

# Recollections of Barry Pyke

149 Crystal Creek Rd, Alexandra

September 9<sup>th</sup> 2009.

In conversations with the late Lance Thompson (Sire Engineer), prior to our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, he told me that when he was shire engineer at Mansfield in 1934 he came down to Alexandra and surveyed a golf course in the race course reserve. Lance was a keen golfer and one year was the Victorian Country Champion.

I joined the club about 1980 and was elected Vice President for two years and then President for nine years.

Our green keeper was on a 2-3 day week and the rest of the work done by volunteers. A roster was set up for mowing tees and green surrounds and each member took one or more holes.

A lot of money was being spent on the maintenance of the gang mower (fairways). This mower was retired. A slasher mower was bought and with the savings the green keeper, Lew Nicholson, was put on full time. Howard Hickmott installed in-place Pop Up sprinklers in three greens and they were resown. Greens 7, 8 & 10 were done next. The small veranda at the west side of the club house was extended the full length then around the north end making it better in the wet and cooler in the summer.

With a view to watering the greens from our own dam, Ron Dent enlarged the dam over one January period doing over \$3000 worth of work. We never used it at that time, but the race club did. The second green used to be very flat and wet. John McDonald (forestry) had loads of red soil from Marysville carted in to remake the green. It set like a brick, making lots of watering problems.

Tom Kemp and I went out to Diawa Na Darak at Molesworth and negotiated a grant of \$4000 to build a practice green to top class specifications. Howard was in charge. All labour was by members and Bonco Supplies supplied a lot of sand and materials at cost price. Truly a great asset to the club.

Moving and remaking the 13<sup>th</sup> green from a wet spot near the race track drain was next, as was the large drain along the 7<sup>th</sup> fairway to dry that section up (hardly needed now). The members painted the club house. The kitchen was completely remodelled by Frank McNair, David Cunningham and Wally Clay. A hundred new chairs were bought by the ladies to replace the old cold seated metal ones. The interior of the club house, which was about four colours, was painted all one colour and some lining replaced. A cooling fan was installed in the roof. The septic tank system was upgraded with all new PVC piping which virtually eliminated the leakages and blockages that were a regular occurrence.

Over one wet period all verandas were concreted by Lou and Greg Nicholson, the only cost being cement as gravel and mixer were donated. The Massey Ferguson tractor was bought from Lilydale and a second tractor was purchased together with a front deck self propelled rough cutter.

On the approach to the 9<sup>th</sup> green was a diagonal ditch with a hard rocky bank on the green side. This was covered by 250 bales of rye grass straw with a little soil to hold it down. It proved a very unpopular move, with many lost balls, however there were long term benefits. Likewise the 4<sup>th</sup> fairway was sod seeded with ryegrass twice and for a while this too was difficult.

Quite a lot of money was spent over the years lopping the old gum trees by the Committee of Management, on which we were very vocal. Probably one of the most unpopular moves was shifting back the ladies tees on some holes, 1, 3, 18 and others. This meant a lot of balls landed in long grass on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and many ladies were denied a chance of NTP on the 18<sup>th</sup> as it was now too far.

The machinery shed was enlarged and a great deal of earth work, new tees etc and drainage was done by Lindsay Wilson. The Toro greens mower was always kept in good repair and was about 20 years old. Coring was done regularly by members over a full weekend. It was hard work but effective. Sand buckets were introduced, the stand made by Lou Nicholson and members encouraged to repair the course as they played.

Green Fee players became more important to the club when we moved to full time staff. Regular wood raffles raised a lot of funds.

We tried to have two men's Tournaments each year but for the one in the spring it was often too wet to play.

Joining Alexandra into the Dalhousie golf circuit was a plus as were the efforts of Tony Triffet at the early Police and Friends Days. These were very popular at the club. The barbeque and roofed area and most of the garden came after my time as have many other improvements.

The clubs number one asset is the course; golfers like to play with a bit of grass under their ball. Another asset is the bent grass, it needs to be fed and nurtured, but it does not need a lot of rain to hang in there till February. It likes nitrogen via clover or from the bag, though not a lot. Ask old golfers about the fairways - they were a delight to play on.