



GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.
Golf Club Historians Sub-committee.

Golf Historians Forum Report
Commonwealth Golf Club October 13th, 2014

Geoff Vincent, President GSA

Geoff welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Commonwealth for hosting today.

He briefly talked about the role of the society and the value of forums such as this.
He introduced Convenor of the meeting Kim Hastie

An insight into Commonwealth's beginnings/ forming a Heritage Committee and planning for their Centenary year. Virginia Gorrell, Commonwealth & GSA member.

Virginia spoke to meeting about Commonwealth's GC early origins.
The club's Heritage Committee is where it is today, due to the efforts of the late Mark Wade.
Mark was passionate about the club's history and spent many hours in the State Library. He formed a small group of willing and interested members to gather many forms of information.

Commonwealth's early beginning can be traced back to sometime before 1914 when 6 holes were laid down in Carnegie and was known as the Murrumbeena Golf Club.

1915- 18 holes were laid down by Professional Sam Bennett. A single weather board club house was built by the Waverley Golf club. ***Photo supplied.***

1919- Club and membership expanded and search for suitable freehold land began.

1920- Commonwealth GC was constituted with land purchased in Warrigal Road South Oakleigh

1921- Plans for a new building were completed by Arthur Purnell

1922- A new clubhouse opened. With extensions made in 1923.

1927- Committee of the day led by Captain Lane decided that a larger and more prestigious clubhouse was required. Which is now the current site.
The Architect was member Mr. F Sales.

1928- Foundation stone was laid by Mr Cuming.

1930- The new clubhouse was officially opened by Governor Lord Somers.

1959- Substantial renovations designed by Sale and Keagne provided a new Pro shop improved bar area /Office and committee rooms.

2014 -Has seen the most current renovations mainly to the office and Women's Locker room areas.



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Golf Club Historians Sub-committee.

Virginia encouraged us to go downstairs and have a look at the recently installed heritage display.

Clubs Centenary plans

Commonwealth is not as old as many clubs and will celebrate its centenary in 2020 one hundred years after CGC was constituted. The planning of events for this year is yet to begin.

Dining Room Stained glass windows

A highlight of the clubs Dining Room is the two stained glass windows. The artist was William Whealdon of Brooks Robinson & Co Melbourne. A foundation member of Commonwealth and according to his daughter donated the windows to the club.

Early Club history and course development

Martin Maguire Commonwealth & GSA member

Marty opened his talk telling us about 2 influential golf professionals in Sam Bennett and Jock Young who both provide significant early historical interest. **Photos supplied.**

Sam Bennett belonged to an esteemed group known as the Carnoustie 300. A group of young men from the Carnoustie area who took golf to the world. Sam was involved with Commonwealth from beginning in 1915. Appointed the club professional built the original 12 hole layout with multiple tee positions to get 18 holes.

Jock Young made a varied and extraordinary contribution to Commonwealth and to golf in Victoria. Not only as an outstanding player but as a well-known teacher, architect, golf club maker and golf writer.

Jock Young from 1924 till his retirement in 1961 was the clubs Professional. He was made a Life member in 1956.

Marty went on to tell us about the clubs early foundation.

Its move to Oakleigh, the clubs name change, Bill Edgar's 18 holes sketches and the implementation of Harry Colt suggestions overseen by Captain Charles Lane. In recognition of the contribution by Australian servicemen to the Commonwealth Armed Forces in the Great War, it was decided to change the name to the Commonwealth Golf Club.



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Interestingly in 1926 Alistair McKenzie on a visit to Melbourne made a few suggestions about the course but was decided by the Captain Lane not to engage his services.

Marty also gave us an insight into the impact of the Great Depression and WW2 with those times causing significant decline in the course's condition and membership.

He told us about the clubs most outstanding golfers and encouraged us to have a look at a new display downstairs highlighting their achievements.

Marty closed with a few amusing stories from the early years.

Overview of course changes at Commonwealth

Rick Wines Commonwealth Life Member

Convener Kim gave a brief account of Rick's outstanding golf career and his contribution to Commonwealth.

A long-time successful Pennant player Team Captain for 20 years,
Captain of four winning teams.

Also represented in many State and National events - Vic Amateur Champion 1975
Club President 1998 -2000

Made a Life Member in 2002

Without any notes Rick gave us a very personal and comprehensive account of the strategic course layout changes to Commonwealth since he joined the club in 1961. Rick closed his talk telling us about a unique set of hickories (made by T Kane) that the club has loan and now displayed downstairs.

Personal Recollections of Book Collecting - Peter Gompertz

Member of the British Golf Collectors Society since 1987

Editor of the GSA newsletter The Long Game

Peter gave an entertaining insight in to how he became a passionate and lifelong collector of Golf books.

Peter suggested a short list of books that golf historians should have on their bookshelf. Peter had some of his personal copies with him from what we can think is a vast collection.

- A Round of Golf with Tommy Armour - course play management
- Golf Collectors Price Guide by John Taylor (with tongue in cheek suggestion about how useful golf instruction books are)



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Golf Club Historians Sub-committee.

- Golf in the Making by Ian Henderson & David Stirk (a must for historians interested in club development)
- Badminton Library 'Golf' by Horace Hutchinson

Plus some modern favourites

- To The Linksland by Michael Bamberger
- Four Iron in the Soul by Lawrence Donegan. A book Peter recommends if you have a particular interest in caddying as he does.

The best book about early golf in Australia, and probably the most expensive is The Australian Golfer by Dan Soutar.

Peter suggested when beginning a collection always start with your clubs history.

For more information or the current value of a book you have. Advice can be obtained by going to www.abe.com and putting in the title of the book and the name of the author. There are a couple of big golf memorabilia auctions coming up in November for more information Contact Peter at peter@antiquebroker.com.au

Hickories clubs for discussion Max Finlay

Gave us a brief talk on the components and the making of a hickory club. Discussing materials, methods and costs of grip wrapping with Cliff George.

Hickory Clubs – Identification, maintenance and restoration **Rules of compliance and adopting the guidelines**

Cliff George

Cliff provided us with a document he helped develop setting down the compliance guidelines. Which have now been adopted by GSA. He is passionate about hickory restoration and strongly believes in preserving the charm of playing Antique Hickory Golf. Cliff went through a number of the rules and reasons for putting them in place.

He strongly believes the key to hickory collecting is the identification of them.

Show and Tell

Attendees are invited to bring along any old golf clubs, golf memorabilia or books for assessment and comment.

Ray King from Greenacres brought along a small golf case with wooden stand for appraisal. We understand it is as Bussey patent "Stand up" Caddy.



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Golf Club Historians Sub-committee.

Moirra Drew (RM archivist/GSA member) was asked assist with further identification and dating.

Several hickory clubs were passed to Cliff for his appraisal.
One from Di Greenhill and a particularly interesting club from Marty Maguire.

Close and vote of thanks to Commonwealth Golf Club Geoff Vincent

Nine holes with Hickories

Approximately 10 players went out for a hit with hickories. Photos taken.
Unfortunately the weather was against them and only few holes were played.
We thank Max Finlay who provided several sets for use.

Ref Hist, Agenda MGC2014