck in silver for the Club by the Birmingham Mint.

Mementoes

The sub-committee produced a number of centenary items for use within the Club, or for sale to the membership:

Within the Club:

The centenary flag, commemorative plaques, flags for the greens, score cards and fixture lists

For sale to the membership:

Balls, ties, sweaters, shirts, reproduction brass buttons, prints of the watercolour painting of 'The Pond Hole' by a well-known local artist and cut glass inscribed to order, including decanters, goblets, and whisky and sherry glasses.

Of the items for sale, the Club Professional organized the balls, ties, sweaters and shirts, but the Club took the risk on ties, buttons, the print and glassware. A preliminary written survey of membership opinion showed some enthusiasm for buttons, prints and glassware which was reflected in a commitment to 500 buttons and 150 framed prints. Unfortunately, the initial enthusiasm was not subsequently followed by hands reaching into wallets; around one third of the prints and most of the buttons remain unsold.

The Centenary History Book & Economics

The most important memento of the year was to be our centenary history, for which over half the levy was allocated. This was one of the earlier, critical decisions made by the Sub-Committee. It guaranteed a print-run of 500, which together with further estimated minimum sales of 100 to friends, visitors and former members, allowed an economic cost quotation of around £6, our target price for a print-run of 600. Additionally we were quoted a discount of around 40% for run-on quantities. Again, through testing actual response from specialist dealers and other centenary clubs, we believed that we could sell a further 350 copies, so the final print-run was set at 950. In the event, sales to third parties, through a lot of effort, amounted to around 250 copies. The remaining copies were given away to new members, and eventually ran out after about eight years.

The selling price of £9.95 was calculated not so much on what the costs had been but on what seemed to be the market rate for what turned out to be an interesting, attractive hard-back. (Some specialist dealers were soon offering it for more than the original price). The recommended price allowed for reasonable margins on the run-on cost, after taking account of potential postage costs of around £1 and trade discounts of 35% (for up to ten copies) and 40% (ten copies and above).

Considerable effort was put into sales and marketing. The printer was very good in helping with design and typesetting facilities for some of the promotional materials used in various mailouts. Reviews and feature

articles were readily obtained in local newspapers and magazines; a major advertising feature on the celebrations was run in a regional golfing newspaper; and an article was written for the magazine of the British Golf Collector's Society. A mailout was organised to specialist dealers in golf books; special displays were put up in the Club bar and professionals shop; and samples were lugged round local book shops. Sales efforts to specialist dealers and local bookshops were successful; extra copies to club members and visitors were most disappointing .

The total cost of around £5,000 for the printing was covered by the budgeted receipts from the membership levy and profits on sales of around 250 books to third parties.

Long after the extra copies had sold out, I came across a (signed) copy of the book in mint condition, obviously unread, at a local car boot sale, marked up at £6. 'It's a high price', said the vendor, 'because it's a collector's item.' I didn't know whether to haggle him up or down. On another occasion, I was trying to locate a copy on Abe Books for a friend – eventually tracking down a volume for what is now the going second-hand price at around £12. My enquiry across the Atlantic to Abe was successful; the book was delivered almost immediately, by hand, from a dealer who lived about half a mile away.

The Benefits of Hindsight

We had a splendid centenary year, as a result of some good early decisions; much hard work and preparation; and enthusiastic promotion and execution of some of the main events. The benefits of hindsight may have helped avoid some of the minor problems that did arise .

A well-balanced sub-committee is essential for most of the preparations. It goes without saying that the chairman must be wise and experienced, with much influence. But he needs two key lieutenants in addition to the usual array of social fixers: someone who is good on design and a good publicity person. The former is needed to ensure that the various mementoes are designed and produced to the standard that will ensure their acceptability to the membership. He or she also needs to determine a consistent design theme in all the printed items concerning centenary year .

On publicity, the local newspapers and magazines we contacted were generally very helpful and co-operative. They were even more so when we were able to present than with copy and photographs of publishable standard.

So the membership should be trawled for a good scribe, photographer and possibly, someone with good media contacts. Lucky indeed is the club that finds all these talents enshrined in one willing member.

In organising the book and many of the 'historical' activities, we found that goodwill was a splendid, worthwhile infectious commodity. People were only too pleased to help, and we found that if we reciprocated in some way, (with the occasional free round of golf for instance) – then the goodwill is nurtured and develops.

The levy system was a grand idea, which should not be under-estimated. It most critically allowed an economic print run for the book, which otherwise might only have interested 10-20% of the membership. The print economics allowed production of a good quality hardback that most members genuinely appreciated and will retain.

However, on the book and other centenary items, it is wise not to become too overcommitted to high quantities which may effectively become redundant even before the end of the year.

A key lesson is to start early. Key venues and people have to be booked well in advance, and the three years we allowed ourselves were adequate. The exception on this was for the centenary history, where we barely allowed ourselves twelve months for research, writing and production, when, with hindsight, a full three years were really necessary .

Conclusions

We believe we had a reasonably-balanced program between competitive and social activities. Competitions were definitively more popular – but they always are at our Club. The special events sometimes needed heavy promotion, but they were well-supported and invariably enjoyed.

They most certainly provided the distinctive flavour of what was a most enjoyable centenary year at York Golf Club .

The British and Australian Golf Collectors' Societies have published this booklet as a means of encouraging golf clubs to celebrate the glorious heritage of Golf, as seen through their own experience. Further copies can be obtained, free of charge, from the Hon Secretaries of the respective Societies:

British Golf Collectors' Society

Anthony Thorpe,
Muirfield,
22 Cherry Tree Close,
Brinsley,
Nottingham NG16 5BA,
United Kingdom

Golf Collectors Society of Australia

