

GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA.

GOLF CLUB HISTORIANS' MEETING.

Report of the meeting held at Royal Park Golf Club on 20th February 2012.

Attendance - See attached sheet.

1. 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.
2. 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. 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 Royal Park 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. For more information about the clubs at Victoria Golf Club go to the following webpage.
<http://rpgc.org.au/victoria.htm>
For more details of Royal Park Golf Club history go to
<http://rpgc.org.au/history.htm>

Denise kindly gave a copy of her book called *A Centenary in the Park* to all who attended the meeting.

4.

3. 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. 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 Munroe 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 had 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. The golfer then played his next shot to a round of applause from the tram passengers.
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.
4. 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, there is a 300-metre walk between the two holes now. 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.
5. Moirra 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.
6. 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.
7. General Business. **Peter Gompertz** showed a book titled *A Journal through the Annals of the Golfing Annals 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.

5.

Ian Rennick closed the meeting at 2.15pm by thanking the speakers and the participants for coming. The next Historians meeting will be at Ballarat Golf Club on the 12th June 2012