

The Long Game

Newsletter of the Golf Society of Australia

No 33, January 2010



Doug Bachli Trophy, AGM & Cocktail Party:



On an unseasonably hot day 16 Gentlemen members competed and President, Ian Rennick was the winner with 38 points. Dick Curtis with 37 points was the runner up. No Ladies ventured out. After Elizabeth Hodgkins presented the winner and runner up prizes the AGM was convened with 27 members in attendance. Ian Rennick delivered his Presidents report (see page 2) Dick Kirby, Treasurer, reported that the Society's finances are healthy and members nominated

for election to the Committee were returned unopposed. The President presented immediate-past President, Keith Wood, with his suitably framed, Life Membership certificate. Members then enjoyed the excellent catering of Victoria Golf Club.



Ian Rennick and Keith Wood



Doug Bachli runner up Dick Curtis



Golf Historians at RMGC

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For the Diary:

10th March, Dinner, Kingston Heath G C

11th April, Hickory Day at Kingston Heath G C

22-23 April, Al Howard Trophy at Federal G C, Canberra

The Golf Society of Australia was formed in 1982 to research and preserve the history of golf in Australia.

As part of this role, the Society manages the

Museum and Library for Golf Australia.

Golf Australia supports the Society by providing office space and administrative assistance.

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Presidents Report

The President presented his report covering the activities of the Society during the year, highlights of which were :- Three dinners were held during the year at Victoria, Royal Melbourne and Commonwealth Golf Clubs. Guest speakers were Anne Lenagan, Chairman of Golf Australia, Peter Knight, Programme Manager of Australian elite amateur golfers and Greg Chappell, Manager, Kingston Heath Golf Club respectively.

The annual Hickory Day was re-scheduled due to bad weather and

played at Commonwealth in October where the winners were Bev Wait and Cliff George. Other successful golfing events played during the year were the President's Day at Royal Melbourne, where the winner was Peter Gompertz, the Don Laurence Trophy at Woodlands where the winners were Barry Donaldson and Max Eise, and the Doug Bachli Trophy at Victoria Golf Clubs where the winner was I. Rennick. The President congratulated all the winners and said he hoped more members might participate in future events.

A Society team unsuccessfully competed for the Al Howard Hickory Trophy against an Australian Golf Heritage Society team from N.S.W. at Thurgoona Golf Club, N.S.W. Victoria has the right to nominate a venue for the 2010 match which maybe at Canberra, A.C.T.

Three golf club historians meeting were held this year at Bendigo, Huntingdale and Royal Melbourne Golf Clubs respectively.

The latter was scheduled as part of History Week and included a luncheon to celebrate the 50th anniversary of

the 1959 Canada Cup. Guest speakers were Don Moir (Sam Snead's caddy), Bob Spencer (Gary Middlecroft's caddy) and Anne Court.

The Society again arranged display marquees highlighting Australian golfing heritage and memorabilia at the 2008 Men's and the 2009 Women's Australian Opens.

Present membership guidelines sometimes prohibit opportunities for keen golf historians to become Society members. Currently a proposal is under discussion to allow for a separate category of temporary membership of representatives of golf clubs. Nominees would require endorsement by their golf club and have restricted rights. These may vary depending upon the circumstances of the application and would not necessarily be written into the Society's rules.

Dick Kirby (Treasurer), Janet Hibbins (Hon Secretary) and the committee were especially thanked for their work during the year. Janet Hibbins will step down as Secretary but remains a committee member. She has been on the Committee for 5

years including 4 years as Secretary. The President expressed his heartfelt thanks to Janet for her help especially over the past 2 years. Paul Burgess (Assistant Secretary) will become Hon Secretary. Paul Rak, General Manager of Royal Melbourne was invited to nominate for Committee and I am pleased to advise that he has accepted. We welcome his input.

Recently Peter Gompertz volunteered to take over as editor of *The Long Game* from Moira Drew a very willing participant in all of the Society's projects, who was editor for 3 years and 10 issues. She will continue attending to museum matters and the web page.

Barry Donaldson and Michael Clayton have not sought re-election to the committee but remain members. Both gentlemen were sincerely thanked for their involvement with the Society for 8 and 9 years respectively.

Ian Rennick

Historians Lunch Meeting at Royal Melbourne.

The Golf Society of Australia joined in the celebration of History Week by having a meeting of Golf Club Historians on October 27th at Royal Melbourne Golf which consisted of a luncheon followed by a Golf Club Historians meeting with the emphasis on golf in Melbourne before 1900.

Luncheon

Noel Terry, the chairman of the Historical committee at Royal Melbourne Golf Club welcomed all to the luncheon which was part of the 50th year celebration of the Club holding the Canada Cup tournament in 1959. Noel read a note from Peter Thomson apologising for not being in attendance as he was overseas.

After the luncheon three speakers were introduced, the first was Don Moir who was Sam Snead's caddy the second was Bob Spencer who caddied for Cary Middlecroft, and Anne Court who remembers the excitement of the club holding such a big tournament. Several other stories were told one being Bill Richardson Jnr who remembers being shocked that his favourite TV show was cancelled because of the golf.

The display in the club house included scrapbooks

and a video of the Canada Cup.

Golf Club Historians.

1. The Chairman of the meeting, Ian Rennick again welcomed everyone to the second part of the day's proceedings.

2. Melbourne Prior to 1900



Professor Weston Bate is the past President of the Royal Historical Society Victoria, and a regular attendee at the Golf Club Historians meetings. Weston has a great interest in Victorian history and has been involved in the writing many books on Victoria.

Weston stated that European settlement in Victoria started with pastoralists who, looking for new pastures for their sheep, arrived in the 1840's from Tasmania and New South Wales. This created great wealth in Melbourne. The gold rush, starting in 1850, brought more migrants and Melbourne's growth continued. Melbourne expanded quickly and by 1890 it was the largest city in Australia. The 1890's saw a depression

that stopped expansion and it was not until 1900 that progress started again.

What about golf? Golf in England boomed from the 1830's but there was little evidence of it in Melbourne except for a short period in the 1840's and again in the 1890's. Perhaps it was the shortage of golf equipment or the lack of suitable land. Weston hoped that the next speaker might have the answers.

3. Golf in Victoria prior to 1900.



Noel Terry thanked Weston for such a concise and interesting address of Victoria's history. Noel said that he cannot answer Weston's question but is keen to correct some facts previously written about early golf in Melbourne.

A summary of Noel's conclusions are as follows. A group of Golf Society members have been concerned that the story of early golf was not correct. In 1906 a book "The Australian Golfer" was written listing where golf
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from page 3 was first played in Australia. Two matters that seem incorrect are the exact location of Melbourne's first course and, the name of the person who related the facts to him. The article was written by R A A Balfour-Melville as told to him by James Graham.

It has been determined that Flagstaff Hill was not the location of the first course in Melbourne, but was an area we now call Docklands. This area, between Batman's Swamp and Spencer Street, was the location for all Melbourne sporting pursuits in the 1840's, but with the construction of the train line in the 1850's the sports were forced to move. There is a reference that golf moved to Elwood but this has not been confirmed.

Golf was certainly played in the 1840's as several newspaper articles were written about it, but were vague about the location. Information about who played golf is found in "The Australian Golfer" and another article "Evolution of Golf in Victoria" by Carre Riddell. The names of Ross, Broadfoot, Fairlie, Turnbull, Riddell and James Graham were mentioned. Evidence that they all played golf have been found except for James Graham.

James Graham was a leading merchant in Melbourne from 1840 to 1890 and trav-

elled regularly back to England. Graham was a prolific letter writer and all his business and personal letters were retained. Sally Graham published these letters and not once did he mention golf, even when he travelled to Scotland. Another Melbourne merchant, William Westgarth who had a similar profile definitely was involved in bringing golf equipment back from overseas trips. Because that lapse (1840 to 1906), Balfour-Melville may have confused Westgarth's name with Graham as these men were prominent in many common clubs and committees

Shortly after the first Melbourne Golf Club closed, David Conacher and wife Helen arrived in Melbourne in 1854. Conacher was an unregistered, and probably unpaid, apprentice to Hugh Philp at St Andrews but in Melbourne had to work as a carpenter as there was no need for his golf club making skills at the time. Another Scotsman T J Findlay, arrived in 1875 and announced that if he could not play golf in Australia he was returning home. In 1879 the third golfer, the very famous professional David Strath, arrived. David was perhaps the best golfer in the world and may have come to Australia for health reasons. Conacher, Findlay and Strath knew each other in St An-

draws. Unfortunately David Strath, who was suffering from consumption died within ten days of arriving. It is possible that a meeting was arranged with the thought of starting golf in Melbourne but with the death of David their plans may have been put on hold.

There is no further record of golf until 1891 when Melbourne Golf Club was formed. The two people who designed Melbourne's course were Conacher and Findley, so perhaps their plans to start a golf course were finally realised.

Noel did not have all the answers of why golf took so long to start in Melbourne; he is certain that golf was being played, but not at a Club level.

Ian Rennick then took up the story mentioning other areas where golf was played. The histories of Royal Melbourne and Kew Golf Clubs state clearly where golf started for their clubs. There is a report that golf was played at Essendon in the 1870's but the location was not mentioned. It started again in 1896 on leased land but was forced to close several years later. There are several references to golf at Emerald Hill, and once again the location is not mentioned. Before 1890, most of Emerald Hill

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Claytons' Corner

with Michael Clayton

The Melbourne sandbelt courses are one of the finest group of courses in world golf. London has a brilliant set of heathland courses, and New York's finest golf is easily comparable to the best of London and Melbourne. The best of the sandbelt and the heathlands are also some of the most playable championship courses in the world. They are not particularly long by today's modern championship standard of 7500 yards, and they have never fallen into the American trap of lining the sides of narrow fairways with long rough.

The 'playable for all' nature of the courses however does not mean the architects responsible for the heathlands, or the sandbelt, shied away from building the occasional hole, or feature, that was clearly not playable for higher handicappers.

The heather that lines the sides of the fairways at Walton Heath is the most brutal hazard in the game – think of hacking out of barbed wire – and at the wonderful 6th hole at Sunningdale the second shot is highlighted by a seventy metre carry across heath and heather to reach the safety of the other side of the fairway.

In Melbourne you can make a pretty strong case for the argument that the two finest par three holes in the city are the 15th at Kingston Heath, and the 15th at Commonwealth. Certainly those brilliant holes would be among the top half dozen on anyone's list.

The question one is forced to ask is whether either hole would be built today and not be criticised for being too difficult for the poorer players.

The Commonwealth hole has one of the very few green complexes in Melbourne where the player is asked to make a forced carry in order to reach the green. The 7th at Woodlands is another and the 13th hole on the West Course at Royal Melbourne is close, but there are very few others.

It is far from an unreasonable demand for the architect to ask once or twice a round, and Commonwealth's 15th asks the question as well as any hole in the world.

Is it playable for all? It clearly is not for a player who cannot play a serviceable bunker shot.

The 15th at Kingston Heath is flanked by bunkers that are some of the deepest and most difficult to play from in

the city.

Playing in the Victorian Open during the nineteen-sixties the late Ted Ball once took six shots to escape from 'Big Bertha' on the left and no doubt many have suffered the same fate albeit in relative anonymity.

This is not a hole that passes the 'playable hole for all' test but a number of the world's greatest holes have hazards that are beyond the capabilities of many. David Duval and Tommy Nakajima are just two golfers who have suffered the humiliation of having to take several swipes to escape the Road Hole bunker at St Andrews. The tiny bunker at the front of Pine Valley's 10th hole is a brutal hazard but that course, unlike St Andrews, Commonwealth or Kingston Heath, does not pretend to be playable by high markers.

One would hope the brilliant short holes at Commonwealth and Kingston Heath could be replicated in this age without criticism, but somehow I think there would be some who would decry them as 'unfair' and 'unplayable' – and this in an age when the equipment has made the game easier to play than ever before.

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(now South Melbourne) was swamp land with few areas suitable for golf, except for the land marked on an 1885 map called the National Agriculture Reserve, just south of the Military Barracks in St Kilda Road. So perhaps this was the Emerald Hill course. Further research is needed to find this course.

The Golf Society has a project of locating areas where golf was played and any suggestions are welcome.

4. Scanning old newspapers.



Before 1900 golf was seldom mentioned in the press, the exception being "The Australasian", published weekly by The Argus. Moira Drew talked about the wonderful photos of golf events and golfers that appeared regularly in that paper and the historical value of the photos of early golf in Victoria.

Moira displayed a number of pages that Royal Melbourne has scanned, so that the originals can be stored away safely and the contents preserved for the future, while the scanned copies are easily made available for viewing.

Dinner at Commonwealth Golf Club



President with Frances Crampton

Over 60 members, and guests, attended the dinner with special guest Frances Crampton, National Manager, Golf Development at Golf Australia. The Guest Speaker was Gregg Chapple, General Manager of Kingston Heath Golf Club whose topic was 'Preparing to Host Tiger'

Members and guests were treated to an informative and entertaining account of preparations at Kingston Heath Golf Club for hosting the 2009 Australian Masters. World No. 1 golfer Tiger Woods will make his third ap-



Guest Speaker – Gregg Chapple

pearance in Victoria, and demand for tickets has been high, to the extent that sales for the practice day have been good. Gregg outlined the changes that will have been made to the course, many of them needed to accommodate the large galleries expected at the tournament and also to deal with the fact that the sequence of holes to be played will be different from the normal layout. He concluded by saying that the redevelopment of the club

house has had to be speeded up in order to be ready for the tournament start date. Gregg assured us that all will be ready on the day!

New Members:

Welcome to:

Stephen Adams

John Buckley

GSA Patron Peter Thomson, AO, CBE, Honoured by Victoria Golf Club

Victoria Golf Club has honoured its most famous member by unveiling a bronze statue, by sculptor Louis Lauman, of five-times Open champion Peter Thomson AO, CBE.

Thomson, who celebrated his 80th birthday in August, joined the club as a 16-year-old in 1946 and played pennant until he turned professional in 1949. Another member of the pennant team was Doug Bachli and together they put Victoria GC on the world golfing map in 1954 when they became the first Australians to win The Open and the British Amateur titles. Thomson's five Open wins between 1954 and 1965 rank him second to Harry Vardon who won the title six times between 1896 and 1914. In

the 20th Century only American Tom Watson has equalled his tally of five and no one has matched his run of three in a row from 1954. To put this



achievement in perspective, it is instructive to list the players who were on a hat-trick but fell short: James Braid, who also won five times, Bobby Jones,

Walter Hagen, Bobby Locke, Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino, Watson, Tiger Woods and Padraig Harrington. Such was his dominance of The Open in the 1950s that in the years that he did not win, between 1952 and 1958, he was runner-up.

Golfing greatness is measured by major championships won, and longevity in the game. Thomson's first victory of note was the club championship at Royal Park in Melbourne at the age of 16 in 1946. His last win came in the 1988 Seniors British PGA Championship, and he won somewhere in the world at least once every year from 1950 until 1973. In 1985 he dominated the US PGA Senior Tour with an unprecedented nine victories.

Australia's Oldest Golf Course

Recent comprehensive research has revealed that the Point Hunter Golf Course located at Kingston, Norfolk Island, an external territory of Australia, is our oldest golf course. In March 1840, Lieutenant-Commander Alexander Maconohie who had been born and brought up in Edinburgh, Scotland, was appointed Superintendent of the penal settlement on Norfolk Island at the suggestion of the Molesworth Committee. Maconohie's view of punishment was that sentences should be 'task and not time' imprisonment.

Instead of being sentenced to fixed period of imprisonment, an offender should be sentenced to be imprisoned until he had performed an



ascertainable period of labour which should be measured by the number of 'marks of commendation' he earned. He implemented these views with the prisoners on Norfolk Island and it was they who laid out the

nine hole golf course at Kingston between 1840 and the end of 1843. The Norfolk Island Golf Club play over the same course today, exactly as originally laid out.

Australia's first golf course was laid out over the government paddocks, previously Grose Farm but now Victoria Park, Broadway, Sydney, in May 1839 and the first Golf Club was the New South Wales Golf Club formed on 1st June 1839 with members playing over the Broadway course.

John Scarth

2009 Hickories at Commonwealth Golf Club

Ten members of the Society attended at Commonwealth Golf Club to contest the 2009 Hickory Championships held over from Kingston Heath last March due to inclement weather. The weather was fine and, apart from some work in progress for the next Australian Ladies Open, the course was in excellent condition.

Winner of the Frank Shepherd Trophy – Cliff George with 15 points.

Winner of the Burtta Cheney Trophy – Beverley Wait with 16 points



Nearest the pin on the 9th, men — Don Murray

Nearest the pin on the 9th, women – Jean Gilbert

Longest Drive, men – Max Findley Longest Drive, women – Beverley Wait

Life Membership Honour for two GSA Members

At the Annual General Meeting of The Victoria Golf Club held last month, well-known Society members Ruth Summerfield and Geoff Brearley were both elected to Life Membership.

For Geoff the honour recognises his contribution to the Club as a Board member from 1979 to 1995, which included 4 years as Captain and 4 as President. Geoff's involvement continues today as a member of the Club's Archive Committee charged with documenting and maintaining

the Club's history. VGC Life Member John Westacott spoke eloquently in support of the nomination and had plenty of stories to tell about the "Chuckles" he knows so



well. Geoff is not enjoying the best of health at the moment and we wish him a speedy recovery.

For Ruth, the Life Membership recognises a wonderful

contribution to Victoria Golf Club and to the greater golfing community at both State and National level as this summary of her involvement shows - Member of VGC Ladies Committee 1981 to 1987 - Captain 1985 to 1987, Board Member 1992 to 1998

At State (VLGU) level, variously from 1985 to 1993 : Club delegate, Handicapping Subcommittee member/Chairperson and Honorary Handicapping Manager.

Like Geoff, Ruth continues her contribution to VGC as a member of the VGC Archives Committee.

Rosemary Wakeham, also a Life Member at VGC, spoke with feeling in support of her friend's nomination and left all present in no doubt of Ruth's contributions.

The acclamation both received when speaking after being unanimously elected confirmed the appropriateness of their elevation to Life Membership.
