

the Brassie

Brassie n.

'In place of the many spoons of a nearly bygone age, there has come into use a club named 'the brassie'. This weapon, lofted somewhat more than a driver and less than a spoon, is shod or soled, with brass, whereby its wielder is enabled to play off roads and hard lies without injury to the head.'

In Horace Hutchinson's *Radminton Golf* (1890).

Captain's Corner

Coming Events

A 9 hole Hickory Invitation at 2pm on Thursday 13 July at Rosnay Golf Links, Weymouth Ave. Auburn – members to bring a visitor (clubs for hire), with Show and Tell after the game; drinks and snacks. Moderate cost; phone bookings to Tom Moore (9871 2798) or Peter Read (9871 3728).

A Living History Dinner with Edwina Kennedy on Tuesday 26 September at Moore Park GC. (7pm for 7.30; \$35ph) Edwina is the only Australian to win the British Women's Amateur Championship (in 1978 aged 19). (The pic below comes from Terry

Smith's book 'Australian Golf - the first 100 years'). Organise a group from your club, invite the women members, junior members and their parents. What a great opportunity for junior girls to hear Edwina talk about her motivation, drive and desire to win one of the great women's events in the world.

These dinners have been a highlight of the Golf Collectors calendar, bringing Living History to today's golfers. Phone bookings to Peter Read (9871 3728) or Erwin Huber (9389 5492).

The Golf Collectors Society's display at the Australian Open; Royal Sydney GC Thursday - Sunday 15-19 November 2006

The Societies Challenge against the Golf Society of Australia at Oatlands GC with hickories over 11 holes on Tuesday 21 November, 2006. After dinner in the Oatlands Club House, Owen Denmeade will present the Club with the '1932 BERK Cup', first played for by Club members in 1931. No doubt Owen will have a wonderful story to tell about his acquisition. And having spoken to Oatlands General Manager, I know they are eagerly awaiting the return of this relic to their Club. Please indicate your interest in the golf and/or dinner to Tom Moore (9871 2798) or Peter Read (9871 3728).



Following the club's first hickory-based the British women's club, it was the only one to win the title in 1978. The photo is from the book 'The History of Golf' by Peter Read.

The Golf Collectors Society of Australia

**Volume 4 Issue 2
June 2006**

Inside this issue:

<i>A Hickory Adventure in England and Scotland</i>	2
Special Feature: <i>Noel Terry's research of David Strath 1849-1879</i>	4-6
<i>Playing out of Water</i> <i>Michael Sheret</i>	6-9
<i>Writing a Golf Club History</i> <i>Professor Colin Tatz</i>	9-12

The Australian Hickory Club Championship on Thursday 23 November 2006 over 18 holes at Rosnay Golf Links, Weymouth Avenue Auburn. Phone bookings to Tom Moore (9871 2798) or Peter Read (9871 3728).

Peter Read

A Hickory Adventure in England and Scotland with Barry Leithhead, Editor

The British Golf Collectors hickory events in May were irresistible – I just had to join and go. For ten days I helped celebrate a Club's centenary, contested the Central England (CE), British Seniors and Scottish championships, played two links courses in wind and rain and a sodden inland course and visited two famous links courses, Prestwick and Western Gailes. I met about forty of the British Collectors, two Americans and two Swedes and spent almost week as a house guest of John Pearson, Editor of *Through The Green*, the BGCS's fine magazine.

Stanton-on-the-Wolds GC in Nottinghamshire celebrated its centenary with a 20-a-side foursomes hickory match against BGCS players over 18 holes on Sunday 21st May.

After a light lunch the teams did battle on a wet course with some of the Stanton players in fine form (pic).



Keith Bilbie (r) and I (l) met more than our match in Clive Ledger (7) and Maurice Hume (2) (centre) who both played hickory golf for the first time with clubs Keith and I provided!

After a fine dinner and good speeches, the Collectors made a \$500 donation to the Stanton Juniors in appreciation for our being included in their celebrations. The Collectors put on a picture and collectibles show while the Club provided the Collectors' players with a tie and copy of the anniversary booklet (as well as the game, dinner and an overnight billet with a Club member).

The combined CE and Seniors events at nearby Coxmoor were played on a sodden course with the icy

north wind getting up over the second nine. My 15 stableford points for 18 holes got me 10th in a field of 30; the winner was Mark Wehring from the USA with a remarkable 34 points.

With John Pearson I played Silloth on the NW England coast and Goswick on the SE Scottish coast, both fabulous links courses. John visualises his drive (pic below) on this par 3 165yd into the wind, which I won with a birdie. The wind blew strongly and it rained at Silloth, spoiling some of my golf but little of the enjoyment for being in such great golfing territory. The



match was much more even at Goswick but I faded towards the end and John won 4 and 2.

The Scottish championship is the highlight of the BGCS events and it deserves to be. Played on Gullane #3 (par 68) with Aberlady village across the water, (pic next page of 14th hole on left), it is ideal for hickory golf, a stern challenge in a quality field of more Scots than English, three Americans, three from Sweden and an Australian. The warm-up 9-hole foursomes event at the old Musselburgh course in the morning adds the historic touch of class. The afternoon before, players drift into Gullane and clusters are found in the pub, street, clubhouse, museum, restaurant or home somewhere in the village. Half the field didn't contest Musselburgh; a BGCS Committee meeting disrupts the Championship's Starter, the infamous Archie Baird, but gradually, history fills the landscape.

We played in threes and I marked Mark Wehring's (6) card; he played impeccable golf to win the scratch with 70 and the Handicap division (net 64). Hamish Ewan and I both managed net 68 to come 3rd and 4th. The event over and drinks and stories shared, the group met later in a nearby pub for a satisfying meal, a few speeches, prize giving and enjoyable conversation. It was a great evening to end a really great two weeks. In the few days after, I visited Prestwick, where the first twelve British Opens were played from 1860, and the nearby Western Gailes. With Ian Bunch, Prestwick's



characters, like Archie Baird (pic shows an attentive Editor catching Archie's every word). Many of them have written club histories and have fine collections of books, art and clubs. Even the clubs for sale are better quality and less expensive than we see in Australia.

Secretary, I walked the first two holes of the original 12-hole course. In 1870 Young Tom Morris had an albatross 3 on the 578 yd par 6, 1st hole on his way to setting course and event records (47 and 149) in winning his third consecutive Open and the Belt. Both Prestwick and Western Gales have long histories; Prestwick has an amazing collection of art, trophies and memorabilia. I was given a warm welcome at both Clubs but time prevented my playing either course.

How can I summarise the experience? Well, there is an ideal way to celebrate an anniversary that aims to promote the importance of golf's heritage. The Stanton members were most thankful for the contribution we made to their centenary. The fabulous links courses, the tough weather that comes with the territory and match play as the format for social golf develop a high standard of golf. The history is everywhere provided you know where to look. That is where the BGCS members come to the fore – they are knowledgeable, helpful and explanatory – good people and a few great



There is genuine interest in the links between the UK and Australia, in the people that left there to come here, providing us with opportunities for shared research and writing the stories waiting to be found. There can be great benefits from a shared future.

Golf Illustrated 19 January 1900: Editorial on Development of the Wooden Golf Club

The tendency in modern clubs is to develop more and more of one species. There is not the difference in make and appearance there was twenty years ago between the drivers of one maker and another, when it was easy without examining a club to say at once by the cut of its jib as it were, who the maker was. A Forgan driver was as easy to distinguish from a Morris, as it is now to tell between a mashie from a niblick. MacEwans and Patricks had, in like manner, their own distinguishing characteristics, all perfectly familiar to golfers. Few people we imagine, will assert that the new ever shortening and broadening shape of the head is prettier than the old. It is certainly more powerful but what has been gained in effectiveness has been lost in what our American friends would call 'elegance'. Apart from the aesthetic side of the question, however, it has to be admitted that, as a hitting weapon, the modern club is an advance on the old, and that on perfectly scientific lines.

Taken to its conclusion, the present tendency in club heads will land us in something very much like the mallet used about two hundred years ago. It appears to be a scientific fact that a stronger blow can be delivered with a club made on the mallet principle. There is less resistance to the air, more concentration of force, less friction on the ground, and greater accuracy of delivery with this type of weapon than with any other. But in striking a stationary ball, there is really no reason, when one comes to think of it, why the weapon should have a greater area of hitting surface than is necessary to cover the area of the point of impact and support the necessary weight of the blow. We have only touched on the fringe of this interesting subject, which should be taken up by the experts in such matters.

David Strath 1849-1879

Champion Golfer

By Noel Terry, Historian, Royal Melbourne GC

Discovering David in Melbourne, Australia

In Royal Melbourne's fine collection of historic golf clubs there is a long nose club made by D Conacher. This club had intrigued me for some time as David Conacher [1827-91] had been the joint designer and builder of the first course for The Melbourne Golf Club, later to be granted the Royal status. Was David Conacher the first professional golfer to come to Australia?

On a trip to the UK, I visited Peter Crabtree and asked if he knew anything of Conacher. He replied "No, but I know someone who might" and introduced me to Dr David Malcolm, beginning a very pleasurable journey for both of us. David Malcolm was quick to advise that the first professional golfer to go to Australia was David Strath but added that little was known of his fate. Some reports had suggested he may have died on the boat and others suggested he died not long after arrival.

David Malcolm and Peter Crabtree were in the finishing stages of a book on Tom Morris, on which they had spent 15 years. As David Strath had been Tom Morris Jnr's closest friend and adversary they were keen to know of anything I may be able to find on the fate of 'Davie', as he was known to the Scots. Tom Morris Jnr and David Strath between them had changed the face of golf forever. They were the first educated professionals and played the way we know the modern game to be played. Thousands would come to see them play and massive betting on the results was common. Davie won the first major encounter but over a period it is fair to say honours were even.

The two of them were gaining major press coverage for the first time, and articles even appeared in the popular women's magazines of the day. As David Malcolm put it so beautifully "they had taken golf into the drawing rooms of polite society".

Tom Jnr was to die in tragic circumstances at the tender age of twenty four leaving Davie as the most admired golfer in Scotland. He played on for a

number of years beating most and won at Carnoustie early in 1878, but had not entered the Open Championship; it was said the had gone to Australia.

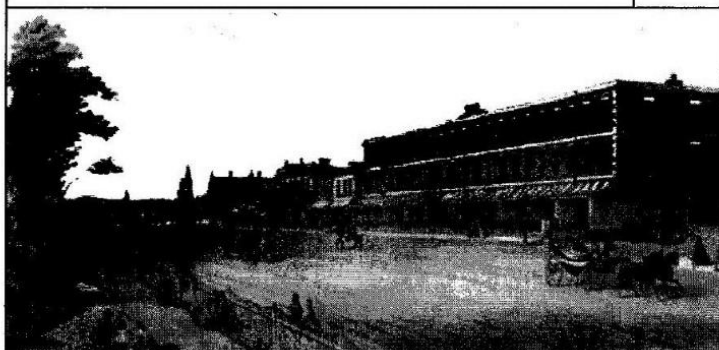
Why did he come? Golf here was not properly underway with only odd reports of a group of players belting balls around various paddocks. He was known to suffer from consumption and he had seen his brother struggle to a bloody death some years earlier; was his health the reason? His boyhood friend, best man and good golfer James Conacher, nephew of David, had come in 1875. Were these two planning to get golf underway in Australia? Charles Conacher, another nephew and cousin of James had also come in 1875 and had medical training; was it he encouraging Davie to come before the Scottish winter set in? We will never know the answers to these questions but as you read on, the probabilities of a correct conclusion are high.

The first test was to find a record of his arrival; on which boat, when and from where. This was no easy task and in the end, on this first part at least, I sought the assistance of Mrs Beverley Greenaway, someone more talented than me on such searches. She, like me, was unable to find him but she rang to ask if perhaps I had spelt it wrong as she had found a David Struth. So I decided it might be worth following to see if Struth turned into Strath on other documents and so it did, as the story began to unfold. The person listed as David Struth had sailed from Liverpool, cabin class, on the 14th of October 1878 on the Eurynome, the fastest vessel on the Australia run at the time. It arrived in Melbourne on the 8th of January 1879.

A search of the Victorian deaths register near that time showed he had died of pulmonary consumption on the 28th of January 1879 just 20 days after arrival and was buried the next day in the 'Melbourne General Cemetery'. His place of death was given as 2 Nicholson St, Fitzroy which, after a search of the area, I found not to exist. Logic however suggested it may be Carlton instead of Fitzroy. At that address I found St Vincent's hospital which made some sense if he had been unwell.

Unfortunately, when I searched the titles office, I found this area was vacant blocks put up for auction that very year. A further check with the Historian at

the hospital confirmed the hospital didn't exist until some 15 years or so later. I was still with Struth and at a standstill on the place of death; it was time to change tack and see if I could find a will. This was the breakthrough as although he left no will, administration papers were drawn up and this time we had Strath not Struth; Bingo! He was also listed as having died at 2 Royal Terrace, Fitzroy with 'Fitzroy' crossed out and Carlton written nearby. This National Trust classified building stands proud to this day and the lithograph shows how it was in 1879.



The papers also clarified that he had taken ill on board some 45 days out of Melbourne while rounding the Cape of Good Hope in icy conditions and he never rallied. He was handed over on a litter to Sergeant J McAdam at the Sandridge Police station where he was then transported by the Police to Royal Terrace. If the owner of this unit could be found then surely we may be close to understanding why he came.

IMPORTS.—JAN. 8.

(A special charge is made on consignees' announcements inserted in this column.)

Eurynome, from Liverpool.—18 vices, 131 bundles and 28 tubes, 5 fans, 52 bundles steel plates, 303 axle arms, 300 rolls wire netting, 10 coils wire rope, 1,490 bundles wire, 6,406 bars 1,163 bundles 425 slabs 95 plates iron, 758 bundles sheet iron, 640 bundles hoop iron, 170 cases galvanised iron, 255 packages hardware, 36 packages machinery, 18 boxes tin, 1,000 boxes tin plates, 118 packages earthenware, 180 plates 77 bundles steel, 419 packages nails, 51 packages chemicals, 9 tierces bleaching powder, 43 barrels silicate soda, 154 drums caustic soda, 258 barrels soda ash, 20 barrels pitch, 55 tons rock salt, 1,100 sacks salt, 2,002 cases bottled stout, 800 barrels 950 cases bottled beer, 50 hhds. ale, 43 casks whisky, 240 kegs sulphate copper, 50 cases 45 quarter-tierces tobacco, 53 packages paperhangings, 16 reels paper, 30 packages fancy goods, 472 staves, 912 packages softgoods, 42 cases plate glass, 29 packages window-glass, 18 packages saddlery, 2 cases show-cards, 104 packages miscellaneous merchandise.

I had already checked the details of every box in the hull of the Eurynome hoping to perhaps find golf clubs. If he was planning to start golf here, it would seem logical he would have brought clubs to sell. The findings however were negative but prove interesting reading (see below left).

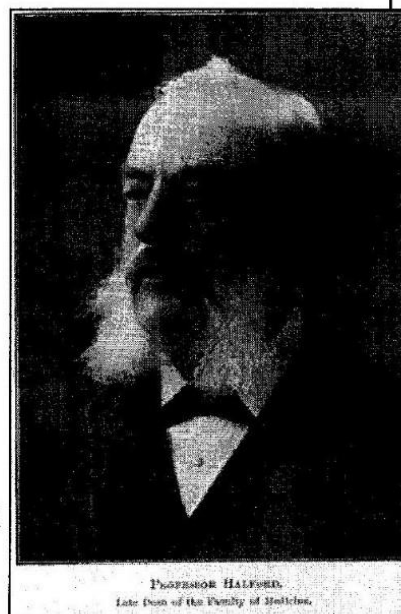
A check with the National Trust gave no further clarification on Davie's friends, however a book I found suggested Royal Terrace was a place where the well connected of Melbourne could be found. The Premier had once occupied one of the units and to my surprise next door at number 1 was the founding Professor of Melbourne University Medical School, Professor Halford.

Extensive research of correspondence between Halford and Brownless, the Dean of the University, showed Halford's desire to practice after hours but a determined preference of Brownless that all Halford's energies be directed to University life and away from private practice, even if after

hours. It was particularly interesting to find that in the period spanning Davie's arrival, Brownless had succumbed to Halford's requests and allowed limited practice. He reversed this decision shortly after.

Not long before Davie left Scotland, Professor Dugan Bird, a University associate of Halford had written an article that was published in the British Lancet magazine, on the benefits of Melbourne for those suffering from consumption.

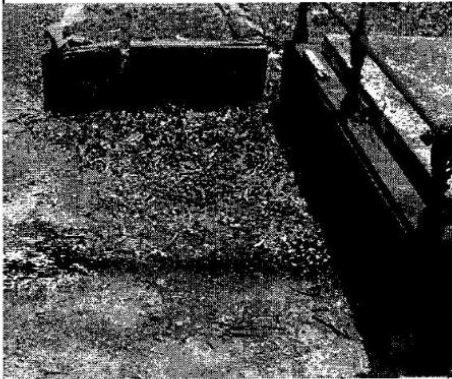
Was it a fluke that the world's best golfer finished up sick in a unit next door to Melbourne's top medical man? I think not, but no proof one way or the other has been found. However, all this information suggests that



PROFESSOR HALFORD.
Late Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

Discovering David Strath in Australia (cont.)

Davie came for his health and connected medics back home had lined him up with Halford, a St Andrews University graduate.



A visit to the Melbourne General cemetery quickly found Davie's gravesite and it was both an eerie feeling and a disappointment to find

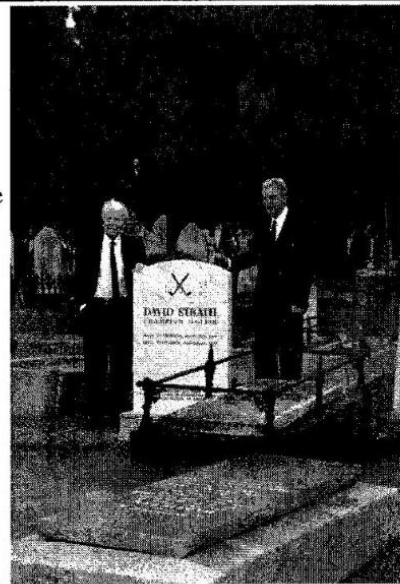
the unmarked grave of this great man.

Davie had £13 in his pocket when he died and he gave £20 to Eurynome's Captain to take to his wife; so he knew he was dying. We were able to trace that the Captain indeed returned the funds.

One hundred and twenty seven years after his burial The Golf Society of Australia, the golf clubs of St Andrews, Peter Crabtree, Dr David Malcolm, Keith Wood and I donated the funds to erect a headstone on David's grave. It was dedicated, with bagpipes playing in the background, by a small group who

gathered. Dr David Malcolm ventured all the way from St Andrews for the occasion and made an outstanding contribution throughout to allow the whole story to be fully understood.

A dinner in recognition of Davie was held at Royal Melbourne one week later and over 140 people were again piped in on arrival. David Strath was the only man considered the equal of Tom Morris Jnr and on many occasions was to beat him. It is fitting that a headstone is now in place. Dr David Malcolm and Noel Terry are pictured above at the new headstone.



We will never be sure of the exact reason for Davie Strath's venture to Australia but all the evidence suggests he left his wife and two young children in an attempt to save his life. What a pity he didn't come earlier.

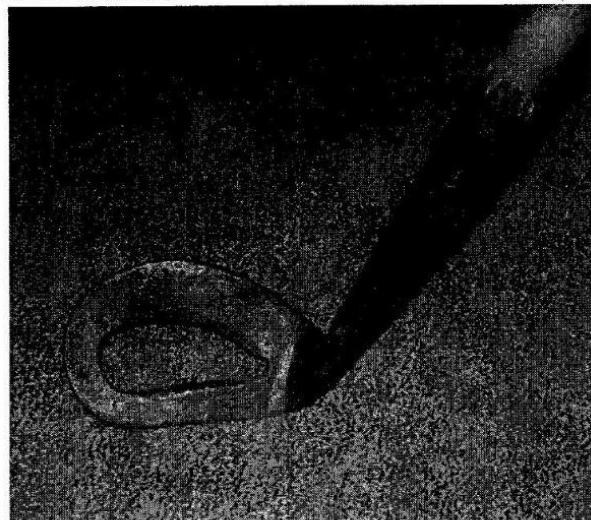
Playing out of Water

By Michael Sheret



Last year the New South Wales Golf Association provided to the Golf Museum at Granville an interesting collection of old golf clubs. Among these clubs is a good example of a water iron, a club which is no longer legal and is no longer used. The water iron was designed – as the name implies – for playing out of water. The club now on display at the Golf Museum is pictured on the right. It could almost be a normal mashie-niblick except for one

striking feature, namely the large hole in the middle of the clubface.



The Golf Museum at Granville is proudly sponsored by Golf Mart, and supported by the New South Wales Golf Association, Women's Golf NSW, the PGA of Australia and Museums & Galleries NSW

The hole in the water iron at our Golf Museum is 64 mm at its widest and 23 mm at its highest. The hole has been crudely cut, probably cold chiselled, into a normal clubhead of the late nineteenth century. The clubhead has no markings to show the maker of the club. Apart from the hole in the clubface, the length of the club's shaft is surprising. At 100cm the water iron is about the length of a modern two iron. This indicates that the nineteenth century golfer was hoping to get some distance from the club. The long shaft, however, would appear not to be original; it is stamped "Made in Scotland", more typical of replacement wooden shafts manufactured in fairly recent times.

Water irons were invented in the 1870s and were still in use in the early 1900s. The current Rules of Golf, 2004-2007, clearly ban the water iron. Appendix II 4a(i) of the Rules is quite clear that a club with a hole through the head would not be considered "plain in shape" and would therefore be "different from the customary and traditional form and make". Such a club would be a non-conforming golf club.

A search through earlier versions of the Rules is interesting. The first widely accepted Rules were published by the R & A in September 1899 and made no mention of what was legal and illegal in club design; in this laissez-faire paradise a water iron would clearly be a permissible club. In the Rules coming into force in January 1909 the R & A had more to say on the "Form and Make of Golf Clubs". They said "..... the Rules of Golf Committee will not sanction any substantial departure from the traditional and accepted form and make of golf clubs". January 1909 presumably spelt the end of the water iron.

What exactly would have been the advantages of the water iron? Intuitively one feels that the hole in the face would allow the club to pass more freely through the water. I doubt if the nineteenth century golfers had any theory of hydrodynamics to support this idea. They would, like most of us, rely on trial and error. I don't think our Golf Museum would let me experiment with their prized water iron. So one day I might cut a hole through the face of a 7-iron, put on my gumboots and do my own experimenting to see if this intuitive idea of the water iron passing freely through the water has any basis.

I have my own theory for another advantage of the water iron. The hole in the clubface is obviously not large enough to allow a ball to pass through. This hole is, however, large enough to cradle the ball on the face of the club and stop the ball sliding up and down the clubface while the clubface is in the water. The ball would probably not be released from its cradle until club and ball had left the water and were on the upswing. However, this 'theory' is really speculation on my part. Despite much searching I have been unable to find anything authoritative on these supposed advantages.

There is another interesting aspect of the water iron to consider, an aspect on which once again I have been unable to find anything authoritative. What were the exact circumstances under which a nineteenth century golfer would feel the need to use such a club? Under the Rules of Golf today we would generally be content to take a drop from water, under a penalty of one stroke from a water hazard or no penalty from casual water.

We can throw some light on the need for a water iron by going back to early versions of the Rules. The earliest known set of rules was drawn up by the Gentlemen Golfers of Leith in 1744. In those days they played over Leith Links (now well within the boundaries of the city of Edinburgh) and they evolved into the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, now based at Muirfield. Leith Links is today a small public park with no sign of a golf course, although now and again golfers play with the hickories over what once were, roughly speaking, four holes of the old course. What we have to remember is that in 1744 Leith Links was common land, used by several golf societies, football teams, soldiers parading, grazing cattle and sheep, picnickers and even householders hanging out their washing to dry. Rule 5 of the Gentlemen Golfers of Leith is worth quoting in full:

If your Ball comes among watter, or any wattery filth, you are at liberty to take out your Ball & bringing it behind the hazard and Teeing it, you may play it with any Club and allow your Adversary a Stroke for so getting out your Ball.

Notice the two different terms *watter* and *wattery filth*.

Playing out of Water (cont)

I would take *watter* to refer to any small creek or wee burn flowing through Leith Links in 1744. I would take *wattery filth* to refer to what we might today call casual water. If I'm right, the golfer could either play the ball out of the casual water or take a one-stroke penalty and lift it out, the same as for any body of water. Tough days indeed. These tough rules would give clubmakers an incentive to design a club for playing out of water. We can also imagine, in rainy Scotland, the conditions on Leith Links with football teams tramping around, householders and picknickers dumping their slops on to the grass and cattle producing fresh cow pats everywhere. There would be much *wattery filth* on the links.

When we get to the rules used by the Edinburgh Burgess Golfing Society in 1802 we find their Rule 3 on a ball lying in water.

That to prevent disputes in the game the ball shall be played in whatever situation it lies except when in the tract or half its depth in water, when the player shall drop the ball behind and play it with an iron.

'Tract' is an obsolete word meaning track. The point to notice here is that there is no distinction between a water hazard and casual water. I feel sure that the rule refers to what we would call casual water, because on many of the old links the only water is casual water. The rule is worded somewhat ambiguously but I presume it really gives relief without penalty for a ball lying half its depth or more in water. So, if half the ball or more was above the water level the golfer did not get a drop without penalty but had to play the ball as it lay.

During the nineteenth century the various golf clubs brought out their own sets of rules and there was much variation from golf club to golf club. Running throughout these various sets of rules there is generally:

- an emphasis on trying to play the ball as it lies,
- little if any distinction between casual water and permanent water,
- a penalty for dropping out of deepish water, whether casual or permanent,
- the notion that, if the ball was only half sub-

merged, the golfer had no option but to play it.

These nineteenth century rules make it easy to understand why clubmakers came up with the idea of fashioning a special club to play a ball half submerged in water. Also, golfers in the days of the guttie often carried floaters. These were balls that floated in water. (Depending on how it is heat-treated and how free it is from impurities, gutta percha tends naturally to float in water). Golfers selected floaters on holes where there was a lot of water. A floater had the double advantage of being more easily retrieved from water or played as it lay in water. No sensible golfer uses a floater today because of its proven disadvantages—it lacks distance and is more readily swept off line in a side wind

By the time we get to the first set of rules drawn up by the R & A in 1899 for use by all the leading golf clubs then in existence, things become more orderly. Definitions 1(e) and 1(h) distinguish between a water hazard and casual water. Rule 15 gives relief without penalty from casual water through the green or on the putting green (behind the casual water in both cases). It was a different story if the ball was in casual water in a bunker: golfers in 1899 either had to play the ball as it lay or drop behind the bunker under a penalty of one stroke. So, even in 1899 there was still a considerable incentive to have a water iron in the bag. It was not until 1952 that the Rules of Golf on casual water in a bunker became similar to today's rules and permitted some relief without penalty from casual water in a bunker.

Golf in the nineteenth century would appear to have been a much more heroic affair than golf today. I'd like to finish by quoting an extract from Bernard Darwin's reminiscences of the final of the 1899 British Amateur played at Prestwick between John Ball and Freddie Tait.

It was at that match – at the thirty-fifth hole – that two much quoted shots followed one another from the big Alps bunker. Freddie playing the ball out of a deep puddle on to the green, and John Ball following with an equally great shot from the hard, wet sand close under the face of the black wooden sleepers. I can still see Freddie's ball rocking on the little waves that he made in the puddle as he waded in. I can hear a Scottish friend next to me crying out in agony, 'Wait till it settles, Freddie; wait till it settles.' I don't think he had the

least notion that he was speaking above a whisper. Yes, that was a day of heroic emotions.

The ball that floated was a gutty, and Freddie never played with or heard of any other kind. He was dead [killed in the Boer War] and buried before the Haskell was invented.

I wonder if Freddie Tait used a water iron, like the one we now have in our museum.

Sources of information used in this article

www. ruleshistory.com

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George White, *History of Golf, Part 3: The 18th and 19th Centuries*. July 2002.

Dennis Bruyns, *Watter & Wattery Filth!* The Compleat Golfer, 2006.

www. scottishgolfhistory.com (Memorable Events)

Bernard Darwin, *Perhaps the Greatest Golf Writer of All* quoted by Bob Weisberger in Golf Today Magazine 2002.

www.prestwickgc.co.uk . If you go to this website, you'll find a fine colour photograph of the bunker in the Ball v. Tait match, by clicking on Course and then clicking on the 17th hole on the map. If we tried to reproduce the photograph here we would lose most of the detail, notably the stairway needed to climb into and out of the bunker.

Writing a Golf Club History

– Professor Colin Tatz

A presentation delivered at the Moore Park Golf Club, Sydney on Thursday 24 November 2005.

My basic argument is that unless there is a social, political and cultural context to a Golf Club's history, nothing is duller than descriptions of 18 holes of nice vegetation.

A golf club's history writer needs to consider **what kind of historian** they are and this helps to provide a framework in which to write. Are you a chronicler and describe the records of year-by-year events? A lot of the golf club histories are just one year at a time.

Or are you a narrator and plan to tell a story? There is nothing wrong with telling stories but there is a limit to what any one storyteller knows. To rely on one's own ability to tell a story can have very serious limitations. You might tell half the story or get half the story wrong. Narrative, while it is a buzzword, is not simply about 'wandering into the forest collecting nuts and berries' and putting them into some kind of order, without a framework or a shape. A lot of histories are just that.

Another way of writing a golf club history is as a *Reconstructionist*, from a collection of memorabilia, notes and cuttings you try to reconstruct what was

there and what happened. In part I consider myself a reconstructionist: for the Monash History there were no archives, almost no documentation and we didn't have the Board Minutes for 1950-64.

Then there are *Constructionists* – they want to know not *what*, they want to *how* and *why*. Why was this place selected and not in some other locality? I tend to call myself of this group.

The next type is a *Deconstructionist* – like a forensic pathologist who does an analysis to know how it works, how did it get there, does it function well, what are the parts that make up the whole, what are the relationship of the parts to each other? You might ask "how did the Club get to be in A Grade pennants in 1996?" What were the avenues, obstacles and problems?"

In my approach to writing a golf club history, **I am most interested in context**. I think that golf club histories divorced from context other than golf, become fairly sterile. Very few people, apart from the members, are going to read them. One thing you have to decide is: Is it strictly for the members? Is it strictly for the records? Is it strictly for the dusty bookshelf? Is it to inspire new members as they join, or juniors, in order to understand something of the ethos, the traditions, the *soul* of the club?

When I say I'm a *Contextualist*, I have chosen in my writing career to write something that reveals a

Writing a Golf Club History (cont.)

– Professor Colin Tatz

context of some sort. For a golf club history we need to understand the context in which the club was formed, developed and exists.

Context is mixture of conditions and circumstances – the facts that surround an issue. What were the conditions and circumstances in 1930, in the locality, for transport and employment, when this club was built? What were the interrelated conditions and circumstances that explained the choice of this place 20 miles out of town? You can't just place a golf course in the middle of the forest and scrub and say "it exists" – you need to know why it exists in that place and in that time. Interrelated conditions can deal with religion and faith, war experiences, with relationships to other clubs; **the whole cultural map** that helps to explain the context.

Firstly, what is the **political** climate of the time? What are the issues? Is the State undergoing a period of nationalistic survival? Is there an identity crisis? Do we belong to mother Britain? Are we starting to define an Australian nationalism in our own identity? What is the nature of the nation - a multicultural nation or does it want to be a homogeneous nation? Do we dislike and not want foreigners? All these things are relevant.

What was the **social** climate of the time, what were the values of 1913 or 1882 or 1893? What was the attitude to religions, to ethnicities, what were the levels of tolerance and intolerance in our society?

Governance issues – were there notions of equality or inequality? Was it against the law to discriminate against certain groups of people or was it acceptable to exclude Chinese, Koreans and Japanese?

Economic issues. Was there recession? Was there depression? Was there undue prosperity? Was there poverty? What was the working wage? Who could afford to belong to a golf club or this golf club? Was the club exclusive or inclusive when considering the financial status of members? Those sorts of issues are highly pertinent to the history of a golf club.

What about **geographic** considerations? What about terrain? What about drought? What about safety? What about the effects of war, even though Australia has been remote from areas of conflict?

The issue of **personality**: Who were the personalities of the time? The Royal Sydney history contained biographical detail about the founding fathers of the club. They were the legal and commercial establishment of Sydney at the turn of the century – the barristers, judges, bankers and the top law firms. These were interesting men with personality, charisma – what we would call 'high profile' people today.

All of these things, though perhaps not every one, are part of the mix that goes into your history. You can't divorce this club from the place in which it resides, because it becomes meaningless. We are not talking about any old place – we are talking about a specific place in a city or town, on the edge of a city or in the northern suburbs or the eastern suburbs. Wherever it is, these things have some claim in larger or smaller measure on how you write your club's history.

I have had two **experiences of golf club history**. The Royal Sydney exercise was fascinating and it still interests me as I am supposed to be writing a ten or fifteen year update. A periodic update in a little slim book means the next historian doesn't have immense bulldozing, groundbreaking work. Clubs should not wait for the next 50 or 100 years and the next historian. In spite of archives policies, there can be fire and staff changeover and things of value can disappear.

Royal Sydney is an example of a club being built in the middle of a westernised, modern, industrialised democracy. But Royal Sydney is about class, caste, privilege, social status and deference. Royal Sydney was about exclusivity based on profession, family and income. Juxtaposed to this becomes issues of the mass, a general population, issues of minority status, issues of prejudice, issues of intolerance.

There is a very interesting point about the Royal Sydney history. When I had finished, we had a celebratory drink. I said to some Club senior members and the supervising committee, "Why did you let me write about your anti-Catholicism, your anti-foreignism, your anti-Jewishness, how come?" And they replied: "You said to us '*we are not allowed to tamper with history*', and we didn't". I was rather astonished.

Another sporting club's history included 4,000 words on their exclusion of Jews – and the Supervising Committee wiped the entire 4,000 words from the draft. So it says a lot for Royal Sydney that it was prepared to live with and face up to what is not a critical history,

but there is criticism between the lines. Criticism of exclusivity, criticism of a lifestyle I thought was not consonant with Australian values. There is nothing factually in error; judgements about it are another issue.

The Monash book is the exact opposite – it's about a club that was based on a philosophy of inclusivity because Monash was founded in 1931 by the Young Men's Hebrew Association, a cultural and social club with a small sporting arm called Monash Golf Club. They couldn't get a game or a membership anywhere in this city, except at assorted municipal courses, where they got a block booking on a Saturday morning or a Sunday morning, they had their own tee times, they had their own competitions that were reported in the newspaper on Monday morning with the golf results.

When the War ended these guys said 'to hell with this, we didn't fight the war to come back and not be allowed to play at a private golf club'. So the Monash guys decided to build a golf course and the first thing they said 'this course is open to everybody', where you wouldn't expect that. One of their reactions would have been 'we have an exclusive club just for our guys and not for anybody else'. So here is a golf club that has a philosophy diametrically opposed to Royal Sydney. Is Monash a paragon of virtue? The answer is 'no' because Monash excluded Japanese and Koreans from 1950 and the first Asian member admitted was in 1976. Good record? No. I thought it abysmal and I said so in the book.

Monash had its own travails in 1987 when three women wanted to be full members and the Monash committee said 'no'. The dispute finished up before the Anti Discrimination Tribunal with Monash being the test case amongst all Sydney 'A' Grade clubs to see which way the law was going to go. I thought it was absolutely outrageous, and said so.

The best contextual history I've ever read is by an American political journalist called David Halberstam who wrote *'October 1964'* – about the World Series Baseball in 1964. But the book tells you about every single slice of American life in 1964 as funnelled through a set of lenses focussing on the World Series Baseball. The book is absolutely brilliant because with it you have that compass which shows you where Baseball fits the USA and where USA fits Baseball. That's the trick with the history.

I feel that a golf club history should have a message.

At one time I was invited to take an interest in the history book of the New South Wales GC at La Perouse and I refused for a number of reasons. It was already researched and my role was just to write it. I don't take other people's research and put my name to it – that is totally unprofessional. The committee did not want a history book – they wanted a glossy book for the coffee table, which members will enjoy. I think a history book has to have a message.

But the major reason I declined was about the absence of context. I said 'Hey, come on, there is a wartime history for NSW GC where gun emplacements and all these sorts of things were a feature. It's on Defence Force lands, that's another feature, it's next door to the aboriginal community of La Perouse; that is a feature. It is next door to where Tongans and Fijians live, and there's all sorts of vexed problems about right-of-way and having the darkies wandering around the fairways to get down to the bottom of the cliffs to get to the oysters etc. etc'. The Committee didn't want to readers know about these issues. That's not history; if you don't contextualise your history you're left with 18 holes of vegetation – you see one set of 18 holes of vegetation, then you see another set of 18 holes of vegetation, what's the message? There must be a message – I don't mean a moral or didactic or polemic message; but there's got to be some kind of message.

There are some serious **technical issues** for those who might commission or write a history.

Sole authorship: If you're going to write a history, do it solo or with a partner who you like, love, respect and trust and that trust must have evolved before you start writing, don't rely on the history to make the partnership. Avoid joint authorship if you can.

Research assistants: I had four research assistants for the Monash book. There were either no records or very few records; we had to do things from scratch. I needed research assistants prepared to travel to look up the Fire Brigade reports, Council submissions, documents about land holdings and so on. It's very good when club members volunteer for this work. I didn't have any for the Royal Sydney book, but I had the Women's Secretary of nearly fifty years who became their archivist. She gave me all the materials and information I wanted.

Fees: The Royal Sydney book was done for fees and this needs a contract covering milestones when

Writing a Golf Club History (cont.) – Professor Colin Tatz

chapters have to be delivered and when portion of fees have to be paid. It is not a question of a lump sum up front or at the end. The writer and the Club both need lawyers to go over the contract.

Committee of Privilege: This is a parliamentary idea, in case there is a major issue on ethics, censorship, what it is allowable or not allowable or simply to define a word. A special committee will arbitrate in case there is a conflict between the author and the commissioners of the work.

Publishing: I persuaded Royal Sydney not to publish it privately as they might have – one of the Centenary Committee was in the printing business. If you want your history to be respected in the professional and golfing world then you want a reputable commercial name on your front cover. You may consider this an expensive idea but there are also benefits in the entrée to book designers, layout specialists and access to the market place through their distributor.

Copyright and intellectual property: Who owns the history? With Monash, I insisted on being the copyright holder and responsible for any complaints with a statement to that effect in the front of the book. Royal Sydney insisted, because they commissioned the book for a fee, that they hold the copyright.

Intellectual Property: IP is that of the creator not of the Club. You may want to reproduce all or part

of the book for a magazine article or somewhere else and you don't want to ask the Club each time for permission to reproduce your own words.

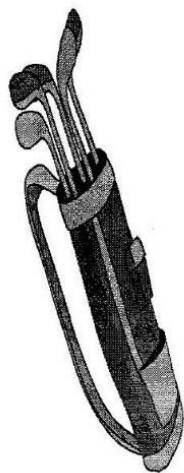
Distribution: Decisions are needed on the quantity, the paper quality, colour, binding and more. Are they to be sold or given away? Will the cost be recovered by a levy on fees? What is a club prepared to invest in its History book?

is that we live in an unhistorical and anti-historical age. 'History' is what happened three weeks ago. 'Contemporary' is only what happened last week.

People don't want know about history in Australia—only the present and the future count. So you've got a problem in any Golf Club history. Apart from decorative value, do any of the members really revere the history? How do you encourage and keep new members? And when new members come in, what do they know of the history?

If people don't read the Club's history when they join, the Club may as well not have had a history; it's just a place to hit little white balls a certain distance, have a drink and go home. They may as well be at the local Sports Centre where you go and play squash, have a shower and go home. There is no sense of loyalty or tradition and more important, no sense of soul.

This is the message that comes from a good golf club history.



*Respecting, conserving and
celebrating the history of golf
in Australia*

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