



RCGC RECOLLECTIONS



Hello all,

My name is Robert Dean and I joined the Red Cliffs Golf Club in 1953, but had been around the club for many years as a young bloke given that both my father and mother were heavily involved in the club. In hindsight, it's likely that I probably played 'illegally' as a junior because in those days juniors were neither encouraged nor officially recognized by the club. Both of my parents, Ted & Vyda were made Life Members of the club and in 2003 the same honour was bestowed on me.

My father E.J. [Ted] Dean was a Trustee of the club and although I'm not exactly sure of the dates or the period of time, he was one of the Trustees that took control of the land when it was eventually sold to the club. He served a term as club President in 1946 and Captain in 1949 and was a very active and committed member for many years. My mother, Vyda served two terms as women's President in 1950 and 1951 and was very active in other aspects of the club. For my own part, I served three terms as club President in 1972, '73 & '74 and two terms as Captain in 1980 & 1981. My wife, Judy has also served the club as women's President in 2005 & 2006, Captain and was the women's handicapper for six years. You can see from this that the Dean family has been heavily involved with the Red Cliffs Golf Club for many years.

One of my earliest recollections relates to my mother's activities as a catering lady for the club. She often spoke of feeding the men with meals cooked on a two-oven wood stove located outside under the trees behind the clubhouse. Quite often these were quite elaborate meals, sometimes 3 courses, with pots of soup, roast leg of lamb and fresh scones. She also remembered the lady who regularly left fresh milk in a bucket at the front gate of the club on Wednesdays and Saturdays for the first to arrive to collect. I think that story has been related in more detail elsewhere in the club's story, so I won't go any further with that.

In the 1940's the season started in late April after the picking and drying of the fruit was over. Blokes with Fergie tractors, trailers and rakes collected sand off the greens and it was mixed in cement mixers with sump oil and returned to the sand scrapes. Dr Zimmer was in charge of that for years and he always ensured that it was carried out properly. The fairways were "mowed" by towing iron hoops behind a tractor, hence the ridges that are still visible along some fairways today. The golf season ended when the spear grass and barley took over, virtually making the course unplayable.

As time went by the sand scrapes were gradually thinned of sand and a clear

oil was used to make them playable. Dick Johnson came up with a new version of better sand scraping equipment and new oil was sprayed on each year so that playing golf was not such a dirty business. In the early days there was no such thing as buggies and golf bags were carried over the shoulder. Poles with hooks attached were erected out the front of the clubhouse and this is where you hung your bag whilst you were waiting to hit off. It certainly is a far cry from today where fancy golf buggies and motorized golf carts are the norm!

After the 2nd World War an important day for men, the A.I.F. Cup Day, which commenced after the 1st World War, was continued until the early 1950's. Sister Carey who was a returned nursing sister was given the honour of firing the Turkish Field Gun, located near the 1st tee, which was the signal for the game to commence. After performing this official task she was then escorted from the course. My father Ted Dean supplied the charge and Eric Larsen organized the fuse. Unfortunately there was a death that occurred one year and I think Bob Langford in his recollections has described what happened. That gun was later restored and situated by the Red Cliffs R.S.L. club rooms.

Early watering of the course was by flood irrigating with water supplied through open channels. One such channel crossed the middle of the 2nd fairway and if a ball happened to hit the concrete top of the channel, more often than not it would finish up out of bounds. Ella and Frank Smith were the mainstays of controlling the watering and they were often seen in gumboots with shovels directing the flow. Later the fairways were piped with 'jump up' outlets. A huge amount of work was done by the then President, Ernie Seabrook, who along with Perce Ferguson were able to get the fairways piped with 'jump up' outlets. Thanks to the hard work and guidance of Joel Berry who was now the club Treasurer the pipelines were paid off in half the allotted time and on budget.

I can't let the opportunity pass without mentioning the biggest development during my time at the club that being the move to grass greens. Obviously this major milestone in the club's history will be covered elsewhere, but there are a few comments that I would like to make. The decision to put in grass greens was not taken lightly and even though everyone knew that it would be a very costly exercise, the whole club was fully behind the idea. Although the club was assisted by the Victorian Turf Institute, as a result of a very detailed feasibility study, not a dollar in grant funding was received to pay for the work. The project was funded through a loan, which had to be paid back, supported by the willingness of the members to undertake countless hours of voluntary work. Once again the volunteering spirit of the Red Cliffs Golf Club came to the fore. Those playing on the grass greens today can thank their predecessors for their insight and determination to get the job done.

Self-catered meals coupled with a very enjoyable social life were always highlights of our golf club. in the early days there was always great food,

good beer and a night around the piano every weekend. On Wednesdays the ladies always changed into fresh clothes and dolled up after play, baby sitters were at home with the children, and fun was had by all. Skits and entertainment and card evenings were often the centre of the club's social life. All the catering was always done by women until Joel Berry headed up a crew of men and for 3\4 years the women were treated to a 3 course dinner, cooked and served by the men. In the 80's a great social committee took on the big task of handling all big catering events. That committee consisted of several couples including Barry and Lorraine Ford, Brian and Mary Briggs, Judy and Rob Dean, Ern and Val Anderson, Isobel and Noel Westhead, Mark and Clair **Wilson** and Keith and Marg Rogers. This committee operated for 5 or 6 years and were the mainstay of the club's social activities.

Golf week was often a huge event for the club, but over recent times it has seemed to fall away. It was common to see in excess of 200 playing in Golf Week and many Melbourne visitors felt that Sunday was the highlight of their week, because that was the big day at Red Cliffs. Many would put their car on the train in Mildura and then were ferried to our course, and after the day we took them into Red Cliffs to board the train as it passed through. Because of numbers the field had to stop after 9 holes for an enormous afternoon tea of cream cakes and sandwiches with lots of laughter thrown in. The social club would then cater for the 200 plus, often with camp oven roast dinner and sweets. It was a huge job but always lots of fun after with dancing and games.

Mrs King was our first kitchen helper who made sandwiches on ladies day. The old 'Associates Room' [now the office] was a lovely lounge room with an open fire, comfy chairs and afternoon tea tables. All ladies announcements were made there until the late 70's when they moved all activities into the main club lounge. Two other ladies stayed for short terms of duty as kitchen staff and then Beryl Chappell became a much-loved friend and helper for following 32 years until she retired in 2009.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a member of the club and although today I'm not as active as I once was I still retain a keen interest in the club and where it's going.

Robert Dean,
Life Member,
May 2010.