

A Short History of Golf Shoe Spikes

Golf shoes have come a long way from the feathery days, when golfers wore their rather dainty street shoes complete with silver buckles.

The gentleman golfer in the etching would simply not recognise the high-tech, light-weight, comfortable golf shoes of today.

Even during my time as a golf professional golf shoes, and especially the spikes, have changed enormously. Until about 1945 replaceable golf shoe spikes were virtually unknown. Since most golf shoes were leather soled, to

get a good footing golfers (or more often the pros who attended to their every needs) had to hammer metal spikes (or cleats as they were sometimes known) into the shoes. To fit these spikes, the soles needed to be thoroughly wetted. They were then placed on a metal shoe last, a solid cast iron device which fitted inside the shoe like a modern shoe stretcher. The spikes were then hammered into place. The bases of the spikes were fitted with small tongues which, on hitting the metal last, would fold over and lock the spikes into place. Generally the spikes would last for the life of the shoes.

In the 1960s and 1970s a new type of spike became popular. Threaded metal sockets were built into the soles



of golf shoes and replaceable metal spikes were screwed into these sockets. To replace old and worn spikes it was necessary to remove the old ones by unscrewing them and then inserting a new set. If, however, the old spikes had rusted inside the socket it sometimes meant that a complete new sole had to be fitted. Rusted in spikes, or “spinners” as they were called, were the bane of a golf pro’s life.

In the 1970s hardened steel spikes made of tungsten appeared. Although extremely tough they were not the success that was hoped. Kicking the spikes on a piece of stone or concrete had the effect of dislodging the spike and the socket. Greenkeepers turned very nasty if their mowers happened to hit a piece of tungsten. Some golf courses banned tungsten spikes altogether.

In the 1980s came the moulded sole with long-lasting tungsten or ceramic spikes embedded in the sole. Despite some advantages these never became really popular. To limit the damage to putting greens caused by metal spikes, “soft” spikes made of rubber or plastic were invented. Early versions hardly made a mark on the greens, but they gave very little grip for the full shot. Soft spikes have evolved through many designs. The most popular modern version clicks easily into the sole and gives a good grip on the turf with little damage to the greens. Much of their popularity is due to their comfort compared to metal spikes. Many golf courses today will not allow golfers to wear metal spikes of any description, citing damage to greens – not to mention clubhouse carpets – and stray pieces of metal damaging the greens mowers.

Tom Moore



Spikes – top to bottom: hammer-in metal, screw-in metal, early soft, modern soft.

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

The aim of AGHS is to encourage the collection, research, recording and preservation of information and objects connected with the history of golf in Australia, to inform golfers, golf clubs and the community in general.

Contents

- President’s Message
- Captain’s Message
- Museum Report
- Historians Group Report
- Coming Events in 2008
- News of Members
- A Short History of Golf Shoe Spikes



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Tom Moore | Dan Cullen

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- Bruce Nairn, President & Chairperson
- Henry Paterson, Secretary
- Malcolm McIntosh, Treasurer
- Captain, to be appointed
- Tom Moore, Museum
- Erwin Huber, Historians Group
- Mal Bray, Publications
- Greg Mills, NSWGA Representative
- Frances Crampton, WGNSW Representative
- Kyle Francis, PGA Representative

President’s Message

With regret I have to announce that Ross Howard has resigned as our Captain. Ross recently had surgery on his hand, and this has severely restricted his golf. Ross also has increasing commitments on his private time, and overall he felt that he could not devote the time needed to be an active Captain. Almost since its inception Ross has been a valuable member of our Society and has contributed greatly in promoting its aims and objectives. We wish Ross a speedy recovery and look forward to his re-appearance on the golf course wielding the hickory sticks.

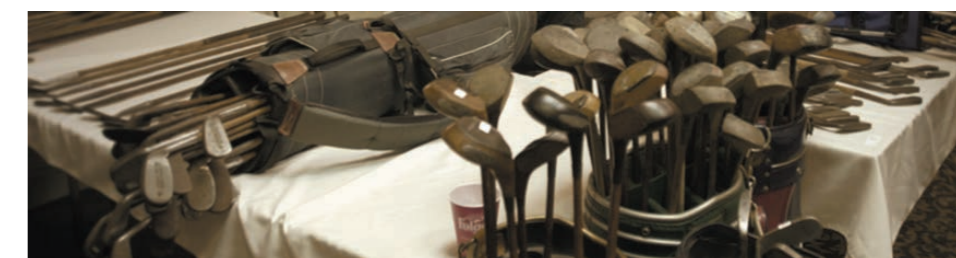
The Management Committee of the AGHS met for the second occasion on 22 May 2008. As Chairperson of the Management Committee I am pleased to report that we find the Society in a satisfactory financial state following the very generous support from three of our major sponsors, WGNSW, PGA of Australia and the NSWGA. This should enable the Society to fund most of the various projects which our sub-committees are contemplating. We have also been able to maintain the membership subscription at \$30 per annum. A notice for renewal of subscriptions comes with this issue of *The Brassie*. We shall undertake a drive for membership over the next twelve months, and we urge all our members to encourage their friends to join AGHS.

It is very important that every affiliated golf club in NSW has a record of their club history. To this end the NSWGA has requested the Historians Sub-Committee to undertake, at the Association’s expense, an extension of the Association’s book *The Story of Golf in NSW* from 1988 to the present. At a recent meeting of the NSWGA Council I read a message from our Historians Sub-Committee encouraging clubs to set up a history group at their club. I have arranged for Barry Leithhead’s message to be circulated in NSWGA correspondence to give it exposure to all clubs in NSW.

Malcolm Bray and Michael Sheret have presented a draft policy for the future publication of *The Brassie*. Michael Sheret is acting editor for this issue of *The Brassie* while Malcolm and his wife are holidaying in Europe. The new professional layout of *The Brassie* is due to the time and expertise freely given by Tom Winter, a graphic designer and generous friend of AGHS.

Our next meeting of the Management Committee is scheduled for 19 June.

Bruce Nairn



Captain's Message

Elsewhere in this issue of *The Brassie* you will have read of my resignation as Captain for reasons of health and time commitments. So, this will be my last contribution to *The Brassie* as your Captain.

The Dan Cullen Trophy was contested as a 2-person ambrose over nine holes at The Coast on 28 March. It was a glorious day on a fine course. Although tempted, sadly I was unable to play. Congratulations to the worthy trophy winners, Mal Bray and David Williams.



Mal and David about to tee off

In a change from past practice of playing the event in Sydney, this year the Australian Hickory Club Championship will be played in Perth. There is still much to be done to finalise the program but, as well as the Championship, other

opportunities to play golf in Perth will be arranged over the period 25 October to 9 November. We'll publish details as soon as we can, and we hope that many of our AGHS members will make the trip and enjoy hickory golf in new surroundings. It has been a privilege and a pleasure for me to serve as Captain of our Society. I extend my very best wishes to my successor.

Ross Howard

Museum Report

A start has been made on the implementation of the Museum Interpretation Plan. Further discussion of the plan will take place at the next meeting of the Management Committee.

We hope to complete the plan by the end of June.

Megan Barham of Museums NSW has given us great assistance in the Museum over the past two years. She is moving to Western Australia and we wish her every success for the future.

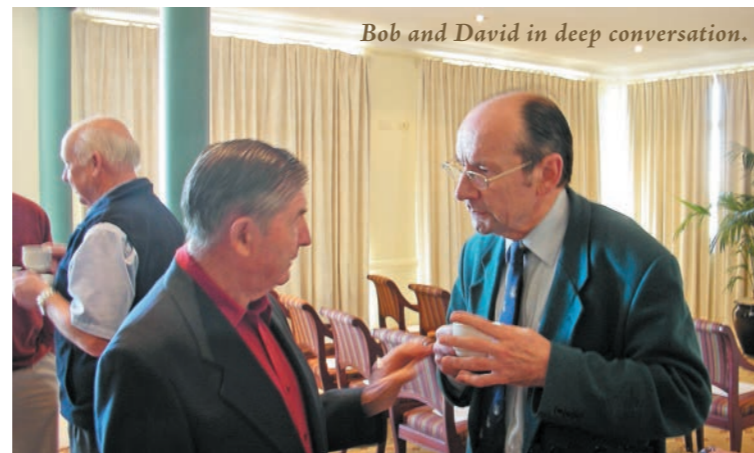
We have negotiated a long term loan of our ball testing machine – see the March issue of *The Brassie* – to the Australasian Golf Museum in Bothwell Tasmania.

Please remember that the Museum is open every Sunday from 10am to 4pm. The Museum is a fascinating place, and we urge all members to visit us as often they wish and to bring their friends. Entry is free. The Museum is located upstairs at Golf Mart in Granville, 4 Parramatta Road, telephone 9637 4720.

Tom Moore

Historians Group Report

Dr David Hamilton, Captain of the British Golf Collectors Society and a member of the R&A was the special guest speaker at the Historians seminar in May at the New South Wales Golf Club. David's topic was *The Scottish Golfing Diaspora*, with an emphasis on the professionals, the enthusiasts who helped to spread the game around the world. Many of them came to Australia – Carnegie and Walter Clark, Dan Souter and James Herd Scott are well known. Others, like Bob Letters, the expert maker of wooden clubs and one of John Letters' sons, are less well known, and we were pleased for Bob to be attending.



Bob and David in deep conversation.

Earlier on the day, Robert Dick, New South Wales GC immediate Past Captain, took David on a drive around the course, voted by some as second only to Pebble Beach for coastal scenery. As part of the program for the day, Robert spoke about *Golf at La Perouse*, the story of the course's development. Bob Ross has just seen his *Biography of Pymble Golf Club* published and, as part of the program, he gave the final episode in this book's journey to completion. As always, the Historians enjoyed the chance to catch up with each other and almost half a dozen new members were made welcome.

The free booklet *Writing a Golf Club History* is proving very popular and almost twenty golf clubs in New South Wales have book projects planned or underway. With another twenty or so clubs expecting a significant anniversary in the next three years, this makes a core group of very active historians. The booklet comes with a Charter to guide a club board or committee in setting up a history group, and we are developing resources to assist clubs preserve their collections and publish the history of their club. A membership drive will be in action soon with the slogan 'A history group in every golf club'.

Contact barry.leithhead@bigpond.com for a copy of the booklet.

Erwin Huber

Coming Events in 2008

Saturday 26 July Demonstration day at the Museum. Instruction in basic hickory club maintenance. Cost \$75: morning tea and lunch included.

August Seminar: How much research is enough? In conjunction with visit to the Photographic Collection of the State Library. *Details TBA.*

Thursday 14 August 9-hole 2-ball ambrose with hickories at Auburn City Links, hit off at 2 pm; for a prize you must partner a visitor. Afterwards, show and tell in the Rosnay clubhouse; bring something interesting from your collection. Overall cost \$20.

September Hickory day at Cammeray GC. All AGHS members welcome. *Details TBA.*

Sunday 21 September Sale of surplus items at the Museum.

October Terry Smith talks about his book, "The Champions". *Details TBA.*

25 Oct – 9 Nov Australian Hickory Club Championship in Perth. Additional games to be arranged. *Details TBA.*

November The Women's Golf Archives, with Jeannie Walker. *Details TBA.*

December Tent display: Australian Open at Royal Sydney. *Details TBA.*

News of Members

Mavis Parry

has again had a stint in hospital but is now on the mend.

Bill McWilliam

has also been on the sick list; Bill had a fall recently and, apart from having a pacemaker fitted, was found to have three fractures of his vertebrae.

Dan Cullen Jr

has required some surgery and is now recovering.

New members are:

Bob Paine,

recently retired professional at Mangrove Mountain Golf Club.

John Hugo,

long-time member of Castle Hill Golf Club.

Greg Ramsay,

involved *inter alia* with the Ratho Golf Links and the Australasian Golf Museum, both in Bothwell, Tasmania.

Jim Glenday,

St Georges River Golf Club, joined at a recent Historians Group seminar.

NEWS FLASH!

The Playing Sub-Committee is aware that the Society is a bit light on playing events for the rest of 2008. We are trying to rectify this, and we hope to have more playing events announced in the next issue of *The Brassie*. We welcome members' suggestions for courses we might play other than our usual roster.

The Society does not have a logo at the moment. We would be glad to have members' suggestions. Either tell us in words or draw a sketch. We can call on professional artistic help to transform your ideas into an attractive logo. Please bear in mind that the logo should reflect the overall aim of AGHS as it appears on the masthead of *The Brassie*.

Send us your feedback and ideas to: Mal Bray <mbray4@bigpond.com> and/or Michael Sheret <SheretMA@bigpond.com>

The Editor