

The Brassie

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Special points of interest:

Golf Club History

- A new focus on golf history: the club we play at not with
- Collecting, conserving, archiving and writing history
- Different approaches, different results

Events

- With hickory-shafted clubs
- In 2005

The Golf Club Historians' (GCH) Seminar

This second GCSA seminar for golf club historians and archivists at Killara GC on 31 May, 2004 was very successful. More than thirty people attended, the presentations were of very good quality, the level of interest was very high and we gained strong support from NSWGA, WGNSW, Golf Management Australia and *The Golfer*. A healthy enthusiasm was created and eleven of those attending joined GCSA. Golf club history emerged as a separate and distinct subject.

The next seminar is already planned for late October with the topic to be one of:

- Oral History, with the State Library – four golf historians attended a seminar on Sat 31 July and this will guide how the subject

applies to GCH;

- Practical aspects of GCH topics, with case study examples from selected clubs;

It was an appropriate occasion for GCSA members to donate collectibles to the seminar host, Killara GC. One item was a trophy won at Killara by Bill Northam, who also won an Olympic gold medal for yachting. The other was a hickory-shafted putter marked with the name of Walter Clark, who was professional at Killara GC from 1922-51.

If you would like the seminar folder and report, or would like to nominate your club's historian/archivist for GCSA membership, please contact the Secretary at PO Box 23 Glenorie 2157 or barryleithhead@hotmail.net.au

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Captains Corner with Peter Read

The final hickory-shafted events for the year are the Championship on Thursday 14 October at The Coast GC and the Societies Challenge on Friday 29 October at the Woodlands GC in Melbourne. The Championship entry form is attached and details will be in the next edition of *The Brassie*.

The program being developed for 2005 will contain a mixture of attractive and challenging events with hickory and modern clubs at a variety of courses. *Watch this space!*

A number of interesting events have occurred in the past few months, the most notable being the Golf Club Historians Seminar held at Killara. We now have two types of *golf club historian* in our membership and we intend to cater for both of them. The good news is that returning the Harry Sinclair trophies to Moore Park GC and the seminar have generated special interest in golf's history and encouraged support for GCSA activities.

The Golf Club Historians Special Interest Group

One benefit of the GCH seminar is the formation a GCH Special Interest Group made up of the eleven new members and some of GCSA's existing members. GCSA will support the needs of the group, assisting the efforts and developing the capabilities of these historians and archivists. Some are already experienced, others need help in some areas and others are just starting.

Ideas and actions for resourcing the GCH Special Interest Group are to:

- Establish an informal network among the GCH Group members;
- Plan the next seminars on Oral History, archiving and writing;
- Develop the next seminar, most likely on Tuesday 26 October—venue TBA; (based on an excellent public seminar about Oral History at the State Library on 31 July)

- Develop a description of GCH as a subject;
- Encourage the NSWGA to promote the importance of history with the golf clubs;
- Establish a resource centre at GCSA's Museum;
- Encourage clubs to donate their books to the Museum;
- Acquire excellent club history books from Australia and overseas;
- Research the form, structure and content of a 'best' golf club history book;
- Include a GCH section in GCSA's quarterly newsletter *The Brassie*;
- Conduct golf days with lunch/dinner at a group member's club.

If you would like to part of the GCH special interest group, contact the Secretary (phone 9652 1430 or email barryleithhead@hotmail.net.au).

Museum Development Program

The May 2004 edition of the Brassie included a brief report of developments planned for the Museum. A development plan is being prepared and an opportunity for funding is being explored. Part of the plan is having the right resources and capabilities to develop and conduct the Museum – we need support for the efforts of Tom Moore and Mavis Parry. There are important roles for GCSA members with experience in database systems, books and reference materials.

The Trust has agreed to purchase the Mosaics Collection Management software and we can then establish the database. This very comprehensive system is used in museums throughout Australia. We want to make the best possible use of it. The PGA has offered to help create the database and we need a member in a support role. Women's Golf NSW donated a computer (thank you!) that

is ready for action.

The Museum contains an extensive collection of books and magazines and the development plan includes appropriate storage cabinets. We need a 'resource centre manager' – a GCSA member competent in this role – to record the collection in Mosaics, arrange the books and magazines in the cabinets and set up the referencing and library facilities and processes for use by the GCH group.

It is likely that a specialist consultant will guide the development of the Museum – its layout, display and story telling. The consultant will advise what tasks need specialists and how GCSA members can assist usefully. There are many interesting roles to help establish the Museum as a worthwhile place to visit – be part of it!!

The GCSA Museum belongs to all golfers; it is our opportunity to showcase the history of golf in Australia.

To the Linksland – A Golfing Odyssey

with Michael Bamberger, caddie to Peter Teravainen in 1991

You won't find this book in any store unless your name is Owen Denmeade and you cruise 100 St Vinnies with a spare \$2 in your pocket.

In this odyssey beyond sports journalism and beyond caddying, and on his way to better golf, Bamberger found an old Scottish pro named Stark, who believed in old-fashioned ideas. In his pro shop in the out-of-the-way course of Crieff, Stark wanted his new pupil to talk about the state of his game and what he learned from Teravainen, and he listened intently. Stark handed Bamberger a Forgan mashie, a beautiful club and he felt it light in his hands.

"Hit some of these old small balls, but be gentle Michael. In golf, you must always be gentle. Give a good spit into your hands, 'twas the early golf glove. Now as you swing the club, feel the weight of the clubhead, up through the soft wood of the shaft, through the grip, into your hands, and through your body. Become aware of the feel of the clubhead – you can feel it more with hickory than you can with modern clubs."

Bamberger went on: 'I took some practice swings and started to feel the clubhead, and also the softness of the

shaft. It was more malleable than any club I had ever swung. I could sense the care and skill that went into making the club. I was aware of the club's *life*. I could feel the mass of the club head causing the shaft to bend, and that was a unique sensation. The setting was out of a dream: I was swinging a beautiful, hand crafted mashie and launching shots into the Scottish wind under the careful eye of a master teacher and to the accompaniment of his reassuring burr. But I was overwhelmed by my usual irresistible urge to hit the ball hard.

Stark was patient, then he said: "There's nothing wrong with your mechanics, but your swing is horrendous. Your problems are about tempo, about timing. In order to *feel* the proper tempo of a swing, you have to *hear* the swing, *Hear* the sound the hickory shaft makes as it comes through the air; listen to how rhythmic and sweet that sound is. Hear the sound of the club head making good contact with the ball and then, right afterward, the ground. These are the lovely sounds of good golf."

Concentrating on listening to the sounds, Michael lost the urge to hit the ball hard.

People, Events and Milestones

Honours for Australians in Golf: Frances Crampton AM, Executive Director of Women's Golf NSW and a Trustee of the AHGT Museum was elevated to Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to sport and golf in particular. Bill McWilliam OAM was awarded the Medal for his service to golf as a coach and encouraging young people and women to enter the sport.

Centenaries: Casino, Narrabri, Springwood, Newcastle, Narrandera and Berrigan celebrate 100 years in 2005 and GCSA are looking at ways to assist their celebrations.

Australian Open in Sydney: The Australian GC will host the 2004 Open and GCSA is expected to have a display of memorabilia.

PGA Golf Show in Melbourne: Tom Moore was there in late July, flying the GCSA flag.

Developments in Australian golf: The golfing bodies are discussing how their futures can be coordinated to enhance the future viability of Australian golf. How will this affect GCSA?

J H Taylor – a tribute from Bernard Darwin

Writing in the October 1933 issue of *The American Golfer*, extracted from *Golfiana* Vol. 2 No. 4 (1990).

'No greater or more characteristic figure has ever appeared in the ranks of professional golf than John Henry Taylor. He was a very great golfer indeed; he won five Open Championships in 12 top-three finishes so his record for consistency is unique. Whatever walk of life he had chosen it is safe to say he would have made his mark on it for he possesses in a remarkable degree enthusiasm, imagination, resolution.

There can hardly be any doubt that his best Open win was his fifth and last at Hoylake in 1913 and it even had a more touch-and-go start than usual. He had made terribly hard work of it in the qualifying rounds and was in the gravest of danger. At long last he seemed in a haven of safety, for he only had to do a five at the last hole to qualify; he had hit a fine drive and had a straightforward iron shot for the green. He half hit it, was caught in the cross bunker, got out far too far and finally had to hole a putt of six feet to save his neck. Down it went and those that knew him exclaimed in chorus: "It would be just like JH to win the whole thing now."

"Win" proved a most inadequate word, for he ended eight strokes ahead of Ted Ray, who was second, and his total of 304 in sheets of rain and tearing wind will always remain one of the outstanding feats of our championship. How he did stick his chin out and pull his cap down over his nose and bang the ball right through the gale! It was the greatest of all golfing victories of man over nature.

Taylor was always at his best on such a day of tempest as he faced in the 1913 Open, not merely on account of his pugnacious turn of mind but because of his methods. "Flat-footed golf, sir, flat-footed golf." Thus I have heard him several times proclaim his faith and no man has lived up to it better. He was as firm as a rock

as if his feet were positively entrenched, and his swing was a marvel of compactness with his elbows close to his body throughout. It needed a strong man to play in this style and he was and is a very strong man. No doubt he could have hit the ball further with something more of freedom – his club never came through very far after the ball and he seemed to punch it away with a little grunt rather than swing it away with lazy grace as did Harry Vardon. It was however, his natural method and if he lost something in power, he was a miracle of accuracy. The old joke was that the only hazards for him were the flags sticks.

Taylor's reputation has always been that of a supreme mashie player up to the pin. He was, to be sure, extraordinarily good and accurate and was master of the low flying shot with backspin when the art of backspin was not perhaps so generally understood as it is now. To my mind the undeviating accuracy of his full shots, whether from the tee or up to the pin, has been every bit as big an asset to him as his pitching. In the days of the guttie, when there was far more brassie play than today, his wooden club shots, played right up to the flag were something of a revelation.

As a putter, he was not up with the greats like Jones or Hagen but he could be relied on to lay the ball dead and he did not miss when it was dead. Vardon and Braid had their days on the green; Taylor was always there or thereabouts.

In JH and his illustrious contemporaries, we have to salute the men who raised the whole status of their profession. When they first made their appearance, the professional golfer was apt to be a pleasant enough fellow, but living from hand to mouth and not always to be relied upon. That he is today a respected and self-respecting prosperous member of society is largely due to the generation of professionals which arose in the early nineties, and JH was their natural born leader.'

THE GOLF COLLECTORS SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Respecting and conserving the history of golf

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