



The Ashley Wood Story

Alan Lindsay

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The Clubhouse

Foreword



As President of this unique Golf Club, I was delighted to be asked to write the introduction to our centenary history which I trust you will find both interesting and informative. My thanks must go to Alan Lindsay for his hard work in researching, preparing and producing this book which is in fact his first literary venture. Since first joining Ashley Wood I have seen many changes but the last two years have been for me the most exciting due to the opening of the new 9 holes and the improvements to the clubhouse and its facilities. The Ashley Wood Golf Club is rightly proud of its reputation for hospitality and friendliness. As we continue to grow we must ensure that our reputation remains the envy of so many other clubs.

Happy golfing,

Bob Hyde



Prologue

Ashley Wood is situated about 2 miles east of Blandford Forum on the B3082. The Golf Club is laid out on rolling downland and the chalk substratum ensures quick drainage, therefore minimising the days lost to wet weather during the year.

A more idyllic setting is hard to imagine and a summer evening spent treading the hallowed fairways, enjoying the abundant wildlife and scenic views, can only be spoiled by the occasional smack at a silly white ball that refuses to react in the way nature intended. Still, there's always the 19th hole!

The Ashley Wood Golf Club is proud of its County-wide reputation for friendliness and hospitality and Angie, the Stewardess, will ensure that you leave the Club fully wine'd and dine'd and eager to return again.

I hope that the accompanying history will give the reader an insight into the trials and tribulations of the Golf Club's first hundred years and hope also that I am asked to write the story of the Club's second hundred years!

AJL



Chapter 1

The Early Years

THE YEAR 1896, Queen Victoria ruled the British Empire, Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister and the possibility of war against the Boers in South Africa was beginning to look ever more likely.

Life in rural Dorset was a far cry from the bustle and hustle of the major cities and the market town of Blandford Forum nestled quietly in what was to become known as Hardy Country.

Much of the surrounding countryside was owned by wealthy landowners who leased parts of their estates to tenant farmers in order to offset some of the large sums of money needed to support their lifestyles. One such man was Sir William Henry Smith-Marrion, a fifth baronet,

living at Down House, Blandford St Mary. Being bored with the usual leisure activities of the gentry; hunting, shooting and fishing, he decided to build a golf course on Rawston Down and Ashley Wood Golf Club was born.

Ashley Wood was in fact the fifth Golf Club to be formed in Dorset, following Bridport 1891, Isle of Purbeck 1892, Lyme Regis 1893 and Sherborne 1894.

An ordnance survey carried out during 1900 recorded the "Golf Links", as the course was then known, being 2642 yards in length consisting of nine holes complete with grass bunkers. The course was laid out



*Sir William Henry Smith-Marrion
(1835-1924) Founder member*

over historic countryside, including Huzbury Rings, an ancient ring fort, Tumuli and defensive dykes all of which dated back to pre-Roman times. These ancient remains were incorporated into the layout in various ways and without doubt added to the difficulty of the course.

One of the founder members, of which there were forty-seven, was the Reverend Frank Salmon, at that time Vicar of Langton Long. After his death, the family donated "The Frank Salmon Silver" to the club which is still played for annually.

An entry in *The Golfers Annual XXII 1908* reads as follows:

BLANDFORD - Ashley Wood Golf Club. Instituted April 1896

Annual subscription £1. 1s. Ladies 12s. 6d

Number of members 40.

Hon Sec - Rev F Salmon, Langton Rectory, Blandford.

The course, of nine holes, is at Ashley Wood, about two miles from Blandford Station.

Visitors 1s. per day, 3s. per week, or 7s. 6d per month.

There are three hotels.

The first Professional Mr J Grant, took up his duties in 1905, followed by G Randall 1911 - 17, A Saint 1919 - 20, J Randall 1922 - 26 and A Saint, who returned in 1929.

In August 1919, at an Auction held at The Crown Hotel, Blandford, the land was purchased by Mr John Cossins, a local farmer, who subsequently levied a rent of 2s. 6d per annum on the course.



*F W Woodhouse
First President (1929)*

By 1923, interest in golf was steadily increasing and early in the year a group of senior golfers from five Dorset clubs met to discuss the possibility of forming a golf union. Mr F W Woodhouse was the representative from Ashley Wood and the Dorset Golf Union was officially ratified on the 25th January 1923. It is unclear why, after being a founder member of the union, Ashley Wood resigned their membership soon after the inauguration but happily they returned to the

fold in 1933. Meanwhile Mr Woodhouse, a prominent member of the golf club, became its first president in 1929.

In that same year a young man from Tarrant Rawston named Harry Hunt left school at the age of fourteen and started work at Ashley Wood as an assistant greenkeeper. During the next ten years, initially under the careful guidance of Professional Archie Saint, Harry became the Club Professional and a much respected golfer on the Pro circuit. This culminated in him winning "The Coronation Cup" in 1938 and 1939 which was a prestigious trophy played for by all the Professional golfers in the area.

His marriage to Iris resulted in the birth of their son, not surprisingly named Ashley. Although Harry was primarily the Club Pro, he spent much of his time tending the course and Iris could be found working around the clubhouse. It was not an uncommon sight to see her wheeling her barrow along the road between Tarrant Rawston and the golf club, full of water containers. This was the nearest source of water available at the time and



Harry and Iris Hunt (1979) Club Professional (1939)



W J Price (center) much secretary enjoys refreshments outside the locker room adjacent to the 18th green (1930)

one can only marvel at her dedication and stamina! The family connection was completed by Ashley caddying for some of the "elite" golfers in his school holidays.

With the outbreak of war, Harry joined the Royal Navy and never played Professional golf again. In 1945 he left the service and returned to Ashley Wood, but four years later he became a security officer at Flight Re-fuelling. He was rewarded with a BEM in 1979 and although his death in 1981 was a sad loss, his name lives on. The family donated a bench in his memory and "The Harry Hunt Memorial Trophy" is played for annually.

The family connection remains to this day with Ashley, a former captain and his wife Mel, who worked tirelessly to raise money recently for club development.

Due to the ever increasing membership it was clear that the facilities at the Club were woefully inadequate and, in 1932, the committee sanctioned



W Bedford financed the building of the new clubhouse (1932)

the building of a new wooden clubhouse to replace the two original sheds, which had served as locker and club repair rooms since the opening of the course. These sheds had been sited in the copse of trees adjacent to the eighteenth green and measured just 80 x 80 and 6ft x 40 respectively.

The committee at that time were; Major I. Cherry, T I Hughes, W J Pride, W A Foot, I Smith-Marriott, L Jay and B C Horn.

The new clubhouse was erected by R C Wehber, a builder from Poole and the finance for this project, £250, was supplied by Mr Bedford of Silver Springs Watercress, Bore Regis. During this era the course was extended

by leasing one acre of land from Mr I Holland, which was situated on the other side of the main Blandford to Wimborne road. The par 3 seventh hole was played across this road, with the green situated right in the middle of the Buzbury Rings, which can still be seen today. The eighth tee was also on this land, making it necessary to drive back across the road in order to complete the hole. One must remember, of course, that the pre-war traffic was negligible when compared with the modern day volumes which now would make the holes impossible to play.

The original nine holes were named; The Ditch, Turbulous, Dingle Dell, The Valley, Ashley Wood, Road Hole, Buzbury, The Coppice and Home.

1933 saw the Annual subscriptions rise to £3.10s. Green fees were 2/- per day, increasing to 2/6d for Sunday and Bank Holiday play. Harry Hunt, the Professional/Greenkeeper was paid 7/- per week and an hour lesson with him cost 2/-.

During the war years 1939-45 the membership declined but a small band of locals tried to maintain the course, seemingly without much success. Little else is documented about the golf club during the forties, but it is clear that Ashley Wood was allowed to become derelict, that is, until the Careys took an interest.

Chapter 2

The Careys

ROY AND JACKIE CAREY spent much of their early married life in Ongar, Essex where they built up a successful refrigeration engineering business. In their spare time they both enjoyed the game of golf, Roy being a low single figure golfer and Jackie a member of the Mundesley club in Suffolk. In 1952, at the ages of forty-seven and fifty-three respectively, fate was about to transform their lives after a chance trip to Dorset.

Peter, their son, had chosen a military career and had been posted to the Blandford Army camp on the outskirts of the town. During a visit to see their son, Roy decided to play golf at the local Ashley Wood Golf Course and asked the Major, who was looking after the establishment, for permission.

The Major's reply of "You can try" somewhat puzzled Roy until he saw what the course offered. Roy takes up the story:

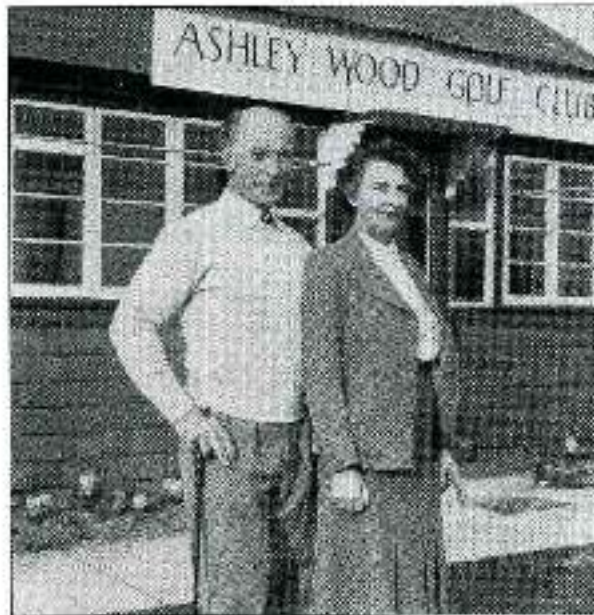
"We drove up to a derelict shack which had once been the clubhouse. The Major, waving his club in the vague direction of the first green said; 'Usually someone walks ahead with a red flag to show where the greens are.' As we played with difficulty around the course, I noticed that scrub and undergrowth almost met in the middle of the fairways. Every green was riddled with molehills; one actually contained a rabbit burrow. The long grass was choked with rusting buckets, broken bottles and rotting golf balls.

A farm worker on a tractor was ploughing up a large tract of land adjacent to one of the fairways and I was told by my playing partner that, due to the demise of the golf club, the whole area was about to revert to agricultural farmland."

For some obscure reason Roy was hooked and with Jackie's blessing decided to risk all and purchase the club. Having made contact with Mr Ernie Cossins, the owner, they agreed to buy three acres of land for £200 and lease the remaining thirty-seven acres for twenty-one years, paying a ground rent of £30 per annum. The three acres purchased included the club house, golf course up to the first rills and an area of land opposite what is now the car park entrance, on which they were to build their home, Dorney House, at a later date. In addition, a further ten acres were leased from Mr Peter Colman, an adjacent farmer. Within two weeks the deals were completed and they sold their home and business interests in Essex and moved to Dorset.

Carey's Curse

One can only imagine the daunting task that awaited the Careys. Obviously, the first priority was to get Ashley Wood back to its former glory and then revive the membership, of which there were just six when they took over the club. What Blandfordians described as "Carey's Curse"



Roy and Jackie Carey outside their beloved Ashley Wood clubhouse (circa 1960)

consisted of a scrub-covered, partly ploughed up golf course and a tumbled down clubhouse that had neither sanitation, electricity or water.

During the first three years they installed lavatory facilities, an electricity generator, obtained water from a borehole drilled at £1.10s. per foot and reconstructed and furnished the clubhouse.

Externally, bramble, gorse and trees were cleared from the course using a mechanical flail borrowed from the Army and bulldozers driven by off-duty troops. This work uncovered other problems for the Careys. Rabbits and moles had destroyed most of the tees and greens and had to be eradicated.

At night, hurricane lamps were placed on the greens and at 2am Roy would spray the rabbits with shot from a twelve bore. Moles were determined antagonists. They tunnelled the golf course, working nearly as hard as Roy and Jackie. As they bored their underground system, arsenic worms were introduced but still hundreds of neat hills appeared on the greens and fairways. The Careys drove round and round in their Land Rover and, when heaps were seen rising, Roy would jump out and blast the enemy with high velocity cartridges. Eventually, the moles lost heart, but day and night the Careys were slaves to Ashley Wood.

They had, on their arrival from Essex, rented a flat in Blandford but soon built a bungalow adjacent to the Club, complete with large garage that would double, at a later date, as an indoor golf clinic complete with mats, rubber driving mats and the infamous Carey Harness, of which I shall refer to later.

With all this work achieved, the Careys still had one major hurdle to overcome. New members were not forthcoming and, without local interest, it appeared that the great gamble was about to flounder. Percy Alliss and Reg Whitcombe, two legends in Dorset golf, had advised them not to proceed with the venture, saying "Golf up here will bankrupt you. You've got a white elephant!"

The membership had grown to ten when the Careys realized that, to stay in business, they would have to appeal to a far wider circle than the few local golfers who used the course.

They called a meeting and told the members that they intended to disband the Club and throw it open to the general public on a fee-paying basis. The regulars could buy a season ticket, which would enable them to play throughout the year for seven guineas and casual visitors would buy a green fee for the day. This decision was unpopular to say the least and, to a

man, the membership resigned never to return. To their credit Roy and Jackie kept going and, with £25,000 already invested, prayed for a miracle.

During the next six months their fortunes were literally in the balance. For days they went without seeing a customer and in an average week they took less than 5s. 0d. Although the course resembled a morgue, it was essential that routine maintenance was kept up. Jackie, who in her earlier years had been used to gracious living, spent her days driving the gang mower, spreading fertilizer and cutting greens, whilst Roy, in addition to working on the course, spent time improving his already grooved golf swing. Fate was about to come to their rescue in the ample form of a lexan named John Dorch.

One day, whilst playing aimlessly round the deserted course, Roy noticed a large American car pull up and an equally large American lever himself out. "I'd sure like to hit a ball like that, it might do wonders for my waistline," he said. John was a Master Sergeant from an American Army rest centre at Shafesbury and he confided later that his CO had ordered him to lose six inches off his portly frame.

Roy took up the challenge of teaching the overweight GI, who became his first paying pupil. Interest spread to other Americans at the base and in no time at all John had lost seven inches of stomach muscle and the rest centre authorities had "adopted" the course. The American Commanding Officer had a big unit crime rate and he knew that golf would keep his men out of mischief. Camp buses ran a daily shuttle service to Ashley Wood and, with Roy teaching and Jackie serving up English food at US prices, they began to realize their dream.

With the Americans from Shafesbury and British Army golfers from the REME and RASC depots stationed at Blandford taking an active interest, the golf club was beginning to look a far better prospect to the Careys.

Local youngsters from Clavesmore and Bryanston Schools used the facilities to the full and at long last Ashley Wood was again a viable proposition.

Chapter 3

The Swinging Sixties

BY 1960 the transformation of Ashley Wood Golf Club was there for all to see.

The original layout had been altered and no longer did the seventh and eighth holes straddle the main road. The provision of two separate tees to serve each hole ensured a more varied and enjoyable 18 holes and the course now measured 5107 yards. Some of the hole names were changed and the following extracts are taken from the 1961 official handbook.

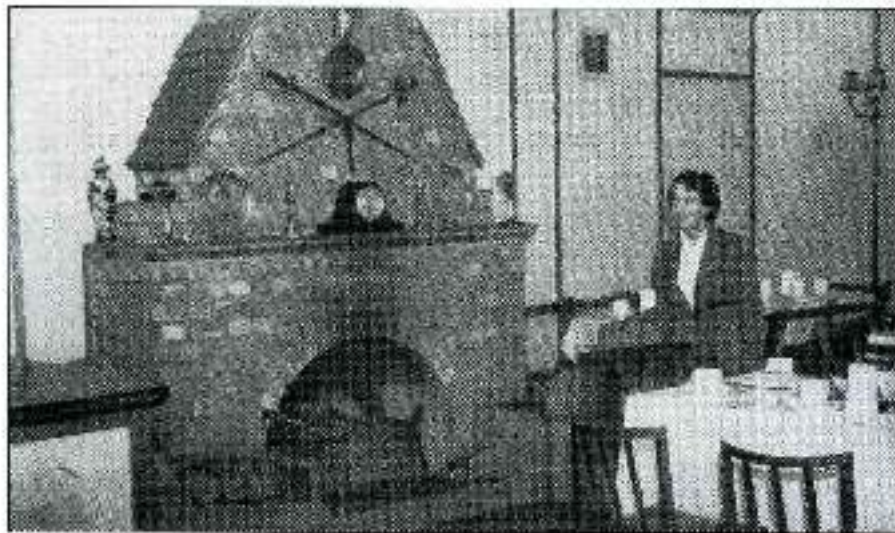
Hole	Yards	Stroke Bogey Index	Hole	Yards	Stroke Bogey Index		
1	979	4	3	10	379	4	4
2	256	4	15	11	267	4	14
3	230	4	11	12	258	5	12
4	948	4	7	13	343	4	8
5	235	4	9	14	346	4	1
6	191	3	13	15	172	3	16
7	272	4	5	16	287	4	1
8	305	4	9	17	260	4	10
9	227	4	17	18	244	4	18
Out	2537	35	In	2370	35		
			Out	2537	35		
			Total	5107	70		

SUBSCRIPTIONS

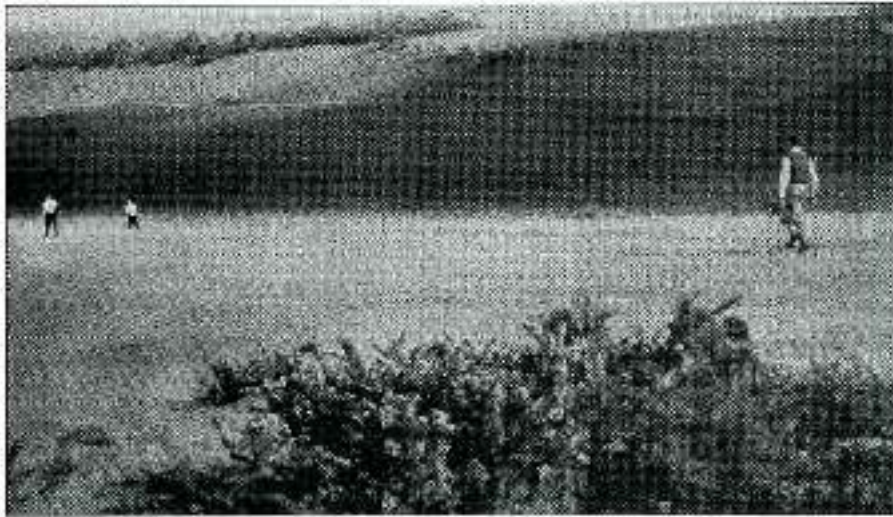
Full annual season ticket	4	8	0
Gentlemen	9	0	0
Ladies	7	7	0
Five Day Country Membership	3	3	0
Social Membership	2	2	0
Students	Rates on application		

GREEN FEES

		s.	d.
Xmas, Bank Holidays	Round	7	6
	Day	10	0
Saturdays, Sundays	Round	5	0
	Day	8	6
Weekdays	Round	3	0
	Day	6	6



Jackie surveys her club room (1960)



Golfers approach the 2nd green, a 255 yd par 4 named "Tumult" (1960)

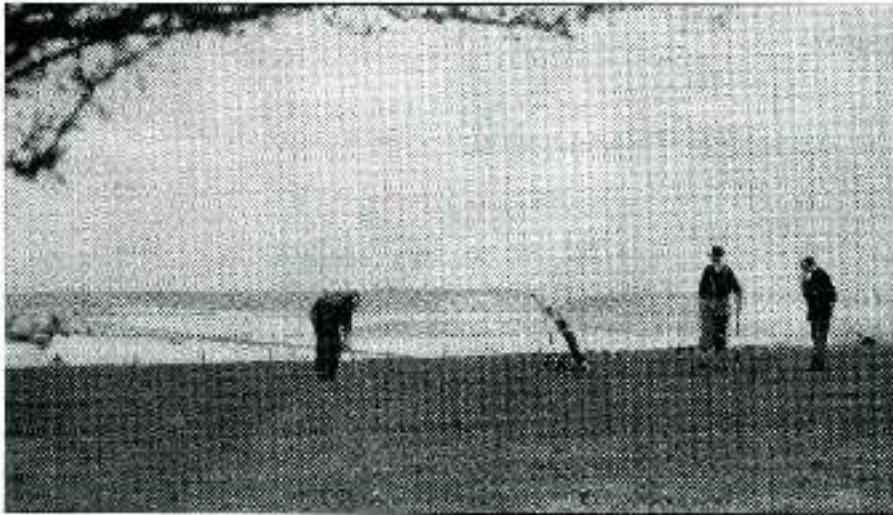
As previously mentioned, the holes were renamed thus:

Longrise, Humuli, The Dell, The Valley, Ashley Wood, The Rings, Death or Glory, Spinney Drive and The Dyke.

It was during this era that the Infamous Carey Harness was introduced. Within the confines of his garage/swing clinic, Roy imparted his own special brand of tuition. Would-be golfers were strapped into a device that resembled a cross between a straight jacket and horse collar. He reasoned,



Clubhouse with Denney House in background (circa 1958)



Players putting out on the 9th green, a 227 yd par 4 named "The Dyer" (1966)



Renowned as a teacher, Roy Carey shows the art of bunker play (1965)

with an engineer's mind that stance, leverage, correct use of muscle power and posture were all necessary pre-requisites for the sport and these attributes were all assured with Roy's invention. Ex-graduates were easily recognizable by their set up and swing pattern and to this day one can still see the odd senior player with this technique.

Chapter 4

A New Beginning

IN 1972, after twenty years as owners, Roy and Jackie Carey decided to retire and duly offered their club interests to the membership.

Being a proprietary club they asked £6,000 for their interests as proprietors, the fixtures and fittings in the clubhouse and the equipment used in maintaining the course. Bar stock would be purchased at valuation.

Terms would be negotiated for the leasing of the clubhouse and course with additional land made available by the owner for car parking facilities.

On the 30th November 1972 a meeting was called and fifty-six members attended.

Consideration was given to finance and it was suggested that a working capital of £8,000 be raised by way of interest free loans from members of the new club. Pledges of £3,800 were assured at the meeting and after much discussion it was agreed to proceed with the purchase and the members formed . . .

THE ASHLEY WOOD GOLF CLUB

Subsequently the following members were elected as Officers and Committee:

<i>President</i>	Douglas Girling	<i>Treasurer</i>	Kenneth Edwards
<i>Captain</i>	Arthur Randall	<i>Committee</i>	Robert Hyde
<i>Vice Captain</i>	Peter Williams		Brian Miles
<i>Lady Captain</i>	Rosa Hyde		Ronald Shove
<i>Secretary</i>	John Sneary		Harry Clark

On the 1st January 1973 The Ashley Wood Golf Club officially became a members club and three leases were signed between the Trustees and the relevant landlords.

Lease No 1 Club house, 1st Tee and 9th green up to rills.

Between Mr & Mrs Carey and the Trustees.

Lease No 2 Remainder of land, excluding 5th and 6th holes and 4th green.

Between I Cossins & Sons Ltd and the Trustees.

Lease No 3 5th and 6th holes and 4th green

Between P M Coleman and the Trustees.

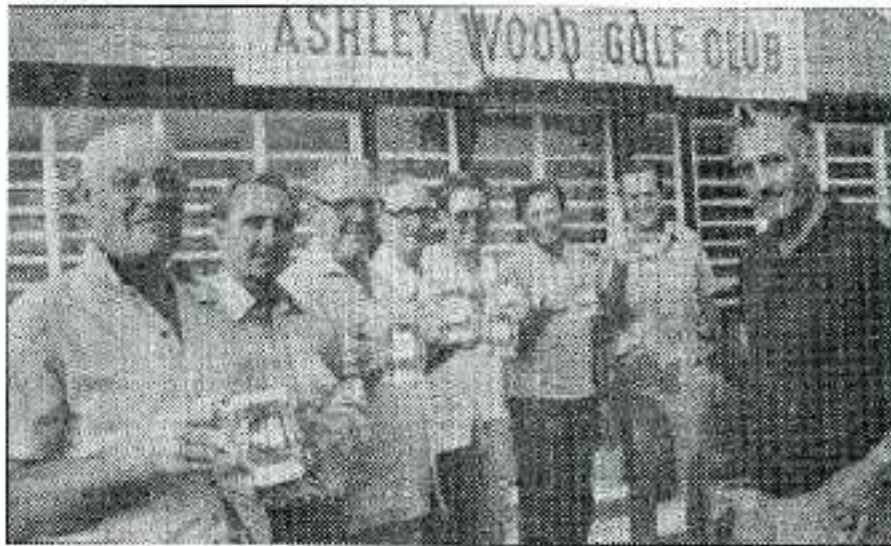
All the leases were for six year durations totalling £1,600 with the rents reviewed during the third year.

Membership was £22 per annum and limited to 250 people. Initially only 216 members were signed up and at a time when golf was still a minority sport, it was a gamble that could have gone horribly wrong.

During 1974, for instance, the course had to be closed due to the elements. A prolonged dry spell with cold north east winds had caused several greens to crack up and although the closure meant considerable loss of revenue to the club, the committee decided to protect the members



*Club President
Douglas Gibling and
the Careys agree to the
members invoice
(1973)*



Club Captain Harry Clark presents medals to previous captain: L. to R: B Hyde, D Williams, D Gerlag, R Shaw, J Columbus, P Williams, K Edwards (1976)

investment and close the course. An anxious two weeks was experienced before the weather relented and the course was re-opened.

Thanks to their fortitude and courage, these people built a platform that future members would use to project the club into the higher echelons of Dorset golf, whilst Roy and Jackie Carey were made Honorary Life Members and retired to live out their lives in their beloved Dormy House. Jackie died in 1989 at the age of 91 and Roy one year later, aged 84.

In 1978, with membership increasing, it was decided to look into the possibility of improving the existing course and a development committee comprising of Haydn White, John Sneary, Ken Sanger and Keith Durbin produced a comprehensive report for the club.

Hamilton Stout & Co, Architects and Consultants were engaged to work with the committee and their recommendations included the following:

1) That the building of an extra nine holes be rejected as premature due to the membership at that time being insufficient to support an 18 hole golf course and the unavailability of additional land in the foreseeable future.

2) That a first-class 9 hole course be provided, utilising much of the original land. With this less costly option a restricted membership could be

maintained and the improved facilities would help retain the present membership numbers, which due to other golf becoming available in the district, was considered vulnerable.

3) It was agreed to adapt the existing club house, as the cost of building a new unit was prohibitive. The adaption would include new changing and washing facilities, alterations to the clubroom, improved kitchen and storage areas and staff cloakroom.

The estimated cost of the recommendations was £100,000. This report was accepted by the membership and Mr Hamilton Stutt proceeded to design a new layout, incorporating land previously unused in the centre of the old course. In addition, he extended the two tees per green principle to all holes, designed six new greens and created various new bunkers and traps.



*Nigel Stainer, Greenkeeper
and club Pro. (1979-85)*

During 1979 Nigel Stainer joined The Ashley Wood Club as Head Greenkeeper. Until then, the course management had been kept "in house" with a sub committee being responsible for the general upkeep of the course.

Nigel had been the Pro at Knighton Heath Golf Club until 1977 when, for reasons unknown, he left the circuit to become a delivery driver. He subsequently lost his professional status and his membership to the Professional Golfers Association, but during his six years at The Ashley Wood he supplemented his greenkeeper's salary by giving golf lessons to members.

He had started his golf career as an Assistant Pro to Percy Alliss and Doug Sewell at Ferndown and had become perhaps the best professional golfer in Dorset during the early seventies. During these years he became the Dorset Professional Golf Champion and held no less than four course records in Dorset, at Broadstone, Lyme Regis, Knighton Heath and Ashley Wood.

He remained at the club until 1985 when a "restructuring of staff" made his position untenable.

Chapter 5

The Eighties

IN 1980, to implement the recommendations previously agreed by the members, finance was needed to upgrade the existing nine holes and the committee duly held meetings with the Club's bankers in order to raise the required funding. With a loan finally agreed, work commenced and a new era began. The majority of the work was done by the members themselves who, with access to earth moving equipment and heavy plant, spent countless hours clearing scrub, building tees and greens, thus generally putting Hamilton Soutis ideas into practice. This valiant band of golfers, many of whom still retain membership, are the backbone of the present Club and newer members undoubtedly owe much to their hard work and dedication. To this day many of them still form working parties to



The 19th green and clubhouse (1982)

help improve the course conditions, which is possibly unique to The Ashley Wood Golf Club, but epitomizes the spirit within this members club.

1981 saw the completion of the work and The Ashley Wood Golf Club became arguably the finest 9 hole course in the county.

The new layout measured 6227 yards with a standard scratch score of 70.

Hole	Yards	S.I	Par	Hole	Yards	S.I	Par
1	542	7	5	10	525	8	5
2	408	2	4	11	421	1	4
3	462	3	4	12	398	4	4
4	98	17	3	13	114	18	3
5	408	11	4	14	388	10	4
6	384	9	4	15	346	11	4
7	136	15	3	16	150	16	3
8	472	5	4	17	505	6	5
9	259	13	4	18	213	12	3
OUT	3167			IN	3060		
				OUT	3167		
			TOTAL		6227		

At last The Ashley Wood Golf Club was on the map and could no longer be considered a "Pitch and Putt venue", a comment heard more than once in the corridors of power at certain more salubrious clubs. The course



Clubhouse and bar renovations complete (1985)



A shot in the dark. George Phillips tees off at the 4th during night golf (1983)

offered a good test of golf for both the low handicapper and novice, whilst retaining the rural friendliness that the Club was already famous for.

During the previous year it was decided to hold a Charity event in aid of Muscular Dystrophy and the first "Night Golf" to be played in England took place at The Ashley Wood Golf Club. Originally intended for one night only, the event snowballed and by 1986 over two hundred golfers from a wide area were taking part in preliminary heats, held over four

nights, to qualify for the final held on the fifth night.

The tournament was played over a shortened course and golfers could use nothing above an 8 iron. All shots were played in the dark, although



Hardy B League Winners (1983). Back, L to R: J Bea, C Jones, R Riggs, F Reid, S Rollins, G Lloyd, A Bailey, M Somers. Front, L to R: H Rebbeck, G Wiggall, B Cornick, K Durbin, G Brumby

lights illuminated the flagsticks and torches were allowed to help find the balls.

It was at one of these night tournaments that George Phillips was immortalized. He unwittingly holed his 9 iron tee shot at the 85 yd 4th hole and won a video recorder, donated by Barclays Bank.

Many thousands of pounds were raised for the Charity, but the popularity of the event was to be its eventual downfall. So many people, playing in the dark, inevitably took its toll on the course and the event was finally stopped to prevent further damage.

In 1982, under the captaincy of Keith Durbin, the Club applied to join the Hardy League. This is an inter club league for golf clubs in Dorset and they were duly elected into the B division. The team came runners up in their first year but 1983 saw them go one better and win the league, no mean feat for a club with membership considerably smaller than that of its opposition.

During the same year four top European golfers appeared at the golf club. Manuel Pinero, Manuel Calero, Sam Torrance and John O'Leary held a golf clinic in the morning, followed by an eighteen hole exhibition match after lunch.



*PGA Tour Professionals visit LAWCC (1983)
L to R: T Bishop (Committee member), Manuel Pinero, Manuel Calero,
B Canale (Club Captain), Sam Torrance, John O'Leary*

None of the players found the course or weather conditions easy to cope with as their scores suggested;

O'Leary / 70, Calero / 72, Pineró / 73, Berrance / 74.

Club captain, Barry Cornick, organised the event and the Pros each received £1000 for their efforts. Sponsorship and gate monies ensured a successful day and a donation was made to the Charity, "Investigation into Cot Deaths".

In 1985 Spencer Taylor became the Club Pro, taking over from Nigel Blankarne who had a concession to sell golf equipment from a portakabin at the Club. Spencer had served his apprenticeship at Dilsden Purlicen Golf Club under Alan Bridge and, at twenty-one years of age, qualified as one of the youngest Professionals on the circuit.

Spencer proved to be an excellent teacher and it can be no coincidence that many of the Juniors he taught have become some of the best golfers within the Club. Over the last three years, for example, Junior or Colt members have won the Club Championship and perhaps here I should mention Jason Howard, who in 1994, won the prestigious title at the ripe old age of fifteen years ten months, possibly the youngest Club Champion on record.

Nick Rodgers, Club Champion for two out of the last three years, holds the old course record of 65 as well as jointly holding the new course record with Colts Jason Howard, Richard Pullen and Junior Stuart Radcliffe, who have all recorded rounds of 68.

Many of the Juniors, both boys and girls, have represented Dorset in intercounty matches, and with the ultimate destiny of the Club in their hands, the future looks bright.

With the membership steadily increasing during 1987-88, logistical problems were experienced. As the course was still only nine holes it was necessary to close the first tee after two hours play in order to allow the early starters to continue the second half of their rounds. Although perhaps a little inconvenient, this enforced delay caused a unique camaraderie to build up within the clubhouse by members waiting to go out and do battle.

Washing and changing facilities were once again stretched to the limits and water shortages regularly experienced. The original bore hole, sunk by Roy Carey nearly forty years earlier, had been contaminated by a diesel spillage and the Club had relied on local utilities for their supplies. During the summer, with local farmers watering their crops, supplies to the club's

water storage facilities were often totally exhausted leaving both the course and clubhouse arid. It was a common sight to see water bowsers delivered to alleviate the problem but it was obvious that this situation could not continue indefinitely.

At the 1989 December AGM it was agreed by the members to have a new bore hole sunk and in June 1990 contractors began the excavation. It was necessary to bore to a final depth of 450 ft in order to find sufficient water, but the work was duly completed in July 1990 at a cost of £16,000.

In July 1990 exploratory meetings took place between the Club and John and James Cassins, who were the lessors for the land on which the majority of the golf course stood. The meetings were to discuss the possibility of extending the course to eighteen holes by purchasing the land currently leased from the owners and taking up new leases on their land adjacent to the existing course. After much consultation, plans and costs were provisionally agreed, but in the true traditions of a members club, the committee proposals had to be approved by the majority of the membership. A general meeting was organized for such a major decision and a large turn out was rightly anticipated.



Trustees sign the leases for the new course (1992). L to R: K Edwards, D King, J Sweeney

An EGM, chaired by Harold Rebbeck, was held on 21st February 1991 at Blandford Upper School. The meeting was attended by well over two hundred members and, after much discussion, the vast majority accepted the proposals. Ken Sanger, the committee member responsible for development, Reg Harvey, Club Treasurer and Peter Lifford, Club Secretary/Manager began negotiations with bankers to raise the £450,000 required.

Additional funding was raised by some members taking up life memberships, whilst Ashley and Mel Hunt ran "development competitions" which raised very nearly £2,000.

With the loan secured, leases and contracts were eventually signed by the Trustees on 22nd February 1992 and work commenced on the new nine holes. The development was entrusted to The Patrick Ballack organisation from Surrey who, with committee approval, designed and carried out the project.

Huge earth moving equipment was employed to transform the fields into interesting, demanding golf holes and thousands of saplings were planted, many donated by members or societies.

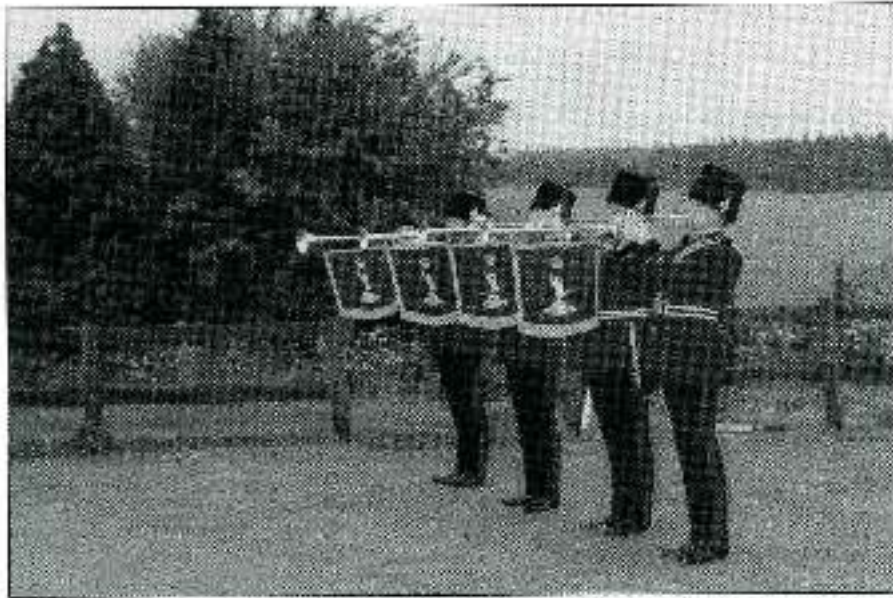


Bob Hyde

With the eighteenth hole being altered from a par 4 to a par 3, it was decided to utilize the old redundant tee area and a practice ground was made available to the members. This incorporated a safety net running alongside the main Wimborne road, a double practice net, sand bunker and chipping area.

And so it was, that at 11am on the 7th May 1994 and almost one hundred years from its inception, The Ashley Wood Golf Club became an eighteen hole golf course for the first time.

A large crowd assembled to hear a fanfare by the Royal Signals Band herald in the Club Captain, Frank Reid, who thanked all those who had worked so hard to achieve the impossible dream. Further speeches were made by



Opening of the new course (1994)

the Chairman Harold Rebbeck and Hayden White, both stalwarts of the club, before witnessing octogenarian Bob Hyde, the Club President, strike the first ball down the fairway, which he did with unerring accuracy. There followed a stableford competition, aptly named the Celebration Cup, played for over the new course with well over one hundred members taking part. K Grimshaw, N Jones and M Budden were the divisional winners and a buffet dance in the evening completed the successful launch of the eighteen holes. In order to show off the new layout, invitations were extended to all other golf clubs in Dorset and an open competition was held in which twenty-five teams competed for glory. The eventual winners were Mid-Dorset but all who took part that day agreed the course was excellent and that The Ashley Wood Golf Club was the real winner.

Because of advertising and media coverage, membership was steadily increasing and behind the scenes the committee realized that the Club had outgrown the clubhouse.

In 1993 plans had been drawn up and passed by the District Council for an extension to the clubhouse but had to be held in abeyance due to the high costs of such an enterprise. It was generally agreed that the members

should not pay for the required improvements as they were already being charged a levy, in addition to their annual subscription, in order to finance the loan for the new course.

Overcrowded changing and toilet facilities were the order of the day until, in 1994, a change in the law came to the rescue.

Until 1994, VAT had been charged on all leisure activities, including golf, but the Government decided to alter the law and subsequently the Customs and Excise Department repaid millions of pounds back into the public sector. Until then, Value Added Tax had been payable on both Joining Fees and Annual Subscriptions but with this change of heart clubs were entitled to a refund, backdated from 1991.

The committee saw a golden opportunity to fund the improvements to the clubhouse from this windfall, but the members would first have to waive their possible right to any monies due to them. Every member, past and present at that time, was sent a letter explaining the position and asking them to forego their refunds. Over ninety percent of those polled agreed to the idea, reasoning that they had already spent the money and therefore wouldn't miss it.

Plans were quickly formulated and in April 1995, Haydon & Co of Bournemouth started the improvements to the clubhouse. The work included building new ladies and gents changing rooms, secretary's office and entrance hall, refurbishing the lounge and extending the kitchen and professional shop.

By the middle of June 1995, and with minimal disruption, the work had been completed and an excellent facility was in full use.

This appeared to be the last piece in a huge jigsaw. From the embryonic ideas of a bored landowner to a multi million pound investment, The Ashley Wood Golf Club has survived where, at times, people had thought it would perish.

Over the years it has championed many good causes. Charities are selected annually and benefit from the generosity of the club members who donate thousands of pounds to people less fortunate. Last year, as an example, over £3,000 was raised for The Wessex Hospice Appeal, which is a Charity set up to care for terminally ill children.

Chapter 6

Sections

WITHIN THE CLUB various groups have been formed, the oldest being the Ladies section.

Currently boasting over seventy members, this section was started on 11th February 1974 under the guidance of Rosa Hyde who unfortunately passed away in 1993, but a previous Lady Captain, Pam Martin, recalls her early days at the club.

"When I joined, my first impressions weren't favourable. The course was only nine holes and the ground staff didn't have the equipment to keep it in a very good condition. The Ladies section were very hospitable to me, most of all Rosa Hyde, Joyce Stephens and Gladys Harries. Rosa and Gladys were so kind to all new members and Joyce always did the flowers for the clubhouse, free of charge.

Gradually the Ladies membership increased, but I later learned that some of them only joined us to obtain a handicap which would help them gain access to more prestigious clubs.

I remember with affection the seventh hole which had a pond in front of the green. More balls went into it than over it and on Saturday mornings a medley of small boys could be seen retrieving them from the water, cleaning them and trying to sell them back to the members at the clubhouse. When the pond was finally



Rosa Hyde - Responsible for Ladies Section from 1966

drained and made into a bunker, I retrieved all the fish and to this day they are swimming happily in my fish pond."

Pam worked hard to promote The Ashley Wood Golf Club and helped initiate both The Invitation and Open Days. A member of the main committee, she was finally rewarded with an Honorary Life Membership.

In common with most golf clubs in the early days, the Ladies found it difficult to integrate into what was predominately a male pastime, but as the nineteen eighties drew to a close more and more Ladies were playing golf and mixed competitions became increasingly popular.

The Ladies Club Champion for the past six years has been Emma Price, a very accomplished six handicap golfer and the section compete in numerous inter club matches, more than holding their own in competitions. They have their own sub committee, whilst the current Lady Captain represents her members on the main committee.

In keeping with tradition, some of the Ladies keep the clubhouse regularly stocked with flowers and have rightfully become an integral part of the Club.

Another group of players within the Club form the Juniors/Colt section. As previously mentioned Spencer Taylor has encouraged the younger players to improve their undoubted skills and regularly plays golf with the future stars of the Club. A special mention here for Hedley Rodgers and his wife Sheila, who for many years ran the junior section and contributed largely to its success.

Their sons, Peter and Nick Rodgers are just two examples of what can be achieved by dedication and encouragement. Peter, after leaving school, became assistant to Spencer Taylor and has now decided to try his skills on the Pro Circuit. Nick, playing off a handicap of two, is the current Club Champion and has played for the County, as have many of the Junior and Colts.

The section currently has thirty-four Juniors, including six associates from Milton Abbey School and five Colt members on its books and is being run by Tony Hart.

The Blandford Garrison, or BGGs, are another section within the Club and regularly play their Medals, Perpetual Trophies and representative matches at, what has always been, their home course.

Because the personnel in this section are liable to change due to postings or redeployment, the BGGs pay for twenty-five annual subscriptions which can be used by any of it's membership throughout the year.

As this history relates, the Garrison tradition of offering great support to the Club when needed, should not be underrated and will, I'm sure, continue to blossom.

The fourth and most recent group to be formed were the Veterans, or Vets.

In 1988, former member Andy Bell tried to promote the idea of inter-club matches at senior level. There appears to have been little interest within the neighbouring clubs, but Andy began an unofficial section at The Ashley Wood Golf Club for the benefit of its senior players.

George Mahoney took over the reins and, to a large degree, was responsible for achieving the recognition that soon followed.

After being officially recognized by the Club at the AGM in 1993, this intrepid band of "over fifty-livers" set up the section that now boasts eighty-seven members.

Colin Gillette as Seniors Organizer, leads a forward-thinking sub-committee and they are now both well established and integrated into the framework of the club.

They currently play in excess of twenty inter-club friendly matches a year and enjoy considerable success, in addition to their Medals and Perpetual Trophies played for within their section.

I have arrived at what is nearly the end of my story, but knowing the Club as I do, I am sure that things will move inexorably into the next millennium.

1996, you will know, is the Clubs Centenary Year and a sub-committee have organized numerous events to celebrate this great achievement.

I can only hope that you, the member, will get as much enjoyment out of your Club as I have managed to achieve and remember that you are privileged to be part of a unique establishment called . . .

THE ASHLEY WOOD GOLF CLUB.



Chapter 7

Officials and Honours Boards

Presidents

1990 R Hyde
1987 Mrs J Carey
1968 D R Girling
1962 W L Sharpe
1955 H & M Haggard (USA)
1953 B C Hunt
1929 F D Woodhouse

Past Club Captains

1996	G Wagstaff	1985	C Sanger	1974	P Williams
1995	T Bishop	1984	H Reinbeck	1973	A Randall
1994	F Reid	1983	B Chernick	1972	B Miles
1993	D Pratt	1982	K Durbin	1971	P de Vool
1992	B Whiting	1981	S Robbins	1970	D Williams
1991	A Bailey	1980	K Sanger	1969	R Hyde
1990	H O A Hunt	1979	I Robb	1968	R L Shove
1989	G L Bromby	1978	M Lewis	1967	K T Edwards
1988	R Rogers	1977	H White	1966	D Girling
1987	H White	1976	H J Clarke	1965	D Girling
1986	C Jeans	1975	J Coombes	1962	H Roffey
				1953	K H I Larvison

Past Captains (Ladies)

1996	Mrs J Robson	1988	Mrs K Iwerett	1980	Mrs M Ince
1995	Mrs S Kent	1987	Mrs P Wallen	1979	Mrs I Rayner
1994	Mrs P Lindsay	1986	Mrs J White	1978	Mrs S Lowe
1993	Mrs M Ruchart	1985	Mrs S Jeans	1977	Mrs P Martin
1992	Mrs V Jones	1984	Mrs J Robson	1976	Mrs P Martin
1991	Mrs S Turner	1983	Mrs B Crisfield	1975	Mrs G I James
1990	Mrs N Mahoney	1982	Mrs D Bozic	1974	Mrs D King
1989	Mrs S Wood	1981	Mrs A Osmond-Jones		

Club Championships (scratch)

Gentlemen				Ladies	
1995	N Rodgers	1985	S Ricketts	1995	F Price
1994	J Howard	1982	M White	1994	F Price
1993	N Rodgers	1981	M White	1993	F Price
1992	G Davies	1980	P Abivert	1992	F Price
1991	M White	1979	I White	1991	F Price
1990	M White	1978	M Lewis	1990	F Price
1989	M White	1977	P Kent	1989	J Robson
1988	M White	1976	P Kent	1988	J Robson
1987	M White	1975	R Showe	1987	J Robson
1986	S Ricketts	1974	D G Williams		
1985	D Pratt	1973	D Gelling		
1984	S Ricketts	1972	D G Williams		



*PAST CAPTAINS – Back row: B. Felling, G. Bromby, C. Jones, K. Edwards, D. Pratt, K. Sauger, A. Hunt, R. Rogers
Front row: Joe Robbins, H. Fells, H. Roberts, R. Hyde, K. Durbis, D. Williams*

CENTENARY CAPTAINS



Mr George Wagstaff (*Club Captain*)

George, or Waggy as he is affectionately known, was born in South Kirby, Yorkshire, in 1920.

Aged 18, he joined the Regular Army and served in the Far East during the war years. In 1946 he moved to Dorset and joined TAWGC in 1964.

He became Head Groundsman at Milton Abbey School where, in 1972, he built a picturesque 9 hole golf course within its grounds.

A born comic and after dinner speaker, he will, without doubt, prove to be the ideal Centenary Captain.



Mrs Joan Robson (*Ladies Captain*)

Joan is a native of Newcastle and came to Dorset in 1976.

She joined TAWGC in 1981 and became Lady Captain for the first time in 1984. In 1987, 88, 89, Joan was the Club Champion and in 1993, 94 was Captain of Dorset Ladies Ex Captains.

Her previous experiences of being at the helm will ensure a successful year for the Ladies.



Mr Bob Hyde (*President*)

Bob was born at Canterbury, Kent in 1907.

An engineer by trade, he joined TAWGC in 1955 and has, over the years, held most positions within the Golf Club, including Captain.

As its "Elder Statesman", Bob perhaps knows more than most about the trials and tribulations of the Club and is a much respected Honorary Life Member.

Appendix

NATURE RESERVED FOR THE ASHLEY WOOD GOLFER

This section is written by Mary Buchan, an ex captain, and I make no apology for transcribing it in full. I could never have captured Ashley Wood in text as well as Mary has done with the following.

JANUARY and the year begins, throughout the eighteen holes, with a few brave Daisies, golden spikes of Gorse and the bright red berries of the Stinking Iris. Golden Catkins hang from the Hazel trees.



No play today!

FEBRUARY welcomes us with a few more Daisies, the first Dandelions and Snowdrops. Perhaps the Wild Crocus may bloom, whilst under the hedges and copse bottoms the prolific Dog's Mercury flowers.

There is very little change in MARCH, apart from the first Violets which may be found in sheltered places.

With the longer, warmer days of APRIL the variety of wild flowers increase rapidly; Cowslips, Primroses, Violets, Ground Ivy (low growing with mauve blue flowers), dark blue Bugle, Lords and Ladies, Storchwort, Campion and Buttercups. If you know where to look you can see the handsome spikes of the Early Purple Orchid. Meanwhile, the Daisies and Dandelions are turning into a golfer's nightmare.

Here I should mention all the ordinary every day green plants we take for granted, as they all play a very important part in the abundant wildlife cycle found on the course. Common Ivy; Docks, Nettles, Cleavers, Figwort, Woundwort, the Deadnettle pink and white.

Also in bloom at this time of the year are the Blackthorn and Wayfaring trees. Throughout the Ashley wood the first Bluebells are showing their colours.

Into MAY and the woods are carpeted with blue. Dandelions and Daisies are rampant and the Spindle tree and Buckhorn are in flower. Take a little time to find these trees and admire their tiny greenish white flowers.

Into JUNE and along the sides of the first and second fairways drifts of the bright pink Sainfoin can be found, contrasting with patches of bright blue Germander Speedwell.

Between the fairways Cow Parsley blooms, not to be confused with the similar white flowers of the Pig-Nut found growing within the wood, contrasted here by the yellow of the Wood Spurge.

Soon the air will be scented sweetly by the Dog-Rose and Honeysuckle, joined by the heady scent of mature trees in full bloom: the Hawthorn, Sycamore, Oak and the Ash.

From JULY until well into AUGUST, on the older parts of the course can be seen the Dwarf Thistle, low growing Thyme and Self-Heal together with Birds Foot Trefoil, Medicks and Salad Burnet. Scabious, Harebells, Cranesbill, Mallow, Wood Betony and the beautiful seed heads of the Goat's-Beard abound whilst the old Rills are now covered with Agrimony, Lady's Bedstraw, Wild Parsnip and many varieties of Hawkweed, all of which are yellow. Here and there will be seen the bright red berries of the Lords and Ladies. On the new fairways is the pretty pink of Centaury. Just

off the fairways are large areas of pink or white Clover, which are richly scented and covered with foraging Bumble and Honey Bees. Hidden away in shady places the Stinking Iris will be blooming, its grey mauve flowers hardly visible.

Now is the time, whilst standing on the fifth tee, to listen to the Gorse pods popping in the hot sun. This is also the area where the Longtailed Tits nest, so keep an eye open for them.

Also can be seen the Skylark singing his joyous song, flocks of Robins and large flapping hopping Crows, busily searching for Leather Jackets and grubs. Mistle Thrushes strut undeterred by the occasional golf ball landing near them, whilst overhead the silent Kestrel hovers and over the wooded areas the mewling Buzzard soars.

During the year it is possible to see Rabbits, Hares, and Roe Deer. Butterflies to be seen are the Yellow Brimstone, the Orange Tip, the Marbled White, the Speckled Wood and the Holly Blue as well as those common species found in our gardens.

From the end of AUGUST and into SEPTEMBER, the flowers change to seed heads. The Wayfaring Tree berries turn through red to black and the Spindle berries turn bright pink, then split to show their orange seeds. The Buckthorn has clusters of small shiny black berries, whilst the Sloe, the fruit of the Blackthorn is beautiful to see but so sour to taste. The Hawthorn, Sycamore, Oak, Ash and Hazel are covered with their ripening fruits and Blackberries hang in enticing clusters on the hedgerows.

The months of OCTOBER, NOVEMBER and DECEMBER are very quiet. The Mistle Thrushes continue to strut the fairways and Pheasants from neighbouring farms find sanctuary in our own dreaded rough.

Mary J Buchan 1994

