



## GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

### **Report from Golf Historians meeting Royal Melbourne Golf Club October 10<sup>th</sup> 2016**

Royal Melbourne Golf Club was the host for the final Golf Historians forum for the year. A pleasing number of 35 attended, made up of many regulars, RM members and guests.

President of the Golf Society of Australia (GSA) Geoff Vincent welcomed everyone and thanked Royal Melbourne for hosting the day. Convenor Kim Hastie opened the meeting also thanking RM for their generous hospitality, noting they have hosted a number of GSA events in recent months.

#### ***Royal Melbourne Golf Club 125 years 1891-2016***

The first speaker was Richard Allen well known RM member, Past Captain and author of several books.

Richard gave us a very entertaining and informative presentation on how the club went about producing a book for the clubs 125th year. He went through the differences between the Jo Johnson 100 year book and the new book and process required to update the old club history to a new one.

The early difficulties they encountered was that Jo Johnson was no longer alive and the club didn't have a soft copy of his book – so each page was scanned and the computer converted the scanned words to a workable document. Typing errors were created and the initial document had to be proofread very closely.

Then came the brutal task of cutting back some 30, 0000 words from the first book to allow for the updated history in the same amount words plus allowing for many bigger and better photos to be included.

In order to write the words of the past 25 years Richard spent a lot time reading Council minutes, newsletters, interviewing key people, Captains and Presidents and many older members. Many stories were obtained from the members and most ended up in the book.

Richard went on to tell us about some of the important things that clubs need to consider when starting their own history.

Firstly, the writer has to think of the average reader. The reality is that probably only 5% of members will read the book from cover to cover. Many will read parts of it – usually the bits that they were associated with and most will look at the photos and read the captions.

Secondly keep it interesting fun, and let the personalities shine through.

The following is just some of the “**things they learnt**” ...

**Get a good writer** - ideally a journalist or a professional historian, even better if they play golf.

**Form a history sub- committee** - and spread the load.

**Club histories are important social and historical documents...what's in them becomes fact...**it's crucial that what's written is accurate....A good editor will pick up anomalies...

Richard gave us a few examples of errors.



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**Photos and hugely important** - source them from members. Important to have everyday photos of the members on the course and at the club but beware of happy snaps - quality is important.

For this book the club sourced and paid for about 60 photos from Fairfax.

Gary Lisbon provide many photos of social events. Black and white photos work well.

**Make rules and stick to them** - made a decision early not to include any Pennant photos.

**Spend time on captions for the photographs and the index** - There are professional indexers and worth paying for.

**The most important photo is the one on the cover** - the cover photo is Claude Felstead, Royal Melbourne member and Australian Open winner at our Sandringham links. Richard argued long and hard for this. Others wanted a photo of one of the signature holes. Richard felt the Felstead photo was the best choice – a timeless, evocative photo full of grace and power – it makes people want to open the book and look inside.

**Attention to detail** - the club engaged a member with a good eye for detail. He was able to spot anomalies from the 100 year book and so they were able to correct them.

Richard advised show the words to as many members as you can so mistakes can be picked up before the book is printed.

**Printing** - have a timeline and stick to deadlines. The club used ABC books and printers in Hong Kong who delivered before time - April this year.

Every member received a free copy as did reciprocals clubs etc.

Richard's presentation was immensely interesting and it was really quite a privilege to hear how the club went about the huge task of producing this beautiful book.

### ***Preserving and displaying archival material at Royal Melbourne***

Moira Drew Member of RMGC History and Archives Committee

For most in the room Moira needed very little introduction a past presenter and regular attendee at these forums

As the GSA archivist for many years, Moira made an enormous contribution to the society's collection and still remains a valuable resource to us.

She has been Royal Melbourne's archivist for some time and is still very involved with the clubs on going activities. Moira has recruited a team of keen members to work with her.

She told us about the systems and methods they have in place to catalogue and store their historical material. Currently they are working on migrating this extensive data from excel spreadsheets into Mosaic. For clubs that are keen to catalogue their archival material in a better way Moira recommends this is software program.

Moira discussed the importance of preservation and storage of historical material photos etc. There were many items on display showing us the correct way to store valuable historical items using the conservation grade materials that are available today.



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### ***Changes to the East Course 1932- 2016*** Tony Rule RM Council/Greens/Archives

Tony's informative presentation was complimented with slides and they gave us a better visual image to the changes the East course. He was able to produce wonderful historic images along with the more recent images.

Opened for play in 1932 the East was designed by RMGC member Alex Russell and constructed by RMGC greenkeeper Mick Morcom.

In 1926 Scottish architect Dr Alister Mackenzie came to Australia to design a new course for RMGC. Russell was able to work with Mackenzie who so impressed with Russell that he made him a design partner in Australia.

The East remains almost unchanged for 70 years apart from some bunker changes on 7 & 11.

A number of the holes on the East course were played very close to the boundaries of the club. Most noticeably 6, 7, 15 and 17.

The slides clearly showed the boundary residential build up through the years.

In 2000 noted British architect Martin Hawtree was appointed by the club to attempt to resolve some of these issues. As a result holes 6, 7 and 15 were changed substantially with lesser changes made to 8, 10 and 17.

In 2012 American architect Tom Doak was appointed to make some improvements to the work initiated by Hawtree. This included bunker adjustments on 6 to attempt to return the strategy of the hole to Russell's original intent. Adjustment on holes, 7, 8, 10 and 13 and the removal of a green side bunker on 12.

The most significant change made was to the 15<sup>th</sup> hole. The original strategy of the hole was turned completely on its head. Originally designed to be played down the right hand side the strategy was changed completely to entice players to play to the left away from the boundary fence. This led to a reshaping of the green away from a left to right slope and more towards a back to front green. Doak took inspiration from the 10<sup>th</sup> at Riviera CC in Los Angeles for this green. Finally on 16 Doak restored the original right hand tee for member play.

Tony also was able to produce some wonderful images of Russell hand sketching's.

### ***A biography of Dr Frank Barney Gorton Stableford.***

Graeme Ryan Sports Historian Member, Yarra Yarra Golf Club

Graeme gave an insight into a book he is publishing about Dr Stableford, the extraordinary man who invented and introduced golf's Stableford scoring system.

Dr Stableford studied medicine in Birmingham and served as a civil surgeon in the Boer War and during Britain's campaign against the 'Mad Mullah' in Somaliland. At the outbreak of World War I, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and served with distinction.

He was an outstanding golfer who once reduced his handicap to plus one and belonged to many clubs during his lifetime. He first tried his scoring system at The Glamorganshire in 1898, but it was not until 1932 at Wallasey where a Stableford competition was first held. It was an instant success.

The introduction of the stroke index at that time greatly contributed to the fairness and effectiveness of the system and its subsequent, lasting popularity throughout the golfing



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world. It also gave players more enjoyment and encouragement compared with the general frustration caused by stroke and bogey. For this, Dr Stableford is known as 'The Patron Saint of Club Golfers'.

Graeme complemented his presentation with a series of photographs from a recent trip to Dr Stableford's golf clubs in South Wales and the Wirral peninsula near Liverpool. He also briefly described the book which will be published in mid-2017.

### ***Hickories at Royal Melbourne and Show and tell***

-Max Findlay GSA Committee and hickory enthusiast brought some antique clubs from his own collection. He produced three clubs that had some relevance to Royal Melbourne.

Mac & Mac Deep Dimple Face, Maschie Niblick. Banned by R & A 1923.  
Names on shaft RMGC Pros - Jack Patterson RMGC and W Thomson RMGC

J Victor East RMGC Maxwell Putter

Lastly another putter, stamped on the putter head is A.R....possibly AR Lempriere  
Employer of Ivo Whitton 1913

-Ross Baker GSA member and Traditional golf club maker.  
Ross brought along several interesting and valuable hickories from his own collection.  
Ross is an entertaining speaker went through some of the special aspects of his precious pieces.

-Marty Maguire (Commonwealth) also brought along some of his own clubs for discussion

-Geoff Vincent gave us update on RAA Balfour-Melville's (first Secretary of Royal Melbourne) personal scrapbook.  
GSA has had possession of the book for most of this year as the family of Balfour-Melville have allowed its restoration and copies to be made. The original was on display at the meeting and will be returned to the family soon.

In closing Convenor Kim Hastie... Thanked all speakers for their interesting presentations.

Reminded members of the upcoming Annual Hickory day this Sunday October 16<sup>th</sup> at Kingston Heath, playing for the Frank Shepherd and Burtta Cheney trophies.

Gave final thanks to Royal Melbourne for their hospitality and to all that attended.

**Meeting Closed**