



Heritage

COMMONWEALTH GOLF CLUB Inc.

April 2008

The following was submitted by the Club to the VGA for inclusion in the first Victorian Golf Year Book, published in late 1937. No changes have been made to the original leaving the occasional spelling quirk and lengthy sentence constructions.

SHORT HISTORY OF COMMONWEALTH GOLF CLUB - 1/1/37

The Commonwealth Golf Club which now possesses a course and Club House that ranks amongst the best in the Commonwealth owes its origin to a small band of golfing enthusiasts who for some time prior to 1914 had laid down six holes in what was known as



Flatman's Paddock extending from Murrumbeena Road to Koornang Road, Carnegie.

It will be interesting to note that the teeing off point was in close proximity to the spot where the Club's professional (John Young) now resides.

It was in 1914 just before the outbreak of war that negotiations were commenced with a view to leasing a tract of country east of the Darling Railway Station extending across the outer circle railway line towards Ashburton where a club which subsequently became known as the Waverley Club was established.

Comprising at the outset 22 members, viz. Dr. Atkinson, Messrs. H. Blinkhorn, G. Brown, O. G. Dawes, R. C. Dawes, R. A. Dawes, C. Hammond, P. Henry, W. J. Hughes, Burt Kelly, A. Knight, E. Lucas, R. Lucas, B. Parrington, T. Ryan, G. Small, Dr. Guy Springthorpe, F. D. Stogdale, C. J. Wild, C. S. Wood, L. J. Wright, and L. G. Wright.

Following the outbreak of war the Club experienced great difficulty in carrying on, nevertheless it survived the troublous times.

With the revival of golfing activities in 1919 the Club began to expand and by this time the membership had grown to over 150 and with the expiration of the Club's lease in sight the work of seeking a suitable freehold was delegated to the Club's Hon. Secretary, L. J. Wright, and Hon. Treasurer the late A. J. Price and after many months of vainless searching the present site was secured in Centre Road, Oakleigh which at that time was regarded as scrub country and comprised only 89 acres.





Clubhouse on Centre Road late 1921



Clubhouse December 1929

It might be mentioned here that Mr. H. P. Knight who in after years played a very important part in the affairs of the Club was mainly responsible for the acquirement of this freehold.

In spite of views to the contrary there was early evidence that the Club would make rapid progress shortly after taking possession of the property it was decided to lay down an extensive water service, but difficulties presented

themselves at the outset as the water main at that time did not extend to Centre Road and permission to lay a private pipe line from a point in Warrigal Road to the Club's property was only granted after protracted negotiating but finally the work was proceeded with.

At the completion of this work a scheme for the erection of a suitable Club House was launched which resulted in a Brick building being erected on a site facing

Centre Road to replace the Wooden pavilion which had been removed from the course at Darling to serve in a temporary capacity.

The architecture of the course was entrusted to Sam Bennett now the professional at Hepburn and at that time the Club's professional and in spite of the restricted area at his disposal he was successful in providing the members with a very interesting lay out.

It was on the 12th February, 1921 that members played their initial game over a temporary 9 holes.

The Club had not been long established before it became apparent that more land would have to be acquired if the Club's ambitions to possess a championship course were to be realised and by judicious negotiations more of the adjoining land from time to time has been acquired and incorporated in the original lay out and the course to-day comprises 130 acres of the finest Golfing Country in the State.

The original lay out has been altered in many respects and the course to-day has a remodelled appearance. All this work has been carried out under the careful supervision of a capable Greens Committee comprising at the outset of Messrs. Chas. Lane, H. P. Knight and C. J. Wild. It is worthy of note the Mr. Chas. Lane who in 1923 succeeded Mr. C. J. Wild as Captain of the Club was closely allied to the Greens Committee from that year until 1933, when he resigned to take up outside interests, and many of the vast improvements that are now manifest are due to this gentleman's foresight and ingenuity in the Club's interest.

In addition to the services rendered by Mr. C. J. Wild as a member of the Greens Committee this gentleman has been largely responsible for the beautification of the course.

The supervision of the work of the course in more recent years has been under the expert guidance of the Club's Secretary, Mr. Sloan Morpeth, and further improvements continue to be noticeable.

In the early part of 1935 a scheme was launched to replace the existing 18 greens and very satisfactory progress has been made with this work.

The Eastern and Western boundaries of which are fringed with Botryoides, the Northern boundaries with Lambertiana, and the Southern boundary with Macrocarpa. Hundreds of Acacias and several varieties of flowering gums principally Fici Folia have been dotted here and there around the course and these to-day give the course a beautiful park like appearance. Altogether approximately 2,500 trees of many varieties are now making rapid growth and in season make a fine spectacle.

The steady growth of the membership demanded the Committee taking into consideration the necessity of more Club House accommodation and at a meeting of members held in 1928 it was unanimously resolved to proceed with the erection of a more commodious Club House and a site which affords a commanding view of the Dandenong Ranges and the surrounding Country was selected for the purpose.

The Club has been richly endowed with players possessing outstanding Golfing talent and apart from notable individual performances in open events the achievements of the Club's representatives in both the Junior and Senior Pennant and the Foursome Shield matches are worthy of note.

The author of these notes is not shown.

Explanatory notes:

- (i) *the tract of land in East Malvern (see map) does not include any part of where the Malvern Valley Golf Course, commenced in 1924, now is.*
- (ii) *at the time of the initial purchase of land a road called Basto Road ran North-South from Centre Road to Old Dandenong Road on a*

line approximately where the front of the current clubhouse is. The land to the West of Basto Road and the road itself was purchased in various lots progressively during 1925 and 1926.

- (iii) *as indicated in letters and the Captain's addresses at the AGMs of 1935 to 1938, Morpeth's project involved not only the remodelling and resurfacing of all 18 greens, but the reworking of the greenside bunkers, resurfacing of all tees and amending a number of fairway bunkers.*
- (iv) *the Miller's Paddock land, encompassing the second part of the 10th hole, the first part of the 11th, and all the current 7th hole, was purchased in the early 1960s.*

Mark Wade

Heritage Sub-Committee

In the August 14, 1915 copy of "The Weekly Times" "Mashie" wrote:

At Darling, S. Bennett, the professional, has laid out an 18 hole course for the Waverley Club. He furnishes the following particulars: "The links are situated between the Darling and Ashburton railway stations, and the fourth and sixth holes play over the disused line. The first tee is five minutes walk from Darling station. The Glen Iris tram and tram from Malvern, are close to the links. The links are picturesque, well turfed, and there are many of natural hazards. Mr. R. Kelly. Of Murrumbeena, is captain of the club and Mr. W. J. Hughes hon secretary. The first competition in aid of the Australian wounded soldiers was won by Mr. Dawes, the hon. Treasurer".