

THE LONG GAME

NEWSLETTER OF THE
GOLF SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA



No 53, JUNE 2015

Don Lawrence Trophy

by Peter Gompertz



Don Lawrence winners

Thirty one members, and guests including Bob Shearer, 4 time winner of the Australian Order of Merit, greeted the starter on a cold, but relatively windless, sunny, day, at Woodlands for our annual tilt at the Don Lawrence Trophy, so bad rounds could not be blamed on the weather.

It is good to see new names on the trophy and this year was no exception. The highest score of 43 points was returned by Murray and Christopher Cropley but, as Christopher is not a member, they were not eligible; the winners were James Black and John Philp with 42 points on a count back from Virginia Gorrell and Bernice Davies who won the Best front 9 with 23 points, on a count back from four other pairs. The best back 9 was won by Ian Dunn and Matt Boland with 21 points on a countback from 2 other pairs. Nearest the pin on the 11th was Jean Gilbert for the women and John Surridge for the men. Nearest the pin on the 17th was Grace Rew for the women and Ian Dunn for the men. Murray Cropley won the mens' (straightest) longest drive and Bernice Davies the womens'. We were joined in the nicely warmed up clubhouse by Muriel Lawrence who graciously handed out the prizes.

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FOR THE DIARY

Monday August 3rd

Presidents Trophy
at Royal Melbourne

Monday September 7th

Dinner at
Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Monday October 12th

Historians Forum
at Yarra Yarra Golf Club

Sunday October 18th

Hickory Championships
at Kingston Heath Golf Club

*Continued from page 1:
Don Lawrence Trophy*



Kim Hastie Bob Shearer Muriel Lawrence

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to recent guest speaker, Malcolm Speed, ex CEO of the International Cricket Council, and a Board member of Golf Australia, who was awarded the AO for services to sport in the latest Queens Birthday Honours. Congratulations also to Paul Rak, General Manager of Royal Melbourne Golf Club, who has been awarded the OAM for services to golf.

Enjoying the Dinner at Kingston Heath Golf Club

See page 7 for the article on this event



Rob Layet Betty Lucas



Geoff Vincent, John Hopkins and Randal Macdonald

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to

**Tony Craswell, David Kelso, Neil Walker
and Charles Wilkins**

Himmerman and Kirk: Mordialloc, Victoria, Australia

By Paul Burgess

In an effort to separate fact from fiction and record the story of Himmerman and Kirk, Cleek golf club makers of Mordialloc, Victoria, Australia in the 1920/30's I have set out below what I have learnt after some personal research together with my wife Pam, discussions with golfing friends and notes from my own club's archives at Woodlands Golf Club.

Who were these Scots who set out to make clubs in Australia? They were Brothers-in law who married the Cunningham sisters of St Andrews, Scotland, Catherine and Helen. John Himmerman married Helen and John Kirk, Catherine. Their marriages took place at St Andrews in November and December 1904 respectively.

All four were born at St Andrews. John Reid Himmerman had been a coal miner at 18 years but when married at 22 years was evidently working at Tom Stewart's golf club factory at St Andrews. John Lynn Kirk was a 26 year old blacksmith and also working at Stewart's factory.

In 1922 John Himmerman aged 40, together with Helen and their 7 children, migrated to Australia aboard the S S Demosthenes. John Kirk, 45 years followed on his own aboard the S.S. Ballarat in 1923 leaving his wife and 4 children at St Andrews.

The magazine "Golf" in July and December 1922 had two feature articles announcing the establishment of a new factory at Mordialloc to manufacture iron golf clubs. The first of its kind according to the second article which set out in detail how Kirk would forge a club head then have Himmerman finish the process.

This was carried out at the rear of the premises at 25 Railway Street (later Collocott Street) Mordialloc. The house which is extant was named 'St Andrews' as verified to me by a neighbour. However the rear of the property has been subdivided and no visible signs exist of the former manufacturing activities.

In 1923 a Sydney newspaper reported the partnership's trade mark had been registered viz:

"Trade Mark Applications Officially Accepted List:
List of Commonwealth Trade Mark Applications
Officially Accepted and Advertised
- November 30 1923:

36468. Golf Iron Heads. Label device incorporating a cross and the words "St Andrews Trade Mark"
- Himmerman & Kirk, Mordialloc, Victoria."

A Golf Rules book of the era included an advertisement extolling the reader to buy clubs featuring the trade mark but interestingly did not specifically mention Himmerman and Kirk.

Cleek Golf Club Makers

In 1929 photos appeared in two Adelaide newspapers naming players who had arrived to play in the Australian Open of that year. J Himmerman is named but the results of the Open do not mention his name. Looking at the photo it is unlikely to be John junior and is more likely a man in his forties as Himmerman Snr. would have been in 1929. No other photo has been forthcoming anywhere of Himmerman, even from his descendants in Victoria.

In 1930 John and Helen Himmerman returned to St Andrews for a period of 3 months. No record has been found of such a trip by John Kirk who probably had more reason to return and see his family than the Himmermans, however Kirk did return later and lived out his life at St Andrews.

In the Sydney Morning Herald of 23rd Oct 1935 the following advertisement appeared.

GOLF CLUBS MARKED DOWN

*30 Shillings, "Krakshot" irons 22 shillings and 6 pence.
The noted "Krakshot" irons, stainless steel,
with hand forged heads by Himmerman.
These are the genuine 'MODEL 66' price 30 shillings.
Anthony Horden sale price 22 shillings and 6 pence.*

An interesting observation of this advertisement is that only Himmerman is mentioned as the club maker. It is about the time Himmerman moved from Mordialloc to St Kilda so might that date be a clue of a breakup of the partnership between the brothers-in-law? Perhaps the business was not profitable. By this time Himmerman was aged 53 and Kirk 57. The latter had been away from his family for at least 12 years. Did he wish to return? He did but we have been unsuccessful in pinning down exactly when he did return to St Andrews.

Himmerman was in the directories of the St Andrews property at Mordialloc from 1923 - 34, then there was no entry for him until 1937 when he was at St Kilda, in 1938 - 40 at North Melbourne and finally until 1961 at Malvern where he died.

His first wife Helen had died at Mordialloc in

1932 and he remarried in 1940 to Theresa Kate Sampson. There was no issue by that marriage.

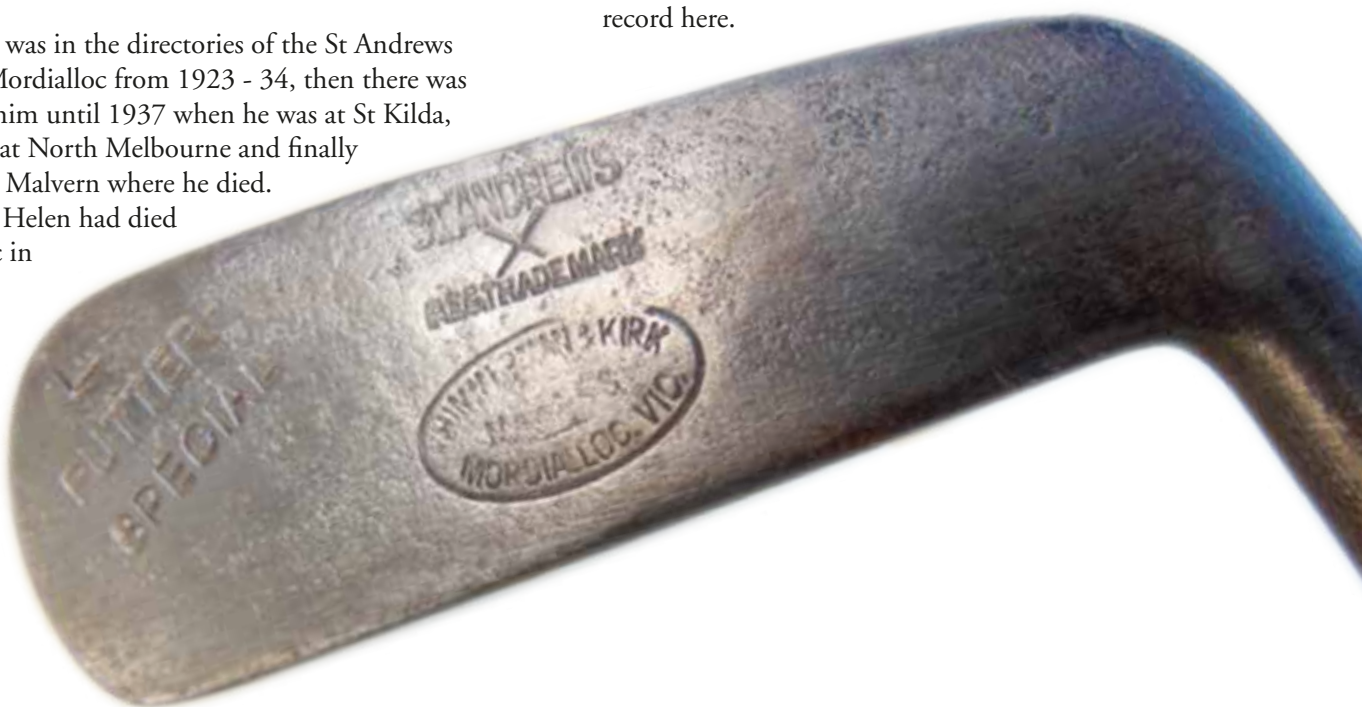
Kirk must have returned to St Andrews sometime in the mid to late thirties as a family historian of the Cunningham's informed me he had various jobs during the rest of his life - as a Coastguard during part of the war years, as a custodian at St Andrews Castle & Cathedral, and eventually in a small way, as a shopkeeper and partner with his daughter Helen.

Much still needs to be recorded about this early manufacturing enterprise. Especially why it ceased business sometime in the mid thirties.

Some other oral history I have collected from a number of sources, which almost always have a grain of truth or are indeed factual are listed below for the reader to contemplate in the future. This applies especially to anyone out there with time and passion to add to what I have documented here. The stories include the following:

- One of Himmerman's daughter married a Patterson River Golf Club Professional.
- The business may have been sold to Slazenger's which operated a sporting equipment manufacturing factory at Richmond in the 1930's.
- One of John Himmerman's daughters recalled her mother (Mrs John Himmerman), pointing out a Richmond factory saying that was where John Himmerman worked in 1930's.
- A number of patents relating to design of golfing equipment were registered by Himmerman and Kirk.
- Kirk's nick names might have been "Sandy" &/or "Jock"
- Kirk travelled to Australia with a brother.

I am sure there is a lot more to be learnt about this venture and I invite anyone to add to what I have managed to record here.



What We Know About Golf In Early Victoria

By Ian Rennick

*Many articles have been written about early golf in Victoria, most have quoted what was written in Australia's first golf book **The Australian Golfer**, written in 1906; the author was Dan Soutar. It is a wonderful book but some of the details are not correct.*

Dan Soutar came from Scotland in 1903 and turned professional in 1905 aged 25. He was joint professional at Royal Sydney Golf Club; he won the Australian Open and many other Australian titles over the next 25 years. Soutar lived in Sydney and admitted he knew little about Victorian golf. The chapter about Victoria was written by R A A Balfour-Melville who had not been in Melbourne very long having arrived in 1893. He in turn got his information from James Graham who was in his 80's, and was talking about events that happened 50 year before. So you can see that some of the details could, and were, wrong.

Balfour-Melville stated that

Golf in Victoria was started at a very early date in the Colony's existence, owing to the fact that so many Fifeshire boys emigrated here. The late Hon. Jas. Graham, himself a Fifeshire boy, gave me some particulars of it. He said he could not fix the start of the Club, as he had lost his books through changing his office. He had an entry of £2 paid to the Golf Club for subscription on August 31st, 1847, so it was in existence then at least The first President was Lieut-Col.

James Hunter Ross; the Secretary was Alexander A Broadfoot; while Mr Graham himself was Treasurer. The course played on extended from Flagstaff Hill to about where the present Flemington Bridge is erected nearly the whole being vacant ground.

Flagstaff Hill is now called Flagstaff Gardens and the area is completely different from what it was in 1840. It is now confined by four streets, but in the 1840's there were no boundaries and the area to the west and north were not built on. The history committee from the Golf Society have spent many days at the Melbourne library, and at the Royal Historical Society, and there was no reference to golf or any sport played near to the Flagstaff.

In an effort to verify the details in Soutar's book, primary source information is required because we want to know historical details and exact dates. If we are relying on newspaper articles we want a newspaper article written at the time of the event not one written years later that rely on memory. If you are relying on details from a book, it must state where the information came from, and we know that supposed facts are repeated, and often added to.

Golf in the 1840's was not important in Melbourne so very little was reported in the newspapers and few journalists knew the difference between Shinty and golf. We do know that golf was being played then as newspapers reported a consignment of golf clubs and balls arriving in 1848.

In searching through early Melbourne newspapers we have found many interesting articles concerning golf.

1842 Melbourne paper quoted

Bateman's Hill was a pretty little knoll covered with trees, on the site now occupied by Southern Cross Railway Station. The Hill was utilized as a "Grand Stand" for the visitors to the first two race meetings held in Port Phillip. It was a beauty spot on Melbourne and the first cricket match was held there...

Golf was played around Bateman's Hill. The Yarra and even in Collins Street

1845 Herald May 2nd.

Reported that with sincere regret the race course area was taken over to grow vegetables and a large area was fenced off. It also was used for cricket, shinty and other manly recreations. Shinty was an Irish game very like golf. The article went on to say it did not know of any other land suitable for cricket

1847 A number of articles stated that golf was being played in Melbourne, and Geelong, naming many of the players.

1849 Mr William Westgarth visited Europe and purchased and collected a number of clubs for some individuals. The consignment came to hand in May 1849 and some golf matches were started.

As the play season would commence when the cricket season ceased, golf it was thought, would succeed as a popular pastime, but it did not.



1850 Melbourne Morning Herald June 28th 1850, gave this account of the earliest attempt at golf in Melbourne:

It is not generally known that this exhilarating, athletic Scotch game is played here every week, by a few gentlemen who intend forming themselves into a regular club to carry out the spirit of golf in all its genuine manliness. The gentlemen meet in the afternoon of every Saturday, weather permitting, somewhere in the vicinity of the Flagstaff, and go to work with that enthusiasm so characteristic of the game itself, and of the Scotch national character. The necessary paraphernalia, in the shape of balls (Gutta percha) clubs, &c, have lately arrived from England, and are of the most beautiful manufacture. To give something like a general outline to the English and Irish reader may be necessary- to a Scotchman, quite the contrary. A piece of ground, covering many acres is selected for play, in which, in a circle, several holes are dug, at equal distances of two or three hundred yards. To get the balls (which are not larger than those used in a tennis court, but as hard as iron) into all those holes first in rotation, is the trial of skill, and whoever does so is the winner. But to do this requires much practice in striking the ball from the ground with. From one hole past the other, and yet far enough to prevent a great number of strokes being applied, which necessarily occupies longer time. A nimble runner too has great advantage, as he has in cricket and other athletic games. As any number of persons can play at once, when the field is full the effect must be striking indeed. The season for golf commences and terminates just as the season for cricket terminates and begins, so that to the lover of genuine sport "there is no end to pleasure." We hope to see the club regularly organised in a few days, with the election of the necessary offices, and we feel certain of the satisfactory result.

1850 Golf moved from Flagstaff to Red Bluff at Ormond

1854 Argus October 2nd.

During the cricket meeting on Saturday some capital golf playing, by members of the Melbourne Golf Club, excited a good deal of attention. A match, it is said, between crack hands, will come off in a day or two.

1859 Drummond Wanliss played golf at Emerald Hill.

1864 Geelong G C formed in 1864 and members played on Ormond's property at West Geelong.

Golf played at Westgath, Essendon and Heidelberg. Golf match played between Geelong and Queenscliff clubs.

1867 The Argus March 30th. A letter to the paper written by Andrew Scott Jnr

Sir, Will you kindly allow me to ask through this column if there are any gentlemen in Melbourne who have golf clubs, and would feel disposed to unite together for the practice of the game?

I have been in the habit occasionally of playing at Emerald Hill, but I do not know more than two gentlemen who can play, I have been obliged to divide my set of clubs, neither of my friends have a set.

Though the ground at Emerald-hill cannot be compared to the links at St Andrews, Musselburgh, Prestwick, or even North Berwick, still a very enjoyable afternoon may be spent, with enough of "bunkers" practice to render the game interesting to a fellow who really likes this famous old game.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant
ANDW. SCOTT, JNRi
70 Elizabeth-Street, March 28

There are several reasons interesting aspects concerning this letter. Firstly it shows that golf was being played and secondly he mentions Emerald Hill. In 1867 the land from the Yarra to St Kilda in the south was called Emerald Hill and was very wet swampy ground. There are few spots of dry ground that golf could be played. The question is where did Mr Scott play?

One possibility is where South Melbourne Town Hall is now located, but it was fully built on; another area is on St Kilda Road where the Military Barracks are located. The Barracks were built in 1860 and had some land south of it called 'The National Agricultural Reserve'; that could have been used for golf. Another location could be where Albert Park Golf Club is now located. We know golf was played at Albert Park in 1890. It would be exciting to find that golf was played there in the 1860's.

In the years from 1860 to 1890 there is very little mention of golf because everyone in Victoria had gold fever. From 1890 onwards many courses started. Most country towns had courses but the smaller towns gradually lost their course for various reasons which included WW1, the ease of travelling to larger towns and later the 1930 depression which made many small courses uneconomic.

A project that the GSA has is to list the oldest golf clubs in Australia that are still active. The list started off with about 80 clubs and all were contacted to verify their details. Many of the clubs had relied on people's memories and were unable to confirm the dates. We are now fortunate that, with modern technology, it is easier to search through old newspapers and to see what the true facts are. The list of the oldest golf clubs now has 44 clubs that definitely started before 1900, but some Clubs are still having trouble confirming exact dates. History research never ends.

Golf must have been played somewhere in Victoria from the time of the first settlement. The first Army Corps sent to Victoria was Scottish, as were the main settlers in the Western District.

Golf Clubs – The Great Changeover - Hickories to Steel Shafts (part 2)

By Al Howard

In the ironmongery department, Spalding also came up with a winner in their D. model Kro-Flite and Sweet Spot iron heads made in mild steel and therefore a mite allergic to rust. They came in numbered sets and thus nostalgic names of golf clubs associated with an earlier age in the Royal and Ancient game faded into golfing history.

Spalding irons were numbered from No. 1 to No. 7, the latter being a new square faced spade mashie and deserving of special mention were the pitching irons inexplicably numbered No. 17 and No. 19. The No. 17 club was the equivalent of today's 9 iron, or wedge, in loft and was a beautifully shaped round niblick blade. The No. 19 niblick had the depth and loft sufficient to give a golf ball an almost vertical flight. The whys and wherefores of how come Spalding numbered their irons from No. 1 to No. 7, then skipped to No. 17, then skipped to No. 19, I know not. Most odd to say the least. Bobby Jones, of Grand Slam fame, was the golfing genius who sparked this Spalding renaissance and, unfortunately, he is unavailable to enlighten us on this number jumble.

In their last release of hickory irons, Spalding updated the head with a sweet spot in the club head centre and a semi-smooth plated finish that was rust resistant. These were marketed under the famous Kro-Flite trade name and with a top grade ball of the same brand were big business in the golf world.

Earlier I mentioned Spalding's No. 19 super lofted niblick and before returning that club to the museum of memories allow me a word or so about the most famous wielder of that unique antique. Like myself he is now of vintage variety but every so often in Sportsfact or similar newspaper columns you'll read of a golfer who could play scratch golf with either right, or left, handed clubs.


This colleague of my youthful Concord days was Noel Craig, for many years resident at Wagga Wagga and leading amateur in the NSW Close Championship at Manly in 1931. Though originally a left hander, and undoubtedly one of the best in the State, Noel could play equally well on either side of the ball. The length of his shots with a hickory shafted No. 19 Spalding was incredible. They ascended like rockets with a very high, though slightly hooked, trajectory and lobbed and stopped within a few yards and the length would seldom be less than 160 yards. Noel regularly played Concord's par three 9th with this club when the hole was that length.

By the early 1930s golf club manufacturers enjoyed a mini boom as production went into overdrive to meet the demands by sports good distributors and their customers. Due to their US background, the long established American firm of Spalding's had a flying start, and from their Melbourne headquarters introduced the Kro-Flite and Sweet Spot range of golf clubs. One of their main claims to golf club fame was the "Cushion Neck" feature; a new-age method of securing the shaft within the clubhead socket, but that secret of success was given scant appreciation by Australian golfers. The trade mark "Cushion Neck" was an apt description of the thin, but extremely durable, rubber sleeve fitted over the golf shaft inside the socket of the clubhead. In brief, it was an insulating rubber shock absorber isolating the shaft from the socket and thus the term "Cushion Neck".

Additionally, neither the clubhead or shaft, particularly the latter, were bored or weakened by rivet holes for pinning the head to the shaft. I was a unique, and practical, solution to the "jarring" problem of steel shafts fitted to iron heads and should have proven very successful, but according to Robbie Burns "the laid plans o' mice and men gang aft agley".

This golf club innovation of Spalding's to insulate the hands against the shock vibrations at impact with the ball unfortunately failed to win friends and influence golfers for a variety of reasons. Though they were in the higher price bracket, it was only 10/- (\$1) above most top class brands with somewhat elongated iron heads No. 2 to No. 5 but this doubtful debit was more than offset by the robust blades of the more lofted clubs. One of the other unusual features was the type of metal alloy used for the iron heads – neither stainless nor mild steel, but a mixture that retained a dull matt finish. Perhaps that was the rock on which they perished. After playing golf for generations with the rusty hickory club, golfers now became all bright eye and bushy tailed, demanding iron clubs with a bright finish to add polish to their game.

The old time Brasso and elbow grease was banished and golf clubs were now given a weekly burnish with fast spinning, cloth polishing wheels mounted on heavy duty bench machines. During this buffing process the iron heads and sockets were given more than a light polishing, and to the revolutionary Spalding irons it was the kiss of death. The rubber sleeve of the cushion neck within the socket was being subjected to the hot foot on the polishing wheel and in protest the shaft began to sever relations with the head. It wasn't an immediate divorce but once the separation set in it was one way traffic, albeit in the slow lane. The heat generated by the polishing wheel on the socket also scorched the celluloid ferrule which provided the weather shield to the cushion neck rubber sleeve. It all added up to the most unfortunate set of circumstances and by the time that the word had spread NOT to buff polish Spalding iron heads, particularly the sockets the damage was done. Once the seal was broken, sun and rain further eroded the rubber sleeves of the cushion neck.



Immediate deterioration was minimal but the set of irons gradually became unsynchronised and out of whack as some of the shafts started their insidious creep out of the socket while others held firm. At times the No. 6 iron would be longer in length than the No. 5 iron, while others would move around the shaft on impact with the ball.

It was a sad oversight that no initial warning was issued on the dangers inherent in applying heat, or machine polishing the sockets of these quite outstanding early range of steel shafted clubs. Some 50 years after their introduction I still have one such club that avoided the perils of socket polishing and it remains as upright as the day it left the factory.

Spalding steel shafted woods were marketed in matched sets of three, retailing for around £7 ten shillings (\$15) complete with ornate Kro-Flite inlay and a hassle free Cushion Neck attached to hickory sheath tapered steel shafts. As first release items they were available only in sets and the wood blocks were deep and upright but the pronounced bulge on the face was a mite too curved for most golfers.

However, these were only the first of many clubs that Spalding made and each succeeding model showed improvement in design, and player approval. From the too upright early models came a welcome switch to a medium lie wood, fitted with either True Temper chrome shafts, or the step down type with a thinner sheath and medium flex.

Bobby Jones, after winning the Grand Slam joined Spaldings in an advisory capacity, and his influence on golf club design was soon apparent. The range of golf clubs bearing his illustrious name were top quality products and their sales achieved a further boost when Spaldings adopted the excellent Paul Runyan wood blocks as their model for the future.

Paul Runyan, a legend for many years, first came to Australia in 1934 with the US professional golf team to play, and win The Lakes International Cup. Fifty years later he was back in Australia spreading the gospel of his successful techniques in the art of chipping and putting and, at the peak of his form, displaying amazing skill in shots around the green.

Due to his slight stature, Paul's drive was never too far from the tee but, once he was within range of the green, he was acknowledged amongst the world's best. Spaldings model of the Paul Runyan block was to prove a wooden club for all seasons and all players; and his name endured in the golf trade for many years.

These top quality persimmon heads were known as "pear shape" in the rough block and were somewhat long in the length from socket to toe, with deep faces and most of the timber distributed in the toe of the head. Because of the length from socket to toe they adjusted easily to a curved soleplate and "sat well" for either upright or flat swingers. They were sold in boxed sets of four woods and with a minimal bulge on the faces soon became the top persimmon woods of that era. Spaldings, with their factory and main office in Melbourne had five times Australian Open Champion, Ivo Whitton as their chief executive and, as a consequence, acquired most of the Victorian and South Australian market whereas in NSW and Queensland, Slazengers and the new firm of East Brothers provided tough opposition.

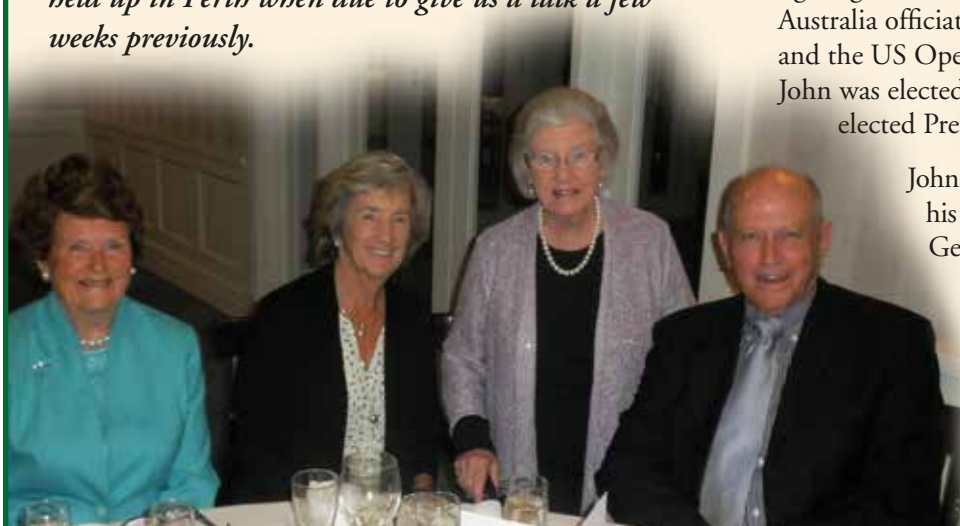
Dinner at Kingston Heath Golf Club

By Peter Gompertz

Sixty three members, and guests, gathered at Kingston Heath hear a talk by John Hopkins OA who had been held up in Perth when due to give us a talk a few weeks previously.

John has been actively involved in the minerals industry as a legal counsel for many years. He has been a single figure golfer for many years and an active rules official in Australia officiating at The Open, the Australian Open and the US Open. In 1997, after 20 years on committee John was elected President of the AGU. In 2011 he was elected President of Golf Australia.

John entertained us with a variety of stories from his days as a Rules Official and our President Geoff Vincent proposed a vote of thanks.



*<< Bev Waite June Newman,
Ann Reynolds and Graeme John*



A Hickory Hero

Al Howard Memorial

by Peter Gompertz

This year's venue for the annual Al Howard Memorial match, between the Golf Society of Australia and the Australian Golf History Society, took place at the Wagga Wagga City Golf Club, a layout designed by the late Al Howard.

The choice of venue was made as Wagga Wagga is equidistant from Melbourne and Sydney where the majority of the likely participants are based, in an effort to ensure equal numbers from each centre but only five Victorians managed to make the trip; as 13 hickory players from NSW put their hands up, four of them were selected to be honorary Victorians for half a day so that 9 matches could be played. It would appear that the combination of having to play with hickory clubs, and be a Victorian, proved too much as the only winning Victorian on the day was Paula Gompertz making her debut for Victoria in this match; the real Victorians were silent on the matter.

In the spirit of golfing friendship all the matches were played to the 18th, with the result being decided by the number of 'holes up', AGHS winning 24 up.

Everyone re-convened at a winery restaurant for a pleasant meal in good company. Both Captains for the day, Dick Kirby and John Buckley, made short speeches and then Ross Howard, son of Al, invited everyone to suggest ideas for spreading the hickory word and where to play future matches. The Victorians expressed the wish that the match be played outside the Pennant season so that the better players could take part. Although the venue was 20 km out of town it would appear that everyone got to their beds in one piece; some of them met up the next day at the Wagga Wagga Country Club for a game with steels.

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.