

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 Badminton Golf* (1896).

Captain's Corner

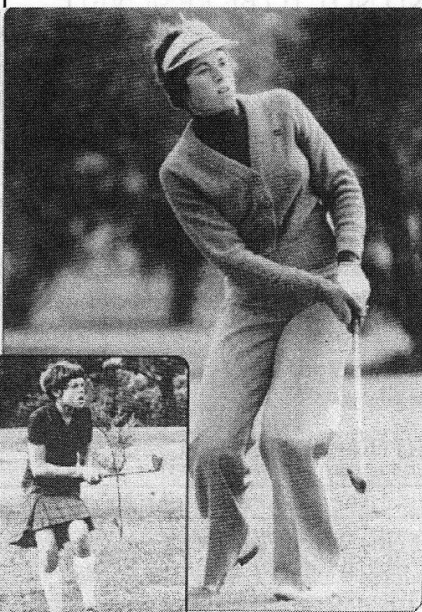
Coming Events

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').

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).



Edwina Kennedy, the first Australian to win the British Women's Amateur Championship in 1978, aged 19. Photo courtesy of the Australian Golf Museum.

The Golf Collectors Society's display at the NSW Open at Moore Park GC 9-12 November & Australian Open at Royal Sydney GC 15-19 November 2006

The Societies Challenge against the Golf Society of Australia has been deferred. Instead, the **Oatlands Hickory Classic** will be played over 11 holes on Tuesday 21 November, 2006. After the Classic, dinner will be in the Oatlands Club House, and 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 its acquisition. 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).

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).

The Annual General Meeting will follow the presentation of prizes.

Peter Read

The Golf Collectors Society of Australia

**Volume 4 Issue 4
September 2006**

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The Significance Workshop

at the Parramatta Heritage Centre

Report by Ann Crisp, Pennant Hills GC Historical Interest Group

Significance is the key in deciding on the objects to keep in a Collection. What special qualities make an object worth collecting, worth displaying and interesting to know about? What objects would you **not** collect or display and not even accept if they were offered to you? **Provenance** – who owned it, used it, made it, and more, allows its Significance to be assessed. If an object is offered without Provenance then perhaps it should not be accepted. If you collect **everything** you might not have a clear idea of 'Significance', which:

- Describes the collectibility of an object
- Is a method of evaluating objects based on criteria for rarity, condition, usage, etc.
- Should be a collaborative issue, not just determined by one person
- Allows critical decisions about why we retain, accept or reject the item
- When on-line, can highlight objects that are too fragile to display

Having a good understanding of Significance helps to get rid of rubbish, e.g. six of the same thing is unnecessary, although by accepting quite a few of the same, you may find that one of them is an especially Significant item because of its quality, who owned or used it. Deaccession the remainder. You must be severe in saying "Yes" or "No" to donations. Tips:

- Keep a good record of your collection so that you readily know what you have in total, its condition etc. as a new donation could replace a 'sad' previous donation.
- Work out a guide of conservation policies and treatment of Significant items.
- If you are not sure of what to keep etc., ask your members re what they want to see, or feel that they would want kept.

- Have a disaster plan should you unfortunately have a fire, flood etc -what are the high priority to save.
- Try to have a thematic/contextual history of theme, subject, region etc. so that you can go from A to B to C to D etc. - not missing C, for example.
- **Each object should have its own Object File** that contains every bit of written information, typed conversations, photos, history including what, where, when, why, who and how. When documenting collections, one **coloured photo** will save a lot of written information. This is a combined file of Significance and Provenance.
- Context i.e. when there is no Provenance: Make on Object File to include any details you can gain, research done. Talk with users/owners etc. about the item's use, and do a Statement to go with what ever information you have.

Significance is closely linked to Conservation and the wrong approach to conservation can destroy the significance of an object. For example, books are part of the whole picture. Do not repair books unless they are going to be used over and over, otherwise they will get further from being truly Significant. The remains of a swinging bridge over the creek on our 10th hole – quite a unique 'object' – could be classed as Significant but we need to consider Conservation to find out how to go about that. Some old items may have mud on them and even this mud can be part of an object's Significance **AND NOT TO BE REMOVED**.

Provenance (story) refers to the object's life history, how/where it was used, chain of ownership, if genuine, authenticity etc. One should not discount two verbal descriptions re the object i.e. two family members disagree on its history. Keep both versions!! Younger folk won't be interested in a display without any history/story to follow. I have heard Provenance described as being the Pedigree - another good way to remember.

Ann Crisp

Pennant Hills GC Historical Interest Group

BOOK REVIEW:

The Centurions of golf by Mike Berners Price
(Radial Sports Publishing 2006)

The Centurions of golf is an epic of golf's history in

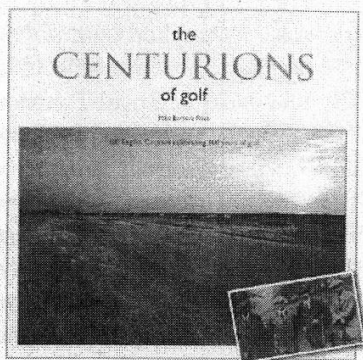
England and an epic writing project. One hundred English golf courses each a century old, visited and most of them played in two years and 20,000 miles, described in almost 300 pages with over 300 photographs. Mike Berners Price has done well.

This is a book about courses and their history, not about Clubs. Each episode describes how the course started, often 9 holes, and who was involved; how it developed as a playing field, with notable events and players from old times until now. The images mix old time sepia, often offset, with modern colour and display course scapes, events, players and notable people. Interesting details of the course and its locality provide the context for its characters.

The book clusters courses by their status and locations. Courses in the early chapters describe Foundations, Expansion, London's survivors and the Open Championship. Then courses are grouped by Seaside, the Downs, Heathland and Parkland.

What relevance does such a English book have to Australia and interest to Australian readers? England is so rich in history, in famous founders and prolific players. Surely our history is no match for that? Think again!

Australia should have such a book as a tribute to its foundations and founders - the closest has been Tom



Ramsey on 25 *Great Australian Courses* and Darius Oliver's more recent *Australia's Finest Golf Courses*. For Golf Club Historians *Centurions of golf* provides 100 examples of how to write about a course, its history, events and people. As a broad and necessarily brief coverage of many courses, the book hints at how to write about one course in depth. We may not have 100 *Centurions* but we have courses that need to be recognised and respected and those involved in their foundation applauded.

This is a directory about many courses more than a guide to any one of them. So it is interesting that *The Centurions of golf* is a companion volume in Radial Sports' Latham range of golf books to the definitive *Guide to the Hotchkin course - Woodhall Spa*. The next book in the series is another in-depth study - *The Evolution of the Links at Royal County Down*.

As a book about historic golf courses *Centurions of golf* takes some beating. With its companions on Woodhall Spa and Royal County Downs it is a real winner. The cost including postage to Australia is about \$A100 and a worthwhile addition to your Club's library.

Dan Cullen's visit to Cottesloe May 2006

For the occasion of the 2006 Cottesloe Open, held on May 20-21, an annual 36 hole event for professionals and low handicap amateurs, the host club invited over some very special guests. Daniel and Enid Cullen, plus their daughter Marrienne Laurie, arrived a few days before to take part in the weekend festivities. It was a nostalgic trip back for Dan who had served as Cottesloe Golf Club's first assistant professional at the current course between 1931 and 1937, having gone there from the WA Golf Club with Welsh professional, Eric Alberts. Dan won the WA Open in 1937 and 1938, before heading to Sydney and war years as a Lancaster bomber pilot.

Time has obviously not dimmed Dan's playing ability and, at 91, he regularly breaks his age. He played three rounds at Cottesloe while he was here, including the Cottesloe Classic pro-am where he played and renewed acquaintance with Larry Harke, a regular member of the WA amateur team and WA Amateur champion in the late 40s and early 50s. He was the guest of the captain and the president in two members' competitions.

Dan presented the Cottesloe Open trophies and, at the Cottesloe Classic dinner, was interviewed as the feature speaker, regaling attendees with humorous tales of Cottesloe in the 30s and of his own golfing career and war-time experiences. On other occasions, Dan provided some terrific reminiscences of Cottesloe, the club, its humorous characters, administrators, great players and the course, as it was in his day. This information will be enormously valuable as we write the club's history, for publication in our centenary year of 2008. This trip over was a huge success and we hope to have Daniel and Enid back for the 2008 celebrations.

Graham McEachern, Cottesloe GC Historian

(Dan's comment after the trip: *They treated me like I was a gold watch!*)



Bob Letters

– Master Clubmaker

Compiled by Barry Leithhead

The Scottish clubmakers have been family affairs: Forgan, Gibson, Nicoll, Anderson and so on and gradually they have been acquired by the major companies or faded away. The

last of these is John Letters of Scotland and one of John's five sons is Bob, now 82, who lives in Sydney. Bob came to Australia in 1971 to work for PGF and later for Dunlop-Slazenger and Brosnan.

John Letters Snr started the company in 1918 and was well established before WWII commenced in 1939. Letters had been innovators – one of the first with steel shafts, keen to introduce machine processing and developers of clubhead design. Each of the sons joined the business; John Jnr eventually succeeded his father as Chief Executive. After completing a sheet metal apprenticeship (making binnacles for boats) and being medically unfit for the Army, Bob started with the firm in 1944. He had often visited the factory as a boy and remembers his early tasks involved in shaping hickory shafts, even in the steel shaft era, for the putters they sold to the Putting Greens situated all around the coast. Later he specialised in making woods. At that time he was also playing top class football with Dumferline and for a while was assistant Professional at Royal Dee-Side GC near Aberdeen.

The years just after WWII were very important for John Letters of Scotland. In 1946, Letters developed the *Golden Goose* putter (Bob with *Goose* putters below) and there was some debate about whether the *Goose* or *Titlist's Bullseye* the first of this type. In 1947, Fred

Daly, the Irish Champion won the Open and the British match play Championship using Letters Master Model clubs and they took off in popularity.

From 1946,



Bob travelled to the Open and other Championships to represent the Company in the Exhibition Tent. A regular visitor to the John Letters factory in the late 1960s was Andy Murchie, a former railwayman who worked next door to the Letters factory. Andy was short at 5' 2" (157.5cms) and tough, off a handicap of 1 at Royal Troon and well known in the Troon village. Andy used to travel with Bob to the Open Tournaments and if prompted would sing one of the promotional songs he had written, like this one, to the tune of 'A Gordon for Me':

*John Letters for me, John Letters for me,
If you're no a golfer you're no use to me
Pin Splitters are nice and Ben Sayers are Braw
But gie me Johnny Letters, the pride of them a'.*

It was in the 1954 Open that Peter Thomson first used John Letters Clubs – "In practice I showed no great form – in fact, I was playing so badly with a set of American clubs that I didn't fancy my prospects at all. Some desperate measure was needed. I rang John Letters and asked if I could use their clubs". On the night before the first qualifying round Thomson and Letters 'broke into' the Letters of Scotland display in the Open Exhibition tent and took down a set of the John Panton model. "Once I got the feel of them I thought they were okay, so I tried them out the next day and used them throughout the Championship". When the tournament was over, Thomson handed them back to Letters with his eternal thanks. (Extract from *The Complete Golfer: Peter Thomson*)

Bob still remembers the enjoyment fifty years ago of playing with his brothers and Peter Thomson at the Barassie course, just north from Troon.

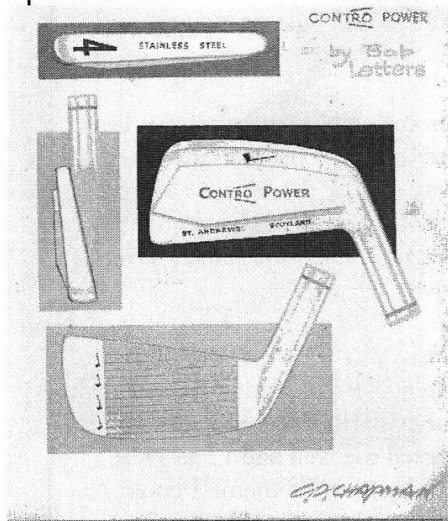
John Letters of Scotland continued their support of the British Open for many years. In the 1970s they introduced the Super Mex model (see pic) and Lee Trevino use Letters clubs in winning his British Open Championships in 1971-2.

Dunlop bought the Letters Company in 1955 and in 1964, Bob went to Japan to help Dunlop-Maxfli to set up their club manufacturing



operations. The year of the Olympics made Tokyo a great place to be, the Maxfli clubs were very popular and Bob enjoyed this experience enormously. Returning to Scotland two months later, Bob thought it best he leave the company, now under Dunlop's control.

He moved to the Swilken Golf Company at St. Andrews in the old Tom Stewart workshop. Bob's task was to introduce machine methods to the old time craftsmen and at the start they were not too willing. Bob's design for Swilken clubs featured the Tom Stewart pipe brand.



In 1966, Peter McEwan, son of the famed clubmaker from Musselburgh, by then very old, still visited the Swilken factory – he was related to the Stewart family. One of the men was Jimmy Anderson whose grandfather James won the Open three years in a row – 1877, 8 & 9. For a moment one day, Bob held the three Open gold medals in his hand. The Anderson family had a number of clubmakers in and around St Andrews in those early days. It seemed that the old craftsmen from the family businesses, now declining or gone, had gravitated to Swilken's. For a touch of irony, within a quarter mile of Swilken's, Laurie Auchterlonie in his hickory club shop around the corner from the Old Course 18th green, showed Bob how he made replica long nose clubs in the old way.

It didn't take Swilken's old-time craftsmen long to realise the machine made a quicker, neater cut in the wooden club for the face insert. As Bob explained his way of doing it, they picked up the skills and became enthusiastic about the new methods.

Just after Bob went to Swilken's, brother John also left the Letters Company to set up Craighton Golf Company. Within three years, by 1970, Craighton was so successful that 3,000 sets of clubs based on a John Letters design rolled off the production line every week.

Bob heard there was an opportunity with PGF Australia for a clubmaker and in 1971 he was appointed as their specialist in wooden clubs; by this time laminated clubs were the popular choice. Working for Clare Higson the founder of PGF was the great highlight of Bob's time with PGF and it was a shame that Clare died while Bob was there.

In 1974, Bob returned to Scotland and for a while worked with brother Tom who had set up Golf Craft Scotland in Hillington, Glasgow. Bob returned to Australia in 1975 and a position manufacturing woods with Dunlop-Slazenger. But after a few years Dunlop started to import the clubs, so in 1978 he moved to Queensland to work as Clubmaker for Brosnan Golf. There he set up the wood production plant, making the heads on a wood turning lathe, teaching the staff the fine art of wood making.

At Brosnan Golf, Bob met Wayne Grady, one of their young professionals and when 'Grades' was heading off to Jakarta for a tournament in 1983, Bob made him a specially crafted set of persimmon woods. It was good working for Dennis Brosnan – he was a good friend and boss and Bob was sorry he had to leave.

Now in 2006, Bob Letters in Sydney, Jimmy and Tom in Glasgow and Hope in North Berwick are the last of a clubmaking clan. In retirement, Bob still repairs a club or two, still loves being in his workshop surrounded by the memorabilia of his past. A golf historian may regard Bob is a modernist, in having

introduced machine methods after WWII. But this break with the history of hand-skilled craftsmen is itself part of history. Watching Bob in his workshop now, or in the video of his club-making thirty years ago, hand-eye coordination at the sanding cone was the name of the game.



Playing with John Letters clubs

Graham Evans on using his collectibles

Recent GCSA member Graham Evans claims to be an old engineer and a collector of anything old that can be put to good use. He golfs at Windsor, north west of Sydney with John Letters clubs and his mates have stopped ribbing him about them, because sometimes old steel goes better than graphite and investment cast composite metal.

"I bought my John Letters "New Master" irons, second hand, from Bill Kaye-Smith at the Parramatta Golf course around 1960. I was 19 years old and had never heard of John Letters. To be truthful, I have never met anyone else who used John letters clubs until I met Bob Letters a few months ago. Bill Kaye-Smith assured me they were very good clubs. I suspect they were about 10 years old when I acquired them.

Well, I've used them ever since and



still do once or twice a week. Why?? Perhaps its just pure bloody mindedness. Perhaps it's those few times in a round when I manage to middle and time the shot. That feel is better than anything I have ever encountered with any other golf stick! Yes, modern clubs are more forgiving but I have a yardstick by which to judge my golf of today against my golf in former times.

On that subject, I think the clubs may be aging a little. That five iron that used to hit the ball 160 metres seems to be struggling to go 145 these days. Moreover the shafts seem to have got stiffer, making timing that much more of a problem.

Certainly the sweet spot on the three iron has shrunk noticeably in the past 10 years. Still they have served me well and I feel great loyalty towards them. I could replace them but what's a few more strokes on my handicap where such old friends are concerned!"

Pennant Hills GC Historical Interest Group

This group began in February 2002 with two Associates volunteering to sort through and store printed items, all Minute Books from 1923, course and clubhouse plans and photographs. Much of this was collected during the three years it took Ron Harper to compile the Club's third history book, published in 1999. We are now a team of six volunteers meeting weekly and whenever possible we have attended seminars to enhance our abilities, as well as to meet with other golf club history volunteers.

It was obvious a dedicated area for work and storage would be essential. Within a year, we expanded into a fireproof two-room area underneath the clubhouse with the necessary equipment to enable us to store data on computer as well as being acid-free. We are custodians of many donations including golf clubs, golf bags, paintings, old trophies and other memorabilia.

We still have much of our **83 year history** to sort through and the areas listed below will keep us busy for many a year to come. In the future, it is hoped to have

a permanent historical display area in the Clubhouse.

The three Associates are involved with:-

- Adding Associate/Member Minute Book highlights from 1923 into the computer system Ron Harper adapted for our specific application
- Compiling photograph albums as well as adding them to the computer system
- Making/storing tapes of oral interviews
- Storing video and DVD donations
- Setting up a lending library from donations of old golfing books/magazines

The three Members are involved with:-

- Making a complete membership list
- Listing every hole-in-one since 1923 that it is possible to confirm
- Correctly storing/filing the original Associate/Member Minute Books from 1923
- Storing donated Associate/Member fixture/programme books from 1931.

Ann Crisp

TRIBUTE TO A GREAT CLUBMAKER



Sandy Faichney

Alex "Sandy" Faichney was born in Kirkcaldy, Scotland. As a young golfer he dreamed of one day becoming a Professional. Although his game and knowledge of the game were good enough, times were tough and Sandy went to work for the legendary golf club manufacturers Wm. Gibson and Co. at Kinghorn where he learnt his trade of clubmaking.

In 1948 Sandy brought his wife May and daughter Anne to Australia and began working at Slazengers factory in Alexandria.

Sandy settled his family in Carlingford and naturally gravitated to the nearby Barclay Golf and Country Club in North Rocks, then run by a Dr. Wearn.

With David Hynd and a few like minded players they decided to take over the course and it was Sandy who suggested the name Muirfield. Sandy was the first Captain a post he held for five years.

Sandy knew only one way to play golf. It must be played not

only by the rules but in the spirit of the game.

Sandy didn't say much but a stern look with his steely blue eyes was sufficient to let anyone know they were doing the wrong thing.

During this time Sandy was turning out some of the best golf clubs in the world. He made clubs for all our champions, Norman von Nida Jack Newton, Bruce Devlin, Bruce Crampton, Bill Dunk, David Graham and many others.

At that time American clubs were promoted as the finest available, but a visit to Slazengers factory during our Tournament season would see a line of American stars waiting to be fitted with a set of Sandy's clubs. None other than the great Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, Arnold Palmer, Hubert Green, Jerry Heard and many others benefited from Sandy's expertise.

Although contracted to play with another brand, Lee Trevino won the British Open using a set of Sandy's clubs with the Slazenger name covered with a strip of adhesive tape.

Thank you letters and telegrams flooded in from all over the globe.

Sandy could have named his own price in the world of club-making. Jack Nicklaus was most insistent that Sandy come to America and work for him.

Sandy rejected all those offers and remained fiercely loyal to Australia.

Sadly Sandy is no longer with us, but still when golfers gather to talk over the finest clubs they have ever had the pleasure to play with-----"Sandy" Faichney's name leads all the rest.

Submitted by Tom Moore

Golf Club Historians Activities

A very special activity is planned for March 2007 at the Royal Sydney GC to hear the latest research on their world-class collection of long nose clubs and featherie balls. Discussion with the Club indicates the in-depth research has revealed new information that makes the Collection even more significant than it was. The activity date will be advised later.

Most of the high interest subjects for GCHs – oral history, archives, writing the book – have been covered by our seminar program. In 2007 we plan regular GCH meetings to discuss one topic in particular but also to update each other on progress and learn of the latest research projects. The report of Pennant Hills GC Historical Interest Group progress is on page 6.

Erwin Huber (9389 5492)

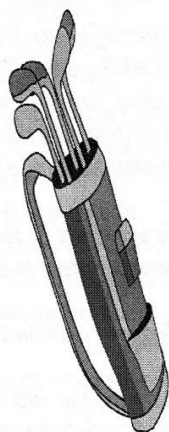
Bernard Darwin *"is the greatest writer on golf the world has ever known. He is much more than that. He may be the greatest of all sportswriters. ... Thanks to Bernard, golf has acquired the sturdiest literature of any game. The best of it is Darwin's - about two dozen books in all - and the rest is as good as it is largely because he showed the writers who came after him how golf could and should be written.. ... I have never met any serious golf writer whose love and understanding of the game was not nurtured on Darwin." (Herbert Warren Wind on 'Bernard Darwin at Eighty' in his book "The Lure of Golf" 1971)*

If you have a Darwin book the chances are you treasure it. Do you collect them? Neil Crafter of the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects is a collector of Darwin's books and if your 'love and understanding of the game has been nurtured by Darwin,' Neil would like to hear from you (neil@golfstrategies.com.au).

The Golf Collectors Society
of Australia

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

the Braggie

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**Invite a golfing friend to become
a Golf Collector/Historian**

The Golf Collectors Society of Australia is the ideal forum for people:

- *Interested in golf's rich and relevant history;*
- *Collecting old clubs and other memorabilia;*
- *Wanting to play with hickory shafted clubs;*
- *Researching and writing the history of their Club.*

These like-minded people with varying interests across the spectrum of golf's history find much in common. The helpfulness of members is a feature of GCSA and new members extend their knowledge and enjoyment of golf.

***Playing with hickories** is good for your game with modern clubs. With hickories, you go back to basics - an easy swing, head still, feeling the shaft and the club in your hands. These are good lessons to relearn.*

***GCSA's Golf Club Historians** have formed a Special Interest Group that assists and develops your role to research, record, archive and write the history of your club. Meet the other historians and share experiences, approaches and achievements through the SIG.*

Join GCSA and extend your enjoyment of golf!

Join GCSA Today! Subscription to June 2007

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Send your cheque for \$50 (\$20 joining, \$30 Subscription) payable to The Golf Collectors Society of Australia, to John Fletcher GCSA Treasurer 1 Camden Street, Sylvania NSW 2224
(Members joining between 1 Jan-30 June pay \$15 Subscription and \$20 Joining fee)