

The Long Game

Newsletter of the Golf Society of Australia

No 35, October 2010



Al Howard Trophy

On a warm Autumn day in April, hickory golfers from NSW and Victoria converged on the Federal Golf Club in Canberra to contest the Al Howard Trophy on behalf of their Society and/or their



State. The NSW team comprised pure NSW members while, due to lack of numbers (come on you lot!), the Victorian team selected GSA members from NSW and Canberra and were loaned two NSW golfers, so that seven matches could be contested.

In order that all contestants could enjoy the full 18 holes of the interesting Federal layout it was agreed that matches would be decided in the original, and traditional, fashion of 'holes up'. Thanks to Golf Australia re-introducing the USGA handicapping system on the 1st April 2010, a member of the GSA team found that his handicap for the day had blown out by 4 shots and he proceeded to play as if he was a 'scratch man', except on one hole where he resembled a young Severiano Ballesteros.

The result was in the balance until the last match left the 18th

green and the totting up process revealed that the GSA had their collective noses in front by two holes, thereby winning this fine trophy for the first time, and ending a run of losses to our interstate friends.

NSW Captain Tony Doggett gave a gracious speech and presented the trophy to our non-playing Captain, Ian Rennick who had spent the afternoon pretending to be a Ryder Cup captain aiming a cart around the course avoiding kangaroos, clapping good putts, giving lifts to out of condition team members and collecting lost sunglasses for same. It would be nice to report that we celebrated by quaffing several pints of claret but since most of us had to drive across Canberra in the dark to get to our beds that sort of rejoicing was muted. We did, though, have a warm glow as we eventually fell asleep.

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For the Diary:

Monday 8th of November
Dinner at
Royal Melbourne Golf Club

Monday 29th of November
AGM & Doug Bachli Trophy
at Victoria Golf Club

The Golf Society of Australia was formed in 1982 to research and preserve the history of golf in Australia. As part of this role, the Society manages the Museum and Library for Golf Australia.

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

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Jeu de Crosse (by Michael Sheret)

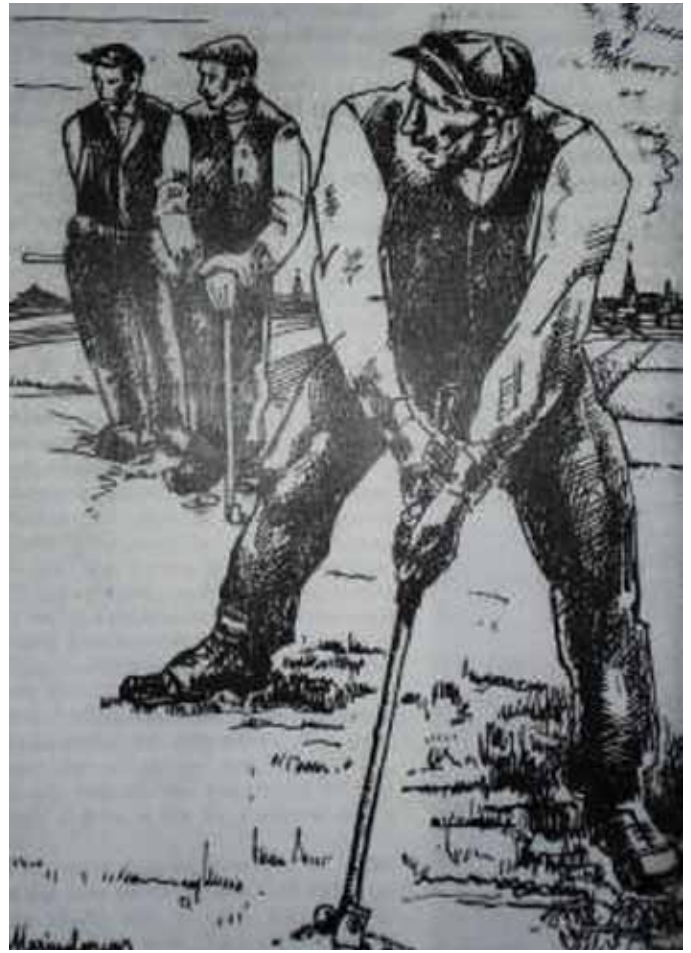
Over two fine August days last year I was fortunate to have the opportunity to play *jeu de crosse* (sometimes called *choule*). *Jeu de crosse* is an ancient ball-and-stick game dating back to the fourteenth century and still played in regions of northern France and southern Belgium. I was the guest of *Les Amis du Pic et Plat* at the small Belgian village of Baudour. Normally *jeu de crosse* is a winter game played over fields after harvest. *Les Amis du Pic et Plat* are unique in maintaining a field dedicated to *jeu de crosse* and open all year round.

Why am I writing about *jeu de crosse* in a magazine for golf historians? As we all know, there are many theories, very speculative theories, on the origins of golf. One such theory is that early golf may have started as a form of *jeu de crosse*. The first recorded mention of *jeu de crosse* was in 1319 and for golf in 1457. In neither case was any description given of how the game was played. The theory goes that traders and mercenary soldiers from the east coast of Scotland, presumably sometime between 1319 and 1457, brought *jeu de crosse* from continental Europe to Scotland. From there on, before it spread to the rest of the world, golf evolved to become a quintessentially Scottish game, quite different from *jeu de crosse* but offering many of the same challenges.

To see, from a distance, *crosseurs* in action you might easily think that they were golfers. The address position and swing are much the same. They are trying to hit a static ball, sometimes over long distances and sometimes over short distances, with a club that, if you don't get too near, looks not unlike a golf club. If you follow the action for any length of time you soon realise that the skills a golfer needs are the same as the *crosseur* needs:

- hitting the ball accurately towards a target,
- hitting the ball as far as possible when required,
- hitting the ball out of trouble.

But, what's this? Some players are deliberately playing away from the target and trying to put the ball into trouble. This is how it works. Four players group themselves into two sides and off they go as if in match play foursomes. One side, the *chouleurs*, have three strokes towards the target.



The other side, the *déchouleurs*, then have one stroke to put the ball as far from the target and into as much trouble as possible. Remind you of croquet? Trouble abounds in the form of hedgerows, unkempt ditches, mud patches, boundary fences and so on.

This sequence of four strokes is called a *déchoulette*. The objective of the *chouleurs* is to strike the target in a number of *déchoulettes* fewer than the number negotiated between the two sides at the start of the match. The target, by the way, is not a hole in the ground. It is a vertical board, a bit more than a metre high and a bit less than half a metre wide, called a *planchette*. Several *planchettes* are distributed throughout the field. Unlike a carefully tended golf course, *jeu de crosse* is played on a largely unprepared field.

The *jeu de crosse* club and balls are radically different from those of golf. Why they take the form they do can only be understood by considering the very rough terrain over which the game is played. In the Belgian game a *crosseur* carries one multipurpose club or *crosse*, with effectively three faces, and a bag full of wooden balls of various sizes.

The full *crosse*, shown next to a mid-iron, dates from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a club for right handers.

The shaft is made of ash. Where the shaft fits into the head socket, the wood has the natural bend of the trunk to root transition, to give the club a good lie angle. (More modern clubs have straight shafts, broom sticks from the hardware store being a popular source of supply). The grip is original, made from a bicycle tyre. Wrapping rubber inner tubing around the shaft is still a common way of making a good grip. The head is forged iron.



Rotate the club through 90° and *le pic* comes into play. *Le pic* was originally designed to play out of cart ruts. While it is still the face to use for poor to atrocious lies, it can be used from good lies and, in skilled hands, can be surprisingly long and accurate.



This close-up shows the face, called *le plat*, that would be used from a good lie to gain maximum distance. It has a loft of about 20°. Note the way the grain of the shaft bends into the socket.

Rotate the club through a further 90°, stand on the other side of the ball, and *le pic* comes in handy as an emergency left-handed club.

(To be continued in next issue)

One of our members, Paul Daley, author of a variety of interesting golfing publications, has copies available for fellow members at special prices if they contact him direct on 03 9800 4485.

Dinner Date

Please make a diary note to attend the Dinner at Royal Melbourne Golf Club on the 8th November 2010, the Monday of Australian Masters week at Victoria.

Our guest speakers will be Therese Ritter, Manager, Championships at Golf Australia. Therese will talk about the R & A Referees School and relate experiences, and challenges, of being one of the first female referees on the Australian Golf Tour. Jin Jeong, a member at Waverley Golf Club, who qualified for The Open Championship at St Andrews by winning the British Amateur at Muirfield, and who finished 14th in The Open, winning the Silver Medal for leading amateur, will be a guest of the Society with his coach, and caddie, Trevor Flakemore. The dinner will be at 6.45pm for 7.15pm.

Golf Behind Barbed Wire

(This article originally appeared in *Through The Green*, the newsletter of The British Golf Collectors Society and is reproduced with permission. Ed.)

Early in 1940 the Worcestershire Union of Golf Clubs organised foursomes competitions to raise money to 'provide for soldiers serving in the Worcestershire regiments'. The prizes were minimal and in third place at a meeting at Blackwell the following year were Flight Lieutenant Ronnie Morgan and Jeff Allan of Moseley. This was Ronnie's last success for three years for in July 1941 his plane was shot down and he spent those years in Stalag Luft III. This was not the end of his golf, however.

Also in the camp was Pat Ward-Thomas who later became the *Guardian's* revered golf correspondent. In his autobiography *Not Only Golf*, Ward-Thomas describes how the prisoners gradually acquired golf clubs and manufactured their own balls from strips of rubber wound round a solid core and encased in beautifully-sewn leather covers very similar in appearance, size and weight, to featheries. Ronnie Morgan, a county golfer, was one of the adepts at this craft, along with Danny O'Brien, a Scottish international. Ronnie described the process in a letter home, which is quoted below.

Another prisoner, Sydney Smith, had somehow obtained a hickory-shafted ladies mashie. He had made a primitive ball from wool and cotton wound round a carved piece of pine, which travelled about 60 yards. When his colleagues asked if they could try, he replied: 'make a ball and you can.' And so Stalag Luft III bore an uncanny resemblance to Allan Robertson's shop.

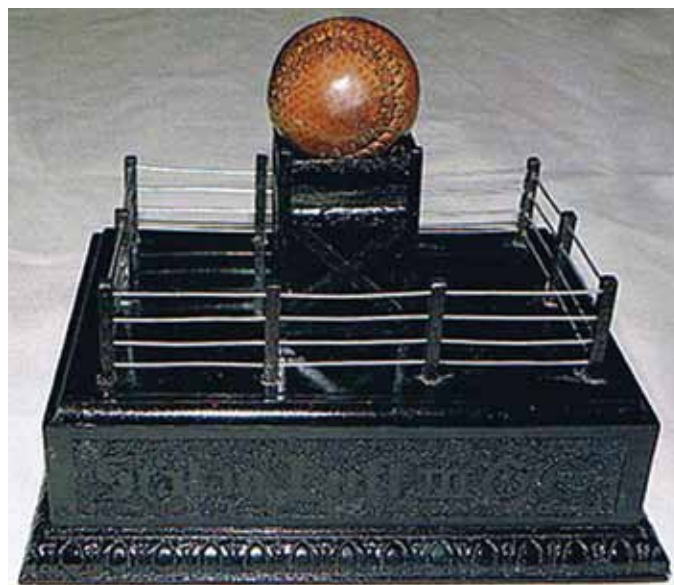
Sagan (the other name for the camp) Golf Club was formed with twelve members and a course was needed. Places were chosen for tees and suitable targets to represent holes, such as tree stumps, poles and in incinerator door – shades of *het kolven*, the early Dutch version of golf.

An eighteen-hole course was planned and to quote Ward-Thomas 'in such a confined space it involved some dangerous if fascinating shots'.

Several prisoners who had established garden plots were not best pleased when their prize tomato plants were decapitated by errant shots. A German officer's morning ablutions were seriously disturbed by another mishit, to much laughter, the only reprisal being a request to move the tee!

The guards also provided a spade to enable greens, or rather browns, to be created. The ground was cleared of stumps, levelled and covered with good yellow sand and smothered with a home-made squeegee. Ward-Thomas describes the course as measuring 850 yards, with a par of 29, the longest hole measuring 140 yards. He does not give further details but Ronnie Morgan wrote home in October 1943, with a fuller account of events. Members of Sagan GC were fashioning shafts and making their own clubs from squashed tins and other discarded metal objects; the Red Cross also dropped a parcel containing the genuine articles.

Ronnie wrote home,
"The golf goes on getting better and better as we find new ways of making clubs and balls, and as clubs arrive from neutral countries – who by the way are wonderfully generous to us. There are about a dozen proper clubs in the camp now, and about twenty home-made, so our nine-hole course gets plenty of play – from the early morning until it is too dark to see. We have recently run a foursomes competition off handicap – the 36 hole final takes place tomorrow – and we had 128 couples enter! Considering that most of the handicaps were purely guesswork it has run very smoothly. I had one of my pupils, an absolute beginner who has learnt very quickly, as my partner and we were knocked out in the fifth round. The lengths of the holes are approximately, in yards, 60, 90, 90, 40, 50, 40, 100, 150 and the balls are now made of rubber (gleaned from several sources, such as burst football bladders, old gym shoe soles cut into strips) laboriously hand-wound and covered with leather from old shoes etc, hand-stitched,



which takes about 4-5 hours, are incredibly good and give a range of about 120 yards with a full mashie shot! It is quite the best thing I've struck as a POW and is proving a godsend in filling in the days of waiting."

Pat Ward-Thomas gives a fuller account of the technicalities of golf-ball manufacture in his book. He adds that he brought some balls back and Jack Nicklaus refused to hit one when offered the opportunity; in case it burst!

Ronnie Morgan resumed his county golfing career in 1946, representing Worcestershire against Warwickshire. He captained the County's first team in 1959 when they qualified for the national finals. Ronnie also enjoyed success representing his club, Moseley. He died in 1995.

Pat Ward-Thomas was in the camp with Moseley member Ronnie Morgan. Ronnie gave the ball pictured to the Club. Ward-Thomas, unfortunately, was not a member of Moseley. He was later of Royal West Norfolk. He mentions Ronnie in his book *Not Only Golf*. Two other balls exist - one in the R&A Museum, the other in the USGA Museum. Another disappeared mysteriously at a dinner when Ronnie took it to show people. He was a seriously good golfer and a prominent Worcestershire player. My article paraphrases relevant passages from *Not Only Golf*.

John Moreton

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 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

From the President

The Golf Society has been in existence since 1982. Initially membership was small but over the years has increased to about 200. New members are recommended by existing members and must comply with guidelines as listed in the Society Rules.

The initial concept of the Society was to establish a golf museum, create a collection of golf memorabilia, and to arrange golf days and dinners. Even though it has been in existence for eighteen years and judged by some as successful, the Society generally has a low profile amongst the golfing community generally. Regrettably the number of active members does not allow us to achieve some of our aims, and the number of members willing to assist in achieving these aims is of concern. Also the average age of our members is increasing.

Golf Australia relies on the Society to promote the history of the game and maintain its museum and library collection. This is done by arranging and manning displays at both Men's and Women's Australian Opens, conducting meetings for golf historians, arranging the displays at the M.C.G. and Moonah museums, managing the collection of golfing memorabilia, cataloguing the library and ensuring the web page is up to date.

For the Society to be effective in encouraging Golf Clubs and individual golfers to become aware of Australian golf history and preserving its heritage, it is suggested an increase in membership could be achieved by creating a new class of membership allowing Golf Clubs limited membership with a nominee member as its representative. While conducting the historian meetings throughout Victoria, I have spoken to many keen golfers who have shown interest in the Society's aims. Due to our restrictive membership criteria, it has not been possible to offer them any kind of involvement in the Society.

The committee has examined this problem and resolved to offer Golf Clubs a special restricted membership with no voting rights. To achieve this and after seeking legal advice, the committee has resolved it will table a proposal at the next AGM to amend the Society Rules so as to allow golf clubs to have restricted membership and the right to name its nominee.

Such a change of the Rules will not set out any other restrictions nor inhibit future committees considering any changes if the new arrangement proves unsatisfactory.

The important point is that in future some of the nominees representing their clubs as restricted members may want to become full and active members of the Society and by their recent involvement become qualified to meet the membership criteria of the Society.

Ian Rennick

SOCIAL LINKS

The Golf Boom in Victorian England

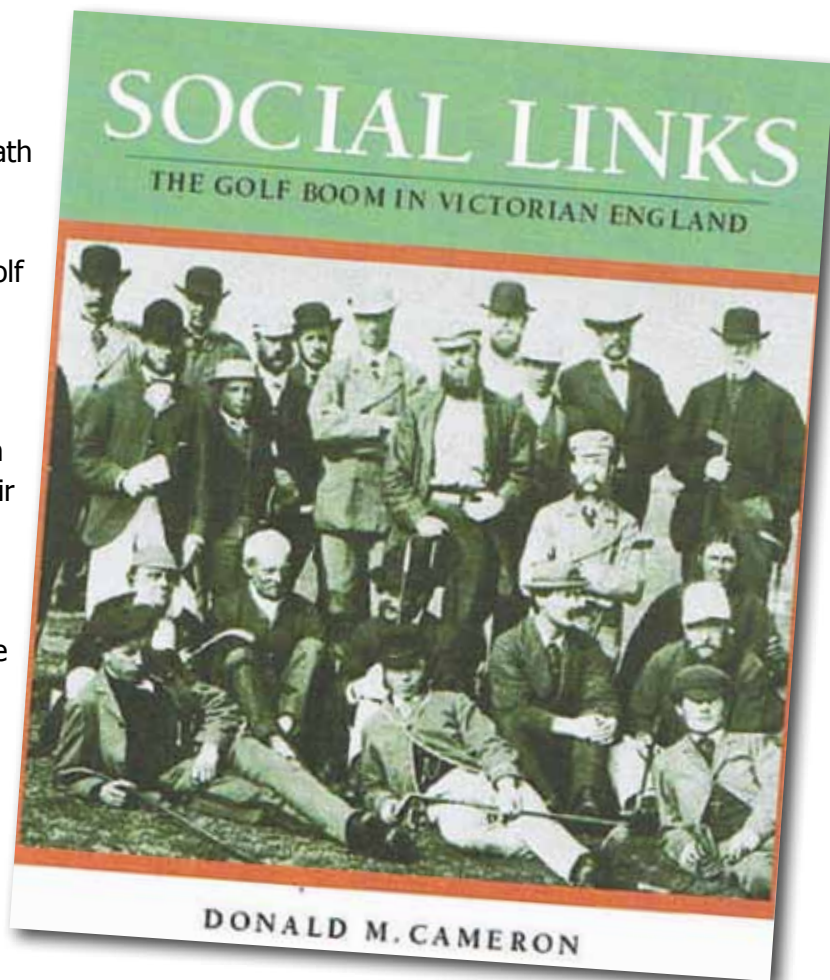
Donald M. Cameron

Apart from the Scottish outposts at Blackheath and Kersal Moor, golf did not take root in England until the 1860's. Donald Cameron's book explores the development of English golf over the following 25 or so years.

In many locations we have a picture of individuals or small groups from towns and villages, venturing on to convenient common land, armed with a hole cutter, to create their own courses. Low numbers and informality required minimal maintenance costs. The availability of good cropped turf was important. In many cases, initial efforts were not sustained and the pioneers moved on to try elsewhere. At other locations the game stuck, a node of golfers was established and formal clubs were constituted. The more familiar considerations of asset growth, uniformity of rules and playing skills was to come later.

Donald Cameron has done the history of golf a great service by underlining the importance of primary sources such as *The Field* – the most important periodical recording the nascent golf movement, and its sister publication the *Golfing Annual* which appeared in the mid-1880s. In many cases Cameron was able to use club histories as his starting point and has gone on to use more obscure primary sources – including military and clerical lists, medical and trade directories, diaries, minute books, newspapers and civic and regional histories - to uncover more detail, together with linkages between different locations.

The structure of the book is a straight forward chronological account of activities at the varied places from 1864-1887. As the narrative moves between locations Cameron identifies the influences and individuals involved, together with any relationships of time and place. The author has uncovered distinct patterns and a surprising number of linkages. Club historians often take a single 'vertical' thread throughout their narrative and miss the lateral 'horizontal' inter-relations with what was going on elsewhere. But in 'Social Links' Cameron hints that many of the pioneers were friends, active



in more than one place. And he draws together his findings by listing the key individuals, their clubs, families and backgrounds at the end of the book.

In this well designed, lavishly illustrated book of 389 pages – which also contains many contemporary maps, documents and photographs – Cameron provides us with a new coherence of the early years of English golf. He deserves commendation for his considerable effort and publishing initiative. Those who are seriously interested in the history of golf will welcome this splendid publication.

Social Links – The Golf Boom in Victorian England is available in two versions - a leather-bound 'Collectors' edition £395 (approx \$650 Aus) and a 'Limited' edition £95 (approx \$155 Aus). All copies are numbered and signed by the author. Further information and order forms are available by visiting www.social-links.co.uk

This review by John Pearson - Editor of *Through the Green*, the journal of the British Golf Collectors Society - was published in the March 2010 edition. The review has been edited for *The Long Game* by Des Tobin with John Pearson's kind permission.

Dinner at Woodlands Golf Club's New Clubhouse

With the warm glow from the fireplace and the comfort of the air-conditioning throughout the refurbished building, 10 members of Woodlands, who are also members of the GSA, proudly escorted other guests around the refurbished clubhouse recently when the Society held a dinner there with 90 members and guests attending.

Our guest speaker was David Greenhill, newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Golf Association, who brought everyone up to date with key matters affecting golf in Victoria. David touched on the re-introduction to Australia of the USGA handicapping system and how it is to be implemented, the intricacies of introducing the USGA slope rating system, and the forthcoming amalgamation of the VGA and Women's Golf.

GSA Committee member, Norie Macleod proposed an elegant vote of thanks which was roundly applauded.

New Members:

Welcome to:

Frances Crampton

Kay Mahook

Leigh Brown

Gillian Ednie

June Jeans

Don Moir

Jim Black

Peter Loathian

Tom Morley

Bronwen Young

Eric Lucas

Norman Richardson

Long time ladies golf identity Burtta Cheney, MBE kindly donated, to the GSA, a pair of golfing bookends which had been presented to her and Nell Smithett by The Golf Society of Great Britain during a visit they made to the UK in 1938.

At the end of the evening many complimented Woodlands on its new clubhouse and the GSA for presenting such an enjoyable evening.



Past President Keith Wood AM and President Ian Rennick with Burtta Cheney MBE



Norie Macleod thanking David Greenhill

Golf Historians at Medway GC

A Golf Historians meeting was held at Medway Golf Club in July. Chairman, Ian Rennick opened the meeting, and welcomed all present, including representatives from as far away as Flinders and Ballarat.

Seven Medway members recalled highlights of the early days including the fact that Medway has a tradition that the Captain and President are not required to enter their name on the time sheet and have right of way when they wish to play.

Two lady members recalled that their access to the bar was limited to a servery in the Ladies lounge, and Colin Winterton, Superintendent for 30 years, related how the course is named after the birthplace in Kent, England

of Stanley Dutton-Green, the driving force behind the founding of the course which he, and the Morcom family, designed.

A display of golf clubs was provided by GSA members Cliff George and Max Findlay. Cliff related his interest in restoring old golf clubs and researching how they were originally made. Max had on display several sets of clubs that he had assembled and restored. He collects clubs to build sets for Victorian and other Australian clubs. Prior to 1940 most clubs had stamped on them the names of the maker, the professional and his club.

His club sold them together with the name of the golf club that employed him.

President's Trophy at Royal Melbourne Golf Club

The President's Trophy was played for on the 9th August at Royal Melbourne Golf Club. 25 players teed off in perfect golfing weather and played 12 holes of the West course. The four qualifiers were Jim Black with a nett score of 49.7



Winner Meriedie Graham receives the trophy

followed by Peter Gompertz, on 50.3, Frank Davis, 51.7 and Meriedie Graham, also with a nett 51.7.

Peter Gompertz beat Frank Davis on the first hole and Meriedie won her match on the second hole against Jim Black. The third hole was then played between Meriedie and Peter. They both put their second shots into the left hand greenside bunker with Meriedie to play first. She failed to get out which put Peter in a strong position.

Unfortunately Peter also failed to get out hitting the top lip of the bunker. To prove it was no fluke he did it twice more before scrambling out. Meriedie then put her shot on the green but failed to get down in two.

Peter missed his putt, which would have given him the half and then conceded Meriedie her putt. It was not the finish anyone had hope for but it ended an enjoyable day as players and spectators retired to the clubhouse for a glass of champagne on the winner.

Don Lawrence Trophy at Woodlands GC

On a sunny but brisk Autumn day in May, 28 Members and Guests assembled in front of a roaring fire in the Woodlands clubhouse for a light lunch before attacking the course in a four ball, better ball, stableford competition in pursuit of the Don Lawrence Trophy.

Slightly more than four hours later (well it was a bit cool!), everyone reconvened in the clubhouse to swap hard luck stories, share a bottle of wine over an early supper and applaud the winners.

Leading the field with an outrageous 49 points were Cliff George and Peter Gompertz, followed by Jean Gilbert and ex-President Daryl Cox with a creditable 47 points; Graeme Ryan and Geoff Henshall filled third place with 43. The nearest the pin prize for Ladies was won at the 11th by Virginia Gorrell, and, of the Gentlemen, Max Findlay put his tee shot closest to the pin at the 17th.

The straightest, longest drive, or if you prefer, the longest, straightest drive, at the 10th was won by a Lady Guest, Jenny Sebire (the yardage was not announced!).



Cliff George & Peter Gompertz

Many in the field vowed to do better next time.



Pictures from the Al Howard Trophy Match at Federal GC



Assembled teams from Victoria and NSW



Paul Burgess watched by Tony Dogget