



## GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

Patron: P.W. Thomson, AO, CBE.

### **Report on Meeting at Woodlands Golf Club. 14th October, 2013**

#### **Welcome.**

Convenor Paul Burgess thanked those attending and reminded everyone the gatherings were aimed to encourage historians from all golf clubs to combine their knowledge about recording club histories, and to be a forum to help each other on all research matters pertaining to the history of golf at their clubs. He mentioned Rushworth G. C. was also celebrating its centenary together with Box Hill and Woodlands. It was also suggested it would be interesting to learn how the two outer metropolitan clubs in 1913 initiated the formation of their clubs.

#### **Box Hill Golf Club, History & Heritage.**

Chris McLeod, President of Box Hill Golf Club, presented an interesting history of his club. Box Hill is celebrating their centenary this year even though it has links back to 1892 when the Surrey Hills Golf Club was started. Surrey Hills Golf Club was established in 1892 near the Mont Albert station but due to sub-division was forced to move in 1907.

The club was split up, a group of members went to East Camberwell and Riversdale Golf Club was formed. Another section went to Doncaster and they eventually formed Eastern and Huntingdale Golf Clubs. More went to Fisherman's Bend which was the start of Victoria Golf Club. In 1909 the remaining members formed the Middleborough Golf Club and played on land that is now the Box Hill Cemetery. They later leased 70 acres of land south of Canterbury Road but ceased play during World War 1 and during a period from 1924 to 1933. The Myer Basement Social Club started playing on land near Gardiners Creek that was owned by the Roberts family. In 1935 Mr. Roberts son in law, Mr J C P Wellard, took over the land and developed a full course with grass greens and maintained it through the 1940's.

In 1951 the Club approached Mr Wellard to buy the land which stretched to Eley Road. The Club issued debentures to fund the purchase but could only afford the 9 holes with Station Street frontage. The remaining land was subdivided for housing. In 1964 a new clubhouse was built facing Station Street, and in 1964 additional land was leased from the MMBW to establish



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an additional nine holes. In 1990 a new clubhouse was opened and in 1997 the land on which the northern nine holes were played was purchased.

An interesting and informative attendee at the meeting was Mr Jim Wellard the son of J C P Wellard and a member of Box Hill Golf Club. He remembers the early course and lives in Wellard Street which looks out onto the present course.

### **Club Heritage Groups, Role and Activities.**

Moira Drew, Golf Australia Archivist referred especially to the preservation of golfing documents and memorabilia which initiated considerable discussion on ways and means of preserving digital documents now becoming the preferred means of communication with club members. Earlier guides and other papers prepared by Moira relating to these matters were available for attendees to peruse or retain for their club's use.

### **Hickory Clubs, Care and Maintenance.**

Golf Society member Cliff George demonstrated various techniques on caring for and restoring hickory clubs. He also provided information on past and present sources of timber used in the manufacture of wooden golf sticks.

Cliff's address attracted much discussion and again reflected the growing interest in old golf sticks.

### **Show and Tell and General Discussion.**

This segment of these meetings is becoming more and more a feature of the day. Hickory expert and Society member Max Finlay displayed a variety of old sticks many not previously shown. This attracted considerable discussion especially when new member Marty McGuire produced some samples of his collection for assessment by Max.

Tad Woznica presented a report and extract from a local paper on the opening of the Grampian's Golf Course by the Governor of Victoria in the 1960's. Tad expanded on the occasion and then presented the documents to Moira Drew for the Golf Society of Australia library collection. Moira being a member of the Grampians Golf Club and present on the occasion was particularly interested in acquiring the document.



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Dorothy Mortlock presented copies of "Out of the Rough" the story of Rosebud Country Club 1962-2013 to Woodlands and The Golf Society of Australia for their respective libraries.

### **Woodlands Golf Club Centenary.**

Paul Burgess delivered an illuminated presentation on the formation, development and highlights of the club's 100 years which are summarised below.

Western District schoolteacher and golfer George Rogers was transferred to Chelsea in 1912, and became aware of a beautiful, undulating tract of land called "Mayfield" at Mordialloc. He obtained a permissive occupancy of a portion of Mayfield and the Mordialloc Golf Club was formed on 17 July 1913 with a limit fifty of members.

Early Melbourne professional, Richard Banks, laid out nine holes for Opening Day on 6th September 1913. Cattle and sheep grazed over Mayfield so the club erected wire fences around greens & tees. Sand bunkers were prohibited so one metre wire-netting hurdle were erected across the fairways.

In 1917, Club professional, Sam Bennett laid out nine new holes within a month. In 1921, Mr. Plant, bunker expert supplied recommendations based on an aerial survey photographed by a member Hunter Rogers, a WW1 aviator who was first in Australian to offer aerial surveys to aid golf course design.

In 1924 a lease was obtained over the 185 acres & electricity and water was connected. When Mordialloc Golf Club became a company in 1925 and its name changed to "Woodlands" - giving due acknowledgement to its parkland setting.

Any debate on whether rebuilding or alterations should be made to the clubhouse was settled after fire gutted the original clubhouse in February 1927. A new clubhouse was officially opened by the Secretary of the VGA, Mr. Meader in 1928.

Captain Gresson is forever revered after personally paying a 10% deposit of £20, to purchase for £200, the Swifts Creek Club (Gippsland) for its liquor



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license. That club was transferred to Mordialloc & until about the 1960's two annual meetings were held to satisfy the Licensing laws.

In 1928 the club admitted to senior pennant and a year later its fairways were ploughed up and sown with couch grass. The Club then purchased its leased area for £11,000 or nearly £70 per acre. In 1934 Woodlands hosted the Victorian Amateur Championship and has been the venue for the Vic Open on many occasions.

WW2 years were a struggle when service personnel were made honorary members & monthly medals became war medals. One stalwart member was reputed to have acted as green-keeper, cleaner, barman etc. Bore water had been sort in the early days but samples proved unsuitable until the mid sixties after a new bore proved successful and the whole course reticulated.

The achievements of two members dwarf all others, namely, those of Margaret Masters who won the first of nine Women's championships at age nineteen (1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1960, 1962 and 1963). Five Victorian Amateur Championships and the Australian, New Zealand, South African and Canadian Championships. Margaret later turned professional and competed in America, where she enjoyed considerable success.

Stephen Allan, Club Champion in 1991 and 1994 turned professional in 1996, qualified for the European Tour in 1997, and then won the German Open the following year. He headed the 2000 USPGA Tour School, Coined The Baby Face Assassin, Steve won the 2002 Australian Open at Victoria Golf Club.

Still on its original site Woodlands recently renovated and enlarged the clubhouse again in preparation for its 2013 centenary year.

**Next meeting.** To be circulated in the New Year.