

# THE LONG GAME

NEWSLETTER OF THE  
GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



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## Don Lawrence Trophy

By Peter Gompertz

*The weather forecast for the day of the Don Lawrence Trophy at Woodlands was not auspicious and waking up to almost gale force winds did not help the mood, but 25 hardy members turned up to greet the starter. Although it was still quite breezy, with a light spattering of rain when we teed off, the weather improved, in stark contrast to your correspondents golf skills, so that the final few holes were played in brilliant sunshine.*

Settling into a warm clubhouse, with a glass of something at hand, President Geoff Vincent welcomed Don Lawrence's widow, Muriel, and three of our new members Barbara Allen, Bill Robinson and Colin White competing for the first time at a Society event.

Before the winners were announced Brendan Moloney read out an oration to Don Lawrence, one of our founding members, and in whose name we compete for the 'silver tray'. The oration had been written by journalist Ted Lazarus and encapsulated Dons career from under age 'Able Seaman' Lawrence to becoming the leading sports journalist of his generation, who among other highlights 'gave' Jack Nicklaus his nickname 'the Golden Bear' and ensured that, in his time, golf was front page news in the newspapers of the day.

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Presidents Trophy at Royal  
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#### 26th August

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#### 14th October

Historians at Woodlands



*Virginia Gorrel Muriel Lawrence and new member Bill Robinson*

Winners of the Don Lawrence, for the first time, were Paul Burgess and Tony Lang with a staggering 48 points, 7 ahead of second place getters. The ladies prize was won by Grace Rew and Bernice Davies with a creditable 38 points. The front 9 winners were Peter Stickley and Brendan Moloney with 21 points, with the back 9 best score going to Max Findlay and Paul Burgess with 22 points.

Longest, straightest drive on the 10th (his first) was won by John Philp. Tony Lang's tee shots at the 11th and the 17th were close enough to win the Men's nearest the pin prizes and Grace Rew was nearest the pin for the Ladies on the 17th. (Dare I say that none of the ladies tee shots made it to the 11th green, and nor did mine!).

A very warming supper was served up for everyone, and some interesting stories exchanged, as members wound down after all the excitement.

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to

Kate Nolan

Ian Rowell

Colin White

## *Have you missed a dinner but would like to hear the speech?*

In most cases, when the speaker agrees, we record the after-dinner speeches at Golf Society functions. If you have missed a dinner and would like to hear any of the presentations, they can be made available on cd for playing on computer or cd player.

**Contact:** The Secretary

# Don Lawrence Oration

As part of the presentation of the Don Lawrence Trophy, GSA member, and well known golf journalist Brendan Moloney read the following 'Oration' which was written by Ted Lazarus and appeared in the July edition of Golf Australia magazine. We are grateful for Ted's permission to reprint his words. – Ed.

*In the scheme of things, the Don Lawrence Trophy played at Commonwealth Golf Club in Melbourne on a chilly winter's day recently was not a big deal.*

Twenty pairs took part in the 4 BBB Stableford competition, staged by the Golf Society of Australia since 1996, to honour one of Australia's finest golf writers and the pair of Ian Rennick and Frank Davis, from Kew GC, won with a score of 47 points.

They were chuffed because they both knew Lawrence, who died in 1994 just two days short of his 70th birthday, and his widow, Muriel, was at the presentation. For those unfamiliar with the Society, it is a group of mainly conservative, middle-aged and older lovers of the game who have a quaint and endearing interest in its history.

It is said of conservative golf clubs that the only revolutions are to maintain the *status quo*. In this context, former president Daryl Cox sailed perilously close to sedition. A couple of days after Bryden McPherson won the British Amateur Championship, he asked what Lawrence would have made of the newspaper coverage of the event.

"If you had not been reading the papers very carefully, you would not have noticed that a Melbourne lad had won the British Amateur," he told an appreciative audience. "In Don's day, that would have been on the front page of the paper. We don't have that any more, unfortunately."

He had a point. The report of McPherson's victory, the first by an Australian since Doug Bachli in 1954, made less than six inches of single column on page 66 of an 88 page edition of the Melbourne *Herald Sun*, Australia's biggest circulation daily.

Lawrence, who wrote for the now defunct *Herald* in Melbourne for 25 years, and the *Age* for further 15, would have been ropeable. His anger would not have been directed at the golf writers, who spend a lot of their time apologising to readers for the lack of coverage. It would have been at the faceless men who decide to spike, or bury, good golf stories so they can saturate the paper with football, much in the way that cholesterol clogs healthy arteries.

The problem seems to stem from around the time Lawrence died. Ranald Macdonald was the boss of *The Age* in Melbourne and Kerry Packer had his empire based in Sydney. Both were fanatical golfers and it was worth more than a sports editor's job to miss a good golf story. Since then there has been a gradual decline to the point where golfers would no more dream of buying a newspaper to find out what is happening in their sport than fly to the moon.



It might also have something to do with the people attracted into journalism these days. There was a time when newspapers demanded that its reporters be able to spell, understand grammar and write succinctly, accurately, authoritatively and objectively. There has been no evidence of this for many years. As for their experience of life, it seems to come mainly from the internet and journalism courses taught by people with little, or no, real newspaper experience.

A friend and old-school scribe told me 20 years ago the game was finished. "Mate," he said, "the cadets go home after work, open a bottle of mineral water and read a serious book. Where have we gone wrong?" How would they stack up against Lawrence who lied about his age to get into the Navy in World War II and studied for his school leaving certificate in English at sea, in between Japanese kamikaze attacks, with a view to becoming a journo?

*The Age* took him on in 1946, and in 1947 he used his wartime experience to work his passage on a ship to England with the aim of working on Fleet Street. Australian journalists were well regarded in the 'Old Dart' but his letters of application went unanswered because he signed them D.H. Lawrence (his middle name was Hevingham) and was confused with the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a book then banned because it was considered obscene.

He eventually got work - but not before being forced to sell his clothes on the street so he could eat - and was taken back by *The Age* when he returned in 1948. There he covered all the big events including The Open in 1960. Arnold Palmer was in the clubhouse at St Andrews when Kel Nagle got to the 18th tee on the last day and spotted Lawrence in the gallery. "What do I need, Don?" he asked. "Four, Kel," he replied. Nagle made his par and won.

Such rapport and trust with the players continued throughout his career. He gave Greg Norman a bed in his home when he was unknown and had nowhere to stay, and was a friend and fellow member of Peter Thomson at Victoria Golf Club. Today his connection there is marked by an engraved silver salver passed on by Muriel. The inscription reads: "To Muriel Lawrence, in memory of your husband, Don Lawrence, with thanks for naming me the Golden Bear. Jack Nicklaus."

Everyone who knew him has a favourite Lawrence story. Mine is about the World War II Spitfire pilot Douglas Bader who lost both legs in a crash but persuaded the RAF to let him fly combat missions with tin legs. He was shot down by the Germans and spent the rest of his war in Stalag Luft III, the prison camp in Poland from which the Great Escape was made. This camp also had a par three golf course built from the dirt they took out of the escape tunnels.

After the war Bader visited Australia while working for the Shell petrol company and was taken to Kingston Heath for a game. While changing his shoes he fell over and his hosts rushed forward to help him. Bader, who was as cantankerous as he was brave, angrily pushed them away and got himself up without effort. (apparently in the prison camp when the Germans took away his legs as punishment he walked around on his hands.)

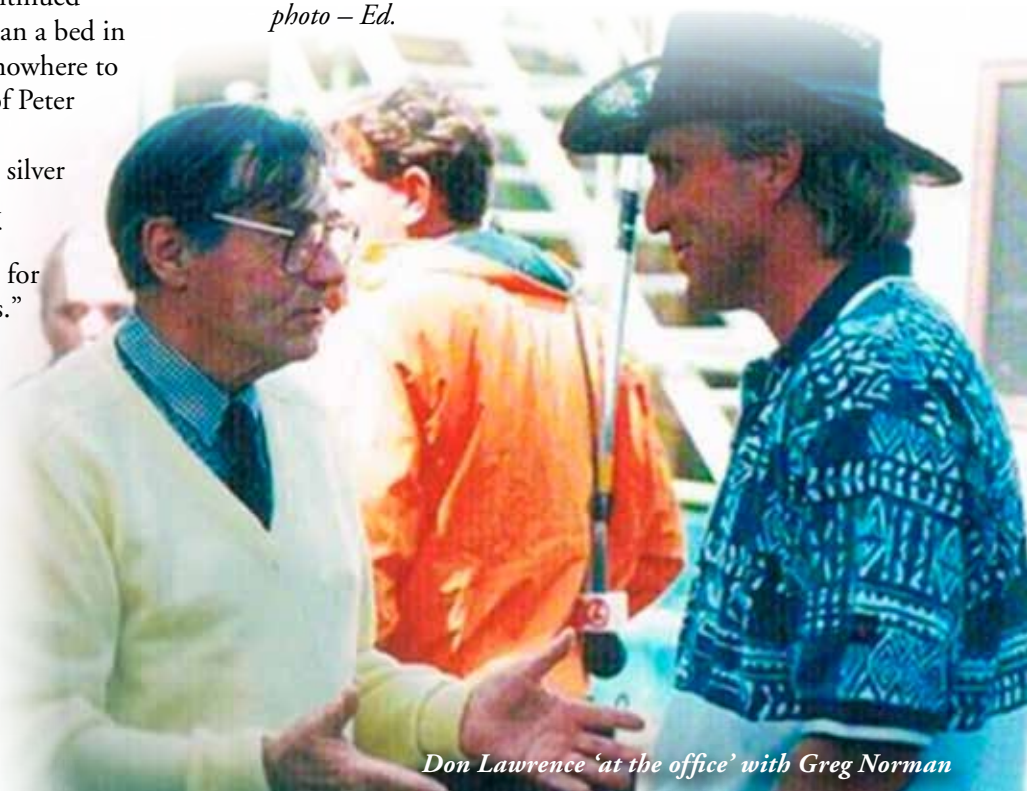
The embarrassed silence that followed the fall at the Heath was broken by Lawrence asking without thinking: "Are the shoes comfortable, Douglas?" There was another silence before Bader, realising how ludicrous the question was, started laughing and the ice was broken.

In retirement Lawrence remained a regular fixture in the press tent - there were 14 Order of Merit events in the year he died - and was a foundation member and later president of the Golf Society. He also helped set up the Open Heart Open, an event for survivors of open heart surgery. I did not qualify, but caddied because I knew that if Lawrence was involved, things would be interesting.

Nagle played after his heart surgery but the most memorable day was when Marius Barnard was the guest speaker and gave us the inside story of the world's first heart transplant performed by his brother, Christian, in Cape Town in 1967. It was Marius' wedding anniversary, he recalled, and he was well into his second bottle of red when Christian rang and said the transplant was on. He drove to the hospital and assisted in operation while feeling no pain. When the donor heart was attached, and beating, he said Christian just stared at it for two minutes before saying: "It works."

You would not read about it today, at least not in a newspaper.

*Many thanks to Victoria Golf Club for permission to use this photo - Ed.*



*Don Lawrence 'at the office' with Greg Norman*



# The London Flying Club's Golf Course at Hendon A Lost Course by Dr. Alister MacKenzie Rediscovered

by Neil Crafter – Part 2 (continued from previous issue)

(This article originally appeared in an issue of *Golf Architecture*)

*On 3 March 1920 MacKenzie wrote to Norman Duxbury, one of his clients for whom he was building the Bury Golf Club, with a list of some of his courses and the cost to construct them. First on the list was the London Flying Club which he described as a “new course and heavy clay with few natural features – £10,000”. This was much greater than the other courses on the list which ranged from £2,000 to 4,000. Presumably MacKenzie extrapolated the cost of building nine holes into 18 for the purposes of this letter.*

By June 1920 nine holes of the course were ready for play and an all-star exhibition match to mark its official opening took place over the new course on Sunday 20 June 1920, with Harry Vardon, Ted Ray, George Duncan and club professional James B. Batley playing a morning and an afternoon match. Many newspaper records of Batley representing the London Flying Club in a number of professional events in England and Scotland have been found, including exhibitions with James Braid, so Batley must have been a more than competent player, capable of holding his own against more esteemed company. Batley came to his new appointment from the Bushey Hall Golf Club in Hertfordshire, where he often played with his friend Ted Ray who came over from Oxhey. The Club promoted the exhibition in the London press, charging an admission of 3 shillings.

The next day ‘The Times’ reported on the match played between the teams of Vardon and Ray vs Duncan and Batley over the completed nine holes, which was won by Duncan and Batley with  $34 + 35 = 69$ , pipping Vardon and Ray,  $34 + 36 = 70$  by a single stroke.

In ‘The Times’ of September 8, 1920 it was announced that the London Flying Club was changing its name to the London Country Club, presumably to better describe the facilities offered by the fledgling club. This name change further reinforces the golf course’s MacKenzie pedigree, as MacKenzie had listed the “London Country” club as one of the clubs that he had advised in a 1923 brochure and advertisement for his services.

In 1924 J. B. Batley left his job as club professional and Charles Trapp was appointed in his place. By 1925 Grahame-White had still not been able to resolve the long running dispute with the Government over the return of his aerodrome and he was forced to close the London Country Club, and the clubhouse, along with his aircraft factories, were leased to Standard Telephones & Cable Ltd (STC), with the clubhouse being converted into research laboratories and the southern airfield used for sheep grazing.



*MacKenzie chipping to one of his lost greens*



In February 1926 it was noted in 'The Times' that the tennis courts and polo grounds had been closed, but the golf course was kept open due to the actions of the members and play continued on the course until March that year, when the golf course was taken over by the newly formed Colindale Golf Club Ltd. This new club entered into a lease with the Air Council and it was recorded that *"alterations and improvements have been made to the course."*

The club advertised for new members but the transfer of the ownership of Hendon Aerodrome to the Air Council and the subsequent establishment of RAF Hendon in 1927 most likely led to a slow demise of the golf course, which would have been part of the property acquired from Grahame-White and his companies under the eventual sale that dragged out until 1929 – the proceeds of which were widely reported as being £500,000. Charles Trapp is recorded as the professional at the Colindale Golf Club in 1928 so it was still in existence at that time, however, reference to the 1929 Golfer's Handbook reveals the omission of Colindale GC from the previous year, so the club and its MacKenzie course most likely did not live past 1928.

Following the sale, Grahame-White left Britain and the aviation industry, living and working abroad managing his property investments. In contrast, by this time Dr. MacKenzie had reached the peak of his profession, but he was to die in relative poverty at his home overlooking the Pasatiempo Golf Club in Santa Cruz, California in 1934, while Grahame-White lived to the ripe old age of 79, passing away in a Nice hospital in 1959, just three days short of his 80th birthday.

In 1934 the Hendon Police College was established on the grounds of the former London Flying Club and RAF Hendon ceased operations in 1957, eventually succumbing to urban expansion where today's Grahame Park Estate lies. Fortunately Grahame-White's original aircraft factory was dismantled and rebuilt within the RAF Museum at Hendon, which was established in 1972. By 1974 the London Flying Club's old clubhouse buildings were demolished to make way for an expansion of the college.

Dr. MacKenzie's course for the London Flying Club at Hendon is sadly long gone, swallowed up by the rapacious housing needs of post-war London. However, with the photographs and descriptions of the clubhouse building, greens and tennis courts we can sense that Claude Grahame-White's dream of establishing a gentleman's country club within an airfield environment, while visionary for its time, was built in such a location that did not allow for its longevity.

*Any readers with further information on the London Flying Club and its golf course would be most welcome to contact the author by email at [neil@golfstrategies.com.au](mailto:neil@golfstrategies.com.au)*

## References and Sources:

- 'Hendon Aerodrome – A History' by David Oliver (1994)
- Alan Jackson
- Melvyn Morrow
- RAF Museum - Hendon







*Cliff George and Victoria G C Pro Brian Simpson*

## Hickory Heroes at Woodlands

*by Peter Gompertz*

*Despite the fact that few of us are proficient with modern clubs, there is a merry band of ordinary golfers who maintain that the game is not difficult enough, and they itch to have a go with wooden shafted clubs, some of which are nearly 100 years old.*



So... on a chilly grey June day, with no wind or rain, a mix of 13 GSA and Woodlands Golf Club members assembled to tackle the front 9 in a social round of golf with no prizes, bottles of Claret or side bets, just for the sheer exhilaration of actually hitting one shot well.

Some of the swings, aided by being younger than the average present, managed to have the club head part company with the shaft, four times! But no injuries ensued. Star of the day was Gary Powerlett who, off a handicap of 9, returned a very credible 41 off the stick playing with hickories for the first time. Another Woodlands veteran who put the youngsters to shame was Bill Morecroft still having a go aged 91!

Those players without their own clubs were able to borrow 7 club 'sets' of hickories which Max Findlay brought to the party. Your Society has about 10 'sets' in Max's care, available for borrowing. Thank you Max.

Woodlands management have agreed to host a 9 hole 'Hickory Hero Day' on the 3rd Wednesday of the month for the foreseeable future. Golfers wishing to take part will be required to book and pay on line. Other clubs are being invited to host such events. There will be one at Long Island Country Club on the 21st September next.

<< *Woodlands member Charles Wilkins*

# Some Tips from Henry Cotton

by John Fawcett

(This article was originally published in RM, the house magazine for members of Royal Melbourne Golf Club. Henry Cotton was a leading British golfer of the 1930s and 1940s and a Champion golfer – Ed )

*While living in London in January 1964 I saw the name T H Cotton in the telephone book, and I wondered if I could arrange a lesson with him.*

The famous man answered my call personally, and in response to my request he replied “Well, who are you?” His tone indicated that I would probably need to produce a golfing pedigree to secure a lesson, so I told him that I was a member of Royal Adelaide G C with a handicap of 4. I also told him that my late father C H Fawcett had won a number of championships in Australia and during World War 1 had played with, and had lessons from, Harry Vardon, J H Taylor, and James Braid. Mr Cotton replied “In that case I will give you a lesson. It will cost you £12 (about 2 weeks wages in the UK at that time, Ed.) at the Temple Golf Club; the lesson will last as long as you can stand up and will start at 2 p m next Saturday”.

I arrived punctually at Temple G C near Maidenhead, despite a two hour journey by public transport, and we commenced on the routine set out in his books that he used with his pupils. He checked my grip, which was OK and told me to widen my stance.

The first drill was with a 5 iron and a three-quarter swing to hit the ball hard, stop at impact and swish back. The aim of this drill is to stop you lifting your head, but it puts considerable strain on the hands, wrists and arms.

Cotton called this exercise “building the heart of the swing”. The next drill was to prop up my left heel about 5cm with a golf-ball box and hit balls. I must have been swaying because I was cured. This drill holds the body still and a very crisp, accurate, shot results, although there is a slight loss of length. He told me he used this shot in high winds – merely raising his left heel to keep him steady.

Drill number 3 was to tee up 12 balls in a row, and with a seven iron hit with the left arm only, and then tee up 12 more and hit them with the right arm only. After a little practice I hit quite good shots with each hand. More than once he told me you should overtrain when you practice.

We had been hard at it for about an hour when he said “Have you ever seen me hit a golf ball?” He took my 3 wood and with his silky smooth wide arc, and a three-quarter swing hit three or four of the most perfectly flighted shots I had ever seen – a long carry with a touch of very late draw.

Another drill was to hit a 5 iron as hard as I could and the next softly, to provide some variety in ones shot making, to strengthen golf muscles and improve impact.

After much more of the same it was getting dark (about 4 pm) and I had to stop through sheer exhaustion. I had certainly had my money's worth. He invited me into the clubhouse for tea and then offered me a lift back to London. We had a long chat about golf and he told me that he regretted not visiting Australia having met many Australians over the years. He disliked flying and the boat trip was too long to consider.

I arrived back in London having experienced a remarkable day. My golf certainly benefitted from this unforgettable, extended, lesson from a great gentleman who maintained that the drills he taught were essentially his ‘method’ and had been worked out over many years of hard practice. He was the greatest British golfer of his day, winning The Open Championship three times and many other tournaments.

At The Open at St Andrews in 1984 I chatted with him briefly. He died about 3 years later and was awarded a Knighthood posthumously.







*The President with guest speaker Jeff Blunden*

## GSA Dinner at Kingston Heath Golf Club

*A total of 33 members, and guests, attended Kingston Heath Golf Club on May 5 to enjoy the second GSA dinner of 2014, an excellent menu provided by Chef Warwick Hili, and a most entertaining and informative address from our guest speaker, Jeff Blunden, one of Australia's leading golf industry consultants.*

Among those present were Ross Perrett, Architect, and Managing Director of Thomson Perrett, Golf Architects, and Neil Anderson, one of the originators of the Greg Norman Medallion clothing label.

Our guest speaker, Jeff, spoke to the 2013 National Golf Participation Report, published by Golf Australia, and authored by Jeff himself. The objective of the report was to provide a valuable reference for the development of strategies designed to drive the future growth of golf in Australia.

Key findings of the Report included the following:

- There are 1.2m golfers in Australia.
- Two out of three golfers are non-club social golfers.
- There was a 1.6% decline in playing members in 2013.
- 18% of clubs experienced membership growth of 10% or more.
- The female share of the membership base is 21%.
- 5% of club members are juniors.
- 51% of Australian clubs have less than 100 members.
- 50% of clubs are in financial distress.
- 60% of club members are over 55 years of age.
- Average handicaps are 20 for males and 31 for females.

Following Jeff's talk, many excellent questions were raised by the audience, giving an insight into how various clubs are planning to meet the challenges which undoubtedly lie ahead.

We thank Jeff for his most topical, and entertaining, address and wish him well in continuing to assist in the analysis, interpretation and future of the Australian golf industry.

*Tony McLean*

*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.*