

WELLINGBOROUGH GOLF



Club Magazine

Anniversary Special

Going strong after 125 Years

www.wellingboroughgolfclub.com



Happy 125th Anniversary



WITH Wellingborough Golf Club celebrating its 125th anniversary in 2018, member David Wilson investigated all the significant changes at the club over the last century and a quarter, whilst putting together 12 articles for the monthly Club Magazine. Please enjoy those pieces again in this special edition.



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It has been a privilege to write a series of articles for the Wellingborough Golf Club Magazine throughout our 125th anniversary year in 2018, and I hope you enjoyed them.

I became a Wellingborough member a few years after the move to Harrowden Hall and I remember the difficulties back then - quite often the waterlogged ground made play impossible in the winter months and the greens would squelch and move under your feet.

But in 2018, it's a completely different story. The course is in fine condition all year round, the result of careful long-term planning and management by successive Club officers and, of course, the good fortune of having the funds to pay for the improvements.

The same applies to the clubhouse, which is always an impressive building but in need of TLC, maintenance and improvement, while the gardens and other areas are a credit to the staff and volunteers who take a pride in the treasure that we are responsible for.

It has also been a pleasure to revisit the work of Ralph Grey-Jones and the diaries and papers of Sam Handley and others.

Ralph undertook the task of writing the Club's history for the Centenary In 1993. Many photos are included in this booklet, while his work stands as a testament to the commitment of his generation to make Wellingborough Golf Club the best in the area.

David Wilson



Railway carriage to Georgian grandeur

IN November 1893, a meeting was held which agreed to set up a golf club in Wellingborough.

Twenty nine men were there - including a doctor, a dentist, schoolmasters, brewers, solicitors, a wine merchant and a clergyman.

Mrs. Thompson let them have three fields for golf at Nest Farm (now the Finedon Road Industrial Estate) for £2 a year.

Annual subscriptions were a guinea (£1.05) for men and 10s 6d (52½p) for ladies, with an entrance fee of 10s 6d. Juniors were encouraged with reduced fees.

The rules were drawn up at The Hind Hotel and Old Tom Morris was appointed Course Architect.

The first 18-hole competition for men was played on March 29th, 1894 with an entrance fee of 6d (2½p) and the prize was a golf club.

Ladies played nine holes in the afternoon and members' handicaps ranged from 13 to 50.

Old Tom was pleased to see hazards like railway tracks, whins, hedges, briars and a dry ditch in play.

The facilities at the Nest Lane course were minimal; first a 'hovel' at the farm, then an old railway carriage and finally, in 1910, a 'pavilion' costing £150.

The nine-hole course had become congested by 1922, so members voted 37 to 20 to move to a new three-field site at the old Wellingborough waterworks.

Nine holes were made with the intention of buying more land, called 'Bumphrey', which lay between the roads from Wellingborough to Sywell and Wellingborough to Hardwick.



Wellingborough Golf Club Company was formed to manage the fundraising and to plan the facilities needed on the new site, which was opened on November 22nd, 1923.

Twenty five years later, WGC bought the land. This 'Old Course' site can still be imagined by referring to the names of the roads that now cover it - Gleneagles, Wentworth, Cotton and Jacklin.

In 1968, thanks to unrelenting negotiations, the Club sold the Old Course and bought land at Harrowden which became, in 1975, our present home.

An additional deal enabled Wellingborough Golf Club to buy Harrowden Hall itself from its owner Mr. Macdonald Buchanan to use as the clubhouse.

The course was re-designed to bring the first tee and 18th green to the end of the main garden. Now Wellingborough had 18 holes, magnificent gardens, a swimming pool, cottages, a machinery yard and a course that would become one of the finest in the Midlands.



First Wellingborough Golf Club Members

OF course, many members have been important to the Club in different ways but there are some who have contributed in special and very important ways, including those who were there first.

There's Mr. W.H. Hope - a dentist who arranged the first meeting of those interested in forming a golf club in Wellingborough.

He was clearly a keen player who wanted to be able to play his golf close to home.

He was also the kind of man who, rather than talk about what would be 'nice', acted on his own 'hopes' and the wishes of a few others and set the ball rolling towards the first WGC.

He was also the father of Courtney Hope, Wellingborough's own actress who played a useful part in gathering funds for the burgeoning Club.

The first Club Committee met to draw up the Rules, with Mr. W. W. Robinson (pictured above) as secretary.

Robinson arranged for Old Tom Morris to come to Wellingborough and survey the land and to give his opinion on a suitable layout.

He was also the Club's first 'handicapper' (no-one knows how he arrived at a player's handicap - anything from 13 to 50) and also the first Captain.

The first Club President was G. C. W. Fitzwilliam the cousin of 7th Earl Fitzwilliam (an appropriate choice given his family's connection with Harrowden Hall) and he it was who declared a credit balance for the first year of £9.7s. 0d.

The first Professional Golfer at Wellingborough was Mr. John Tabor who received the princely remuneration of £1.05 (one guinea) a week. He would charge 7½p for nine holes of tuition!

George Craddock gave a lifetime of service to the new Golf Club both before and after the Great War.

He was the Club Professional (from 1903 to 1948) which involved him also being the groundsman - cutting the greens and arranging for a neighbouring farmer's sheep to keep the fairways at a good length.

Mr Craddock's work as groundsman was soon to be curtailed as membership grew and the need for professional advice increased both on and off the course. His wife was in charge of all the catering arrangement 'and any profits accruing therefrom should be her perquisite'.

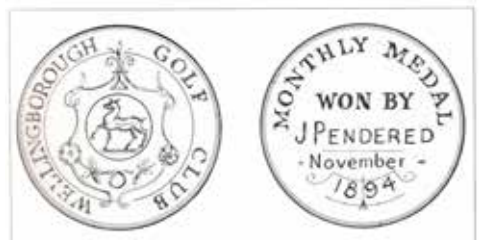
The winner of the first monthly medal in 1894 was John Pendered. A talented golfer, John was Club Champion Golfer five times and later became Club President.



The medal (illustrated below) was designed by a Mr. W. T. Brown, who chose a Hind motif.

This was the emblem of Sir Christopher Hatton, who had a strong connection with Wellingborough (remembered in The Hind Hotel, Hatton Hall, Sir Christopher Hatton School and a number of roads around Broad Green).

Sir Francis Drake re-named his flagship 'The Golden Hind' from its original name of 'The Pelican' in appreciation of the Hattons' sponsoring of his voyage of discovery in 1578.



Going through the War Years & beyond

SOME serious consequences were felt by the club after war broke out in 1939. To begin with, the Annual Dance had to be cancelled and all cup competitions were held over!

More importantly was the petrol shortage which limited the club to five gallons a month for ALL PURPOSES.

There was also a serious shortage of beer as efforts were made to contact several different breweries to safeguard supplies.

Gin, however, had accumulated behind the bar and had to be sold off for £1 a bottle while other prices were increased.

Competitions were held regularly to provide funds particularly for the Red Cross and the Spitfire Fund, while green fees were reduced to 1/6d (7½p) for the armed forces.

But the club was more troubled by the suggestion that the second and third fairways should be ploughed up for farming; remember Wellingborough Golf Club was playing on the Bushfields Course at this time.

Initially fencing off the course from the sheep made it too costly but in 1943 they were ploughed for crops only to be re-seeded two years later.

There was a little compensation and a reduction in rent for the inconvenience.

The shortage of petrol meant that most members had to get on their bikes and in turn this resulted in the creation of a bike shed.

The alternative to cycling was to use the offices of Mr. Fillingham who owned a garage near to Eastfield Park.

He ran a taxi service to the Golf Club and back, on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

There were 'picking up' places at agreed points along the route. Ever generous, the Club rewarded the drivers with a drink on Sunday morning.

The war took its toll of members. In 1939, Membership was 125 men and 65 ladies but in 1945 it was down to 84 men and 49 ladies.

After the war, Wellingborough was in for considerable expansion with new estates, schools, colleges and other facilities.

For the Golf Club, it was time for 'an improvement fund' and a new bar, new furniture, new crockery and towels were ordered.

On the course, an appeal fund was launched for water to be laid to the greens - all completed and paid for by 1950.

Under the strong Presidency of Stan Collier (pictured below), the Club found its feet again.

Cattle were not allowed on the course, as requested by the farmer, and neither were the sheep.

Membership began to increase and now cost in modern terms £4.75 for men and £3.15 for ladies - schoolboys continuing to pay 52½p.

By 1950, the Club's annual income had risen to around £740 (from £366 in 1945).

At the end of 1945, Arthur Husk was appointed assistant to George Craddock, whose health was failing, at £3 a week.

The Craddocks were highly regarded by the Club and received bonuses every year.

The men's Spring weekends away on the east coast were well supported - in April 1948 the trip to Sheringham cost £2.25 a head. Times and costs change!



New Clubhouse? Time to make a decision

MOVING to Harrowden Hall in 1975 was a momentous decision because the preceding years had been full of doubts.

Had we done the right thing selling off the Bushfields course for building houses and putting the money into a parcel of farm land and an old country house that needed so much money, time and effort putting into it? Would the 'tax man' come calling?

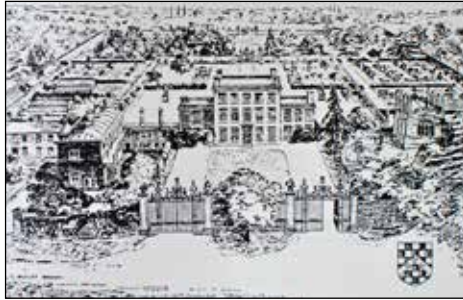
Those most closely involved in the move to Harrowden Hall and the development of the new course were Herbert Saxby, Sam Handley, Ken Galley, Stan Collier and Mal Wilson, whose names you will see around the Hall.

They had the assistance of others who had expertise in specific areas - Sursham Tompkins, who were our architects, but also members, R. C. Tann and Richard Sandbach, our solicitor.

There was concern about the club's liability for tax and our MP tried to get clarity about it since commercial operations were given relief which was not then available to clubs and societies.

The decisive meeting took place on March 14th, 1974 when the committee and co-opted members discussed the two options - buy the Hall and the surrounding buildings for around

£150,000 or go ahead with a plan for a new clubhouse that would cost around £300,000.



The Captain, Louis Wilkinson, said at the beginning of the meeting that a decision had to be made, even if it took them all night.

The decision to buy the Hall was taken and from that point there were 12 months to transfer the Club to Harrowden Hall and to complete the new

18 hole golf course, which was already in progress under the care of Comely Wood and Ken Fish.

Mal Wilson (Hon Sec of GC Company) had recently retired so was able to give the project his almost undivided attention.

He was responsible for many of the operations, negotiations, legal consents, planning, purchasing pictures, statues and furniture, the provision of emergency lighting, rateable values, etc.

But because the tax situation about selling the old course and buying the Hall was uncertain, everything was done with an eye on keeping expenditure to a minimum.

So it was a hectic time getting everything in place for the Grand Opening.

Sam Handley remembers walking into the Hall two weeks before the move to find 25 people - trade-people and members - working flat out to sort electrics, plastering, painting, carpeting, fitting out the bar.

It was chaos but we got it done - the members only lost one week's golf!"



First Drive-In: A wet, but Grand, Opening

'THE best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley,' and the weather took charge of the event.

The plan for the Grand Opening was to take the form of a Drive-In followed by a four-hole exhibition match between three of the lowest handicap players and the Professional.

Then there would be a formal opening of the clubhouse and a reception to which all members, representatives of other clubs and those involved in the project were invited.

However, torrential rain preceded the day, so work to get the course playable for the Grand Opening had progressed slowly. And as the weather grew worse on the day, panic began to set in.

Would it be playable even for the four-hole exhibition match?

The plans had worked to this point and were not going to be abandoned now! So 370 people braved the elements and in good spirits wished Wellingborough Golf Club every future success.

In torrential rain, the Drive-In at Harrowden Hall took place on Friday, May 2nd, 1975.

Those involved were Club President Herbert Saxby, Captain Sam Handley, Vice Captain Ken Galley and Lady Captain Joan Merrican (pictured right, top to bottom).

It is alleged by some that the Lady Captain had influence with the Evening Telegraph on account of the length of her drive being exaggerated!

The tape-cutting ceremony on the front lawn was abandoned, but that was all.

After the Drive-In, the guests dashed for the stable block and shelter before they were led, rather unceremoniously through the boiler room and a dark back passageway into the clubhouse. It was reported that a good evening was had by all!

Slowly, but surely, the new club took shape with Walter Rowley continuing as secretary.

Many of the older members will remember Walter, a Yorkshireman and schoolmaster, proud of his roots, who brooked no nonsense or argument from anyone at school, or in the club.

He served the club faithfully as player, Secretary, raconteur and teller of fisherman's tales and always made sure that the bar held a handy stock of Glenfiddich Malt Whisky.



Move from one 'natural' course to another

WHEN Old Tom Morris played the first round on the old Nest Farm course he spotted good potential. He stated that 'since the land was high, it would therefore always be dry under foot and the turf was of a very fine nature to make good greens without much trouble'.

Improvements were still to be made, including the purchase of sheep 'to keep the grass down'!

At Harrowden, the landscape of lakes, streams, woodland and a variety of specimen trees, both on the course and in the gardens, provided a perfect home for both wildlife and golfers.

Whilst preserving its natural environment, the Club has continued to improve this landscape for all abilities of golfers for over 40 years.

The drainage has improved beyond measure, while the ponds and trees have been carefully managed by experts.

When the Club bought Harrowden Hall for its clubhouse in 1974, the course had to be re-designed to bring the first tee and 18th green up to the end of the garden.

The old first tee became the 10th and the old 18th green became the ninth, while two par five's and a couple of short holes were also lost.

Improvements continued, before and after the new course was first played in 1982.

The Club Captain's Newsletter in October 1977 stated; 'Members have again experienced trouble and annoyance with areas of rough left for hay-making.'



'This will not occur again! Bunkers will also require future attention. Approximately 50 tons of sand has been added during the season.'

The area between the third fairway and the fourth green was developed into a reservoir at the turn of the millennium so that the Club had its own guaranteed water supply.

The greens had always played well in the drier months but became soggy in the wet.

So, in 1999 the Club bit the bullet and had all the greens redesigned and reconstructed to USGA standards.

Since then, with good management and expert advice, the putting surfaces have become the envy of all who come.

Meanwhile the bunkers had been improved piecemeal over the years, but in 2017 it was agreed to completely re-structure, re-design, re-sand and re-turf them.

Helped by a dry late summer and autumn, the work (pictured above) was completed in November - a job well done!

Practice facilities now include; a putting green, a chipping area, a par three area behind the 17th green for young and old to sharpen up their short game, a practice bunker and a green area to the right of the eighth fairway and a large driving area further down The Slips.



The Gazebo: An expensive restoration

THE alterations to the course in 1982 involved bringing the first tee and the 18th green up to the end of the gardens, and this had revealed The Gazebo - an early 18th century summer house!

It had been built in the wilderness on the site of 'the quaint old summer house' where Charles I and his courtiers relaxed after playing bowls at Harrowden.



No aid was forthcoming, neither was an agreement to a request to move The Gazebo and use it as a starter's hut.

Lord Aberconway even offered to buy it and transport it to Wales but all permissions were refused, except for a relaxation of a demand for special footings.

It was usual for a wealthy owner to have carefully maintained parterres and gardens near the house enclosed by wrought iron gates. Beyond was a less formal area known as 'The Wilderness'.

By Jane Austen's time (1800s), as she describes in both 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Mansfield Park', the Wilderness was a 'wild area of woodland which may have included a maze and shrubberies, where gentlemen and ladies could roam (to be close to nature or to have 'private moments').

After years of neglect, the Harrowden Gazebo was in an advanced state of dilapidation and the Club applied to demolish it.

Opposition came from local and national groups, The Department of the Environment, Wellingborough Council, English Heritage and individuals. An official enquiry considered the application in September 1981 and, as expected, it was refused.

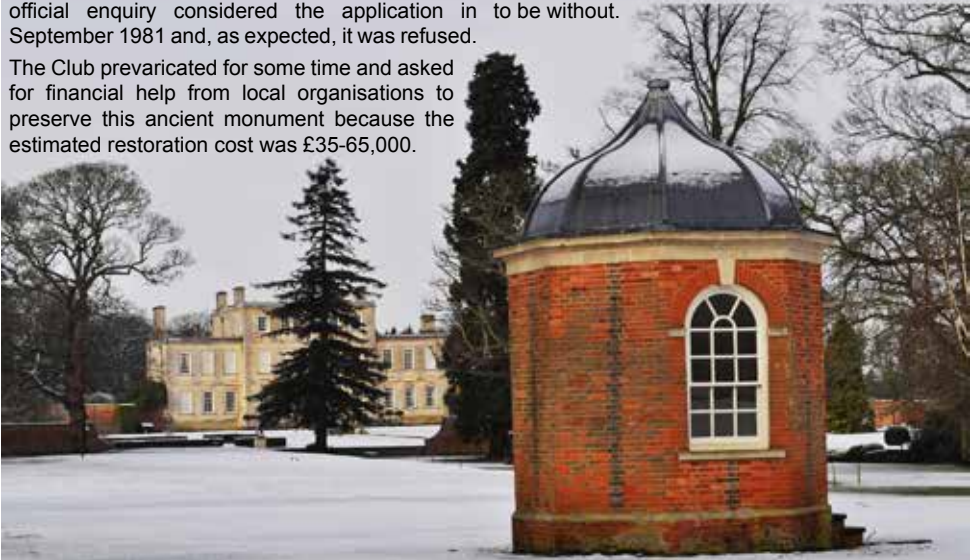
The Club prevaricated for some time and asked for financial help from local organisations to preserve this ancient monument because the estimated restoration cost was £35-65,000.

So the Club was left to fund the restoration with 40% help from English Heritage and £1000 each from the County and Borough authorities.

Specialist contractors were called in. Original materials, bricks, roofing etc, were in short supply so had to be made to order and the project was overseen by historical experts.

The Club, members and officers alike, complained that it was ludicrous to have to spend so much on a 'useless' dilapidated building in the middle of a fairway when the Hall itself was in need of so much restoration work.

Nevertheless, the authorities stood firm, the restoration was completed and now most members and visitors would agree that The Gazebo is a feature of the first hole that they would not wish to be without.



Harrowden Hall: Impractical. Magnificent.

IN 1974, Wellingborough Golf Club had a new course under construction, but no clubhouse.

The Club were in a strong financial position after the sale of the Bushfields course and plans were in hand for an ambitious clubhouse.

The idea was to build it in the area around the present tea hut near the ninth green and 10th tee. Estimates were between £300,000 and £500,000.

Conversations with the owner of Harrowden Hall, Mr Macdonald Buchanan led to the possibility of buying the Hall, which is a Grade 1 listed building, for use as a clubhouse.

After lengthy discussion amongst the membership, the Golf Club Company and Agents it was finally decided to buy the Hall for £125,000.

Planning permission had been gained but there was a lot of work to be done in a short time before it could be used.

The purchase included the house, 25 acres of land, cottages for staff, buildings for changing rooms, a professional's shop, garages and an area for course machinery.

There were walled gardens, a grand terrace and a swimming pool, which opened in 1976.



There was a Catholic Chapel, which was built in 1905 in the style of the 15th Century Chantry Chapel at Higham Ferrers and four greenhouses dating to the early 1900s. The possibilities were endless.

In the house, arches replaced some of the doors downstairs, heating, lighting and plumbing were re-designed, the family rooms became the bar and

lounge area and the first floor bedrooms became the kitchens, dining rooms and ladies' rooms. No use was made of the top floor.

Further changes have been made over the years and there is a rolling programme of repairs and refurbishment, the last being a total renewal of the ground floor and the upstairs dining room.

The costs involved were great and it was at this point that the course and property expenditure was transferred from the Club to the Golf Club Company which had been formed some years before to oversee the Club's non-golf transactions.

Whilst Harrowden Hall may not be ideal for all the needs of a golf club, Wellingborough have made good use of it and the facilities it offers.

Additional revenue now comes from its use as a wedding and meetings venue.

All visitors admire it.



Harrowden Hall: Inside our glorious home

COME in through the front door at Harrowden Hall and the outer hall ('The Leather Room') has a stone floor, set with black marble diamonds.

The chimney-piece is of Derbyshire marble embedded with small fossils and in the over-mantel are the Watson arms impaling those of Wentworth.

The walls are still panelled in the original, natural pine having been rescued from layers of dark paint by Mr. MacDonald-Buchanan who owned the Hall from 1966-75 when it was sold to the Golf Club.

The room to the right of the hall was a study, there was a large drawing room and a family sitting room.

Our main bar was the dining room, with the modern kitchens beyond. Up to 1939, all food was carried from the large old kitchens in the stable block (Pro Shop and changing room). The ovens could cope with whole oxen!

From the inner hall a fine staircase swept up to the first floor and a landing surrounded by large canvasses of Greek mythology by the Flemish born painter Gerard Lanscroon.

The paintings represent scenes from the story of Psyche (the soul) being taken to the abode of Cupid, while the banquet scene on the left depicts her receiving the gift of beauty from Proserpine.



Upstairs, the family had 12 bedrooms and four bathrooms, a laundry room and a nursery wing with its own bathrooms. The top floor was the servants' quarters.

The gardens close to the house displayed four statues by Jan

Van Nost, still in their original positions: Hercules and Cacus, Hercules and Antaeus and Samson slaying the Philistine. The fourth statue was melted down in the 19th century to repair the roof.

The garden was separated into compartments by brick walls with a parterre in front of the house, the kitchen garden (north) and an orchard (south).

The greenhouses - a large plant house, a forcing house, a 3/4 span vinery and a carnation/orchid house - dating back to the start of the 20th century.

A restoration programme began in 2000 by David Wilson and Don Russo, the gardener, saw the four buildings brought back into good condition.

Harrowden Hall has many features in common with Hinwick Hall which has detailed and interesting records of the work, including the names of craftsmen involved. The Catholic chapel dates from 1905 and is modelled on the Chantry Chapel in Higham Ferrers churchyard.



Vaux Family: Mix with the rich & famous

ON June 5th, 2018 the Club was given a highly detailed lecture about Harrowden Hall and the Vaux family by Dr. Michael Heaton.

The Club has the Powerpoint presentation on a pdf, which members are able to access by asking the Managing Director.

Briefly though, Harrowden Hall has a very long and distinguished history involving Kings, Queens, Cardinal Wolsey, Father Garnet (the most famous of recusant priests), embassies to the King of France, the Gunpowder and other plots, Catholic recusant families (principally the Treshams) and priest holes.

The various Barons Vaux were involved with all the important and powerful people of history and their stories involve worthies including Shakespeare who in Henry VIII uses Sir Nicholas to take the Duke of Buckingham to the Tower:

Sir Thomas Lovell:

To the waterside I must conduct your grace;
Then give my charge up to Sir Nicholas Vaux
Who undertakes you to your end.

Sir Nicholas Vaux:

Prepare there,
The duke is coming; see the barge be ready;
And fit it with such furniture as suits
The greatness of his person
And who uses a first Baron Vaux poem for lines in 'Hamlet'.

The most detailed book about the Vaux Family is The Vaux of Harrowden by Godfrey Anstruther.

The Barony was created in 1523 for Sir Nicholas Vaux (poet and courtier to Henry VIII and Edward VI). A long period of Abeyance occurred until 1838 when George Mostyn became the sixth Baron.

There was another period of abeyance until 1938 when Grace, the wife of William Gilbey (of the Wine & Spirits business), became the eighth Baroness.

She was succeeded by her eldest son Father Gabriel Gilbey, a Benedictine monk at Ampleforth Abbey who took his House of Lords seat in 1962 (the first Benedictine monk to do so since 1559).

His younger brother succeeded to the title and his grandson became the 12th Baron in 2014 being elected to the House of Lords in 2017. The family seat is the Rusko Estate in Kirkcudbrightshire.

The Vaux Family owned Great Harrowden Hall until 1695 when they sold it to Thomas Watson Wentworth, a son of Baron Rockingham, of Rockingham Castle.

Two centuries later, the seventh Baron Vaux was able to buy back the Hall but he left the estate virtually untouched except for the building of the Catholic chapel, completed in 1905, which he had built in Weldon Stone as a copy of Archbishop Chichele's 15th Century Chantry chapel in Higham Ferrers.



Ladies' first vote is century after first comp

LADIES were the first to play a competition on the first Nest Lane course at Wellingborough on March 29th, 1894 - a nine-hole competition in the morning, while men played at 2pm.

It was won by Mrs. W. H. Hope with a score of 92 for nine holes. Handicaps topped out at 52 for ladies (50 for men).

There is good evidence that ladies attending the Harrowden Hall School for Young Ladies were the first to play golf at Harrowden in the 1890s.

In those early days, there were three 'classes' of golfer.

The 'first class' men would play 18 holes, while the 'second' and 'third class' men and the ladies were permitted to play only nine holes.

Membership for ladies increased after the Great War, and by 1921 there were 22 who paid the fee of two guineas.

By 1968, fees had risen to £10 for ladies and, at the Centenary Club AGM, membership was 179 ladies and 693 men.

Ladies were always 'second class' members: new rules of May 1924 resolved that 'a match in which a lady or ladies are engaged must stand aside' and permit men to play through.

Although they could vote in National General Elections in 1928, at Harrowden they could attend committee meetings, but not vote.

In the 1980s, ladies were permitted to speak, but not vote, in Directors Meetings and had to vacate the course by 1pm on Saturdays... even if they were stood on the 18th tee completing a club medal round!

Ladies were not allowed in the main bar on a Sunday morning until Captain Jim Clark permitted it in 1994 - a century after that first club competition.

The club flourished, even through the years of the Great Depression, thanks in large part to the efforts of Miss Kenyon and the lady members.

Through all the years at Bushfields and for some time at Harrowden, the ladies were responsible for catering at golf competitions, matches and social events until Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey Jones were appointed stewards.



The ladies organised fund-raising events - whist drives, bridge drives, beetle drives and dances to which Courtney Hope, Wellingborough's own actress and playwright, brought her concert party to entertain.

The Ladies Championship Trophy - 'a beautiful Rose Bowl' - was bought with the profits (£11) from one of the Club Dances and was won by Miss J. E. Henfrey in the first competition in 1922.

Miss Kenyon, who is not recorded as having any initials, was Ladies Secretary/Treasurer 1921-31, and was involved in almost everything that went on in the club.

She was clearly a very strong and influential character - as ladies secretaries have been since!

Eventually equality of membership was agreed in 2008 and ladies now pay the same fees and have the same rights to play as men... nearly!



The Don's passion for plants & gardening

VISITORS never fail to compliment us on the 'glory of the garden' as they sit comfortably on the terrace after a round. And that is due in no small measure to the efforts of gardener Don Russo (pictured right).

Don left school to be a motor mechanic but felt unfulfilled, so he took on the gardens at Harrowden Hall and has never looked back.



The structures, installed in the early 1900's, had been allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that permission had been granted to demolish them.

But the restoration project would allow them to become useful, even profitable, again and would provide the Club with a fine-looking asset.

"I can't wait to get out there at six in the morning and tend the flower beds and lawns," he says.

He loves his horticultural labours and the Golf Club recognises the magnificent work he does.

Over the years, Don has developed and improved the flower beds that were present when he arrived and has put in new ones, most recently the crescent bed in front of the entrance door.

But you cannot fail to notice the small touches that have appeared over the years.

This includes; the mini-knot bed to the right of the front door, the seating area between the entrance gates, the small beds round the bases of some of the great trees, the tropical garden in the secluded area between the Hall and the Chapel and, of course, the many beds in the walled garden.

Don works mainly alone but does have the assistance of Debbie who is meticulous over the care and maintenance of the beds.

In 2000, Don began a project with his newly-retired English teacher, David Wilson, to renovate the four ancient, Foster & Pearson teak-framed greenhouses in what used to be the kitchen garden.

So both men gave their own time, several days a week during winter and summer.

They pressure-washed the structures, removed all the hundreds of panes of glass, scrubbed each one individually by hand.

They returned them using modern mastic sealant, made good the wood, brick and metal work, and finally oiled the timber frame, painted all the metal and planted up the interior.

The underground water collection and the heating systems were left as they were.

Over the next seven years, all four greenhouses, the large plant house, the small house, the lean-to and the small forcing house were restored.

It had been a labour of love and Don now had all the equipment needed to do his horticultural work for the Club.

The project had cost the Club perhaps £1000 for glass and other materials and that is all!

The two men also planted the border of the reservoir with hundreds of daffodils.

So now golfers can recite Wordsworth's famous lines about daffodils 'beside the lake, beneath the trees' as they pass.



Head Club Professionals: 13 'lucky' men

OVER the last 125 years, Wellingborough has been served by 13 Professional Golfers.

The first 50 years saw two men give sterling service, with George Craddock becoming a legend for loyalty and hard work.

In those days, the Professional was responsible for maintaining the course with quite primitive, manual machinery (often loaned or given by a member in the very early days) as well as providing coaching and other golfing advice.

The next six Professionals stayed for around a year each, with Alf Lovelady from Northampton Golf Club (then at Kettering Road) giving us just one day a week.

Peter Fogg, Alf's assistant at Northampton, and the brother of Wellingborough's 1990 Lady Captain Brenda Hart was tragically killed in a traffic accident on the Mears Ashby to Wilby Road.

He served the Club for four years from 1962, when he was the county's youngest Pro.

The Fogg family were well known on the county golf scene - Mr and Mrs Fogg were steward and stewardess at Kettering Golf Club and their eldest son was a Professional in Leicestershire.

The next 17 years were covered by Rodney King (11 years), Tony Maskell, Robin Thompson and John Priestley before David Clifford, pictured left, joined the club in 1983.

David had been senior assistant at Walsall Golf Club and was a talented all-round sportsman, having had cricket trials at Trent Bridge and football trials with Derby County.

At 17, he had a golf handicap of four having been playing for just two years. David is a good and patient teacher of golf and joins in Club activities both on and off the course.

Recent years have seen him cope with serious back problems, while still playing and coaching.

Although he never became a Professional golfer, Ian Marshall played off scratch at the age of 15 and, at 19, failed by just one shot to qualify for The Open.



Date	Head Professional
1894 - 1903	John Tabor
1903 - 1948	George Craddock
1948 - 1955	Arthur Husk
1955 - 1956	D. Smart
1956 - 1957	E. Calloway
1957 - 1959	F. G. Smith
1959 - 1962	Alf Lovelady (one day a week)
1962 - 1966	Peter Fogg
1966 - 1977	Rodney King
1977 - 1978	Tony Maskell
1978 - 1980	Robin Thompson
1980 - 1983	John Priestley
1983 - present	David Clifford

Ian was the Club's Head Greenkeeper from 1979 to 2011 and played significant roles in Club and County golf being Club Champion six times, County Matchplay Champion in 1990, as well as being NGU Vice President in 1991.

The WGC members who have achieved the highest echelons on the County and National scene are too numerous to mention here - their glories are recorded and displayed on the Honours Boards in the entrance corridor.

But perhaps we should mention 2018 European Tour Professional Ryan Evans, the MacLaren family - Professional Meghan, mother Mary and father David (Seniors Tour Supremo), The Ellson family, Simon Lilly, Glenda Abbott... so many men, ladies and boys and girls who have brought golfing honours to the Club and to themselves - Champions all!

Good Old Days: Maids, bulls & high heels

BACK in the day, the Club was doing well! An early Annual Balance Sheet reported that the 'financial position of the Club must be considered satisfactory when it is remembered that nearly £16 has been spent on new lockers, rules, pavilion and grass cutting.' How times change!

Most new societies, clubs and groups go through difficult times in the early days and it is members' generosity that sees them through.

Wellingborough Golf Club's minutes for July 1894 recorded; 'thanks to Dr Platt for lending a lawnmower, Mr Hope for giving a lawnmower and Mr Dulley for giving leaf mould for the greens.'

In August 1898, 'Mr Hope reported that the grass on the links had been cut by machine but that in order to put it in good condition sheep should be put on to keep the grass down.' Consequently, £50 was spent on buying sheep.

In April 1887, 'Mr Hope offered to send up a maid on Thursdays to prepare refreshments for members.'

Problems, Problems... How do you encourage members to turn up to the Club AGMs? In 1898, they were offered a Tripe Supper.

More problems in November 1922 - Miss Kenyon proposed that Mr Walters be asked to keep his bull under restraint and, in 1934, Mr Dack (the farmer who owned the land) agreed to keep all cows and horses off the course for £25 per annum.

A problem in the clubhouse was solved in 1921 by agreeing that a fine of 2p be paid by any member who leaves the door open and the secretary was asked to put up a notice asking members not to wear high heeled shoes.

More course problems in October 1977. 'Members have again experienced trouble and annoyance with the areas of rough left for hay-making. This will not occur again; pledged the Captain.'

Changes! Some of those early members were not afraid of change.

In 1914, the ladies passed a resolution that a silver spoon should be played for on a medal day instead of a button!

But you must not press too hard nor go too far. In 1959, a request by the ladies to be allowed to play on the course on Saturdays after 2.30pm (how DARE they?!) was defeated by 46 votes to 16, with one spoil paper.

'We shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields...' The Club's contribution in August 1940 was to place a roller in the middle of the second fairway to prevent enemy aircraft landing.

Go Compare! Bar prices in 1961: Beer 8½p pint; whisky 10p; gin 8½p; sherry 9p; tea, toast & two eggs 15p. A packet of crisps was 1p; now it's 22p.

But Wellingborough Golf Club's finest hour must have been in the 1980s when it warranted an article in The Sun newspaper, which was repeated on national news channels.

Apparently, some ladies had been spotted sunbathing topless at the swimming pool... ..in full view of the first tee!! Say no more!

So here we are 125 years on.

We have had our trials and tribulations at Wellingborough Golf Club. But with a strong and committed membership, plus some good fortune, we have built a Club with a reputation for a testing course in excellent condition, a clubhouse with history and facilities to accommodate all our members and guests, and gardens to admire.

We can be justly proud. Roll on the next 125 years.

