

Historians Forum at Victoria Golf Club 23 April 2018

By Tony Rule

The first forum of the year was held at Victoria Golf Club. A total of 35 members and their guests attended and heard an insightful group of presentations about the course, members and the role of women at the club.

First up Mike Clayton, Victoria's consulting architect, spoke about changes that have occurred to the course over the years since it was initially constructed by the Morcom's in the early 1930's. Using an early 1930's aerial photograph Mike illustrated how some of the design features and strategies had been lost by the mid 70's. The replacement of bunkers with trees, the loss of some remarkable bunkering all transpired to remove the strategy of the original intent of the design. Much of the work Mike and his team have done since has been to reintroduce these features.

Next up was VGC Board Member Stephen Ager. Stephen has done a significant amount of research into the life of The Hon. Michael Scott. Scott was the winner of the very first Australian Open Championship played in 1904 at The Australian Golf Club in Sydney. An Englishman by birth Scott was a member of Victoria Golf Club from 1903 until departing back to the UK in 1911. He won a second Australian Open in 1907 and in that same year he was club champion both at Royal Melbourne Golf Club and Victoria Golf Club. Scott also won four Australian Amateur Championships and the 1933 British Amateur at the age of 54. Scott is one of the most significant figures from the pioneering days of Australian golf and he will be the subject of a more detailed article in a future edition of The Long Game. Stephen ought to be congratulated for the time and effort he has dedicated to researching the life of The Hon. Michael Scott.

The third speaker was the inimitable Brian Simpson. Brian has been the professional at VGC since 1973 and he offered some fascinating insights into VGC's greatest ever player; Peter Thomson. Peter's warm up routine, ball striking, set up routine and preference for leather grips were just some of the topics discussed. On one occasion Peter came to Brian requesting that the swing weight be adjusted on a set of clubs, however there was a caveat, he could not grind or attach weight to the blade of the club. After much consideration Brian came up

with a solution; put some lead into the grip. With these very clubs Peter went onto record 9 victories in a single year on the Senior PGA Tour.

The final speaker was Ruth Summerfield. Ruth has contributed much to golf, not only at her home club but also to the wider golfing community. Ruth spoke about the early days at Victoria and the sometimes-fraught relationship between the women and the men at the Club. Fortunately, those days are long behind the club and VGC now enjoy one of the highest female membership levels of any golf club in Melbourne.

The GSA is very appreciative of the time and effort of the staff and members of Victoria Golf Club.

Victoria GC Aerial Photo 1936



Speakers Mike Clayton & Brian Simpson at Victoria GC

