

## CHAPTER 4

### 1920 - 1935 THE DEVELOPING YEARS

As we have seen at the end of the Great War the Club was in a poor state. There were only 16 holes, the course was in two distinct parts, the membership had fallen to such an extent that it could hardly support the Club and the land was still rented so that the Club were limited as to what they could do with the course. At least it did own its own Club House, albeit on rented land, situated some way from the course and with a Debenture of £660 still outstanding. The situation did not look good for the future.

But the war had brought many changes, not least of which was the master and servant relationship. People were wanting more independence without being dependent upon their master for a living and this manifested itself in the break up and sale of many old Estates up and down the country. The process was helped by the lack of manpower on the land due to the numbers killed during the war. Needless to say one of the Estates which was partly brought under the hammer in 1920 was the Lyme Estate.

Although the position of the tenant had to be considered the Club felt they would be in an intolerable situation if they were tenants of Mr. Wild as landlord. Consequently, a bid of £40 per acre for a total of 124.182 acres (£4967) making up the Stanley Hall Farm was submitted and this was accepted.

At this point a brief history of Stanley Hall is worth mentioning. The Crook Barn which was probably the original Hall, dates back to the 15th Century although a record of the 13th Century refers to a Roger of Stanlegh, there was probably a dwelling on the site before the present buildings. This is borne out by the fact that there is evidence on the present 2nd and 5th fairways of possible ridge and furrow ploughing which if genuine would date the use of the land back to medieval times. According to the English Place Names Society 'STANLEY' means 'Woodland Glade at a Rock or Stone.' This would indicate that Stanley Hall woods were much more extensive than at present.

The Hall as we know it today dates from the 16th Century and is of timber framed construction although there was a fair amount of rebuilding in the 19th Century, the extension at the back (overlooking the 18th fairway) dates from the 17th Century.



"Stanley Hall (with Crook Barn on the left)"

The Hall was originally registered with the Church but was claimed by the Legh Estates in 1549, a claim which was subsequently upheld, and it remained in the ownership of the Legh's until the freehold was sold to the Club in 1920.

It is interesting to realise that it was only when the bid was accepted that the Club started thinking how they were going to raise the necessary capital. The feeling was obviously that you can always raise capital secured by the Deeds of Land. Although this may still hold true, the going rate for a mortgage at that time was 6.5%,

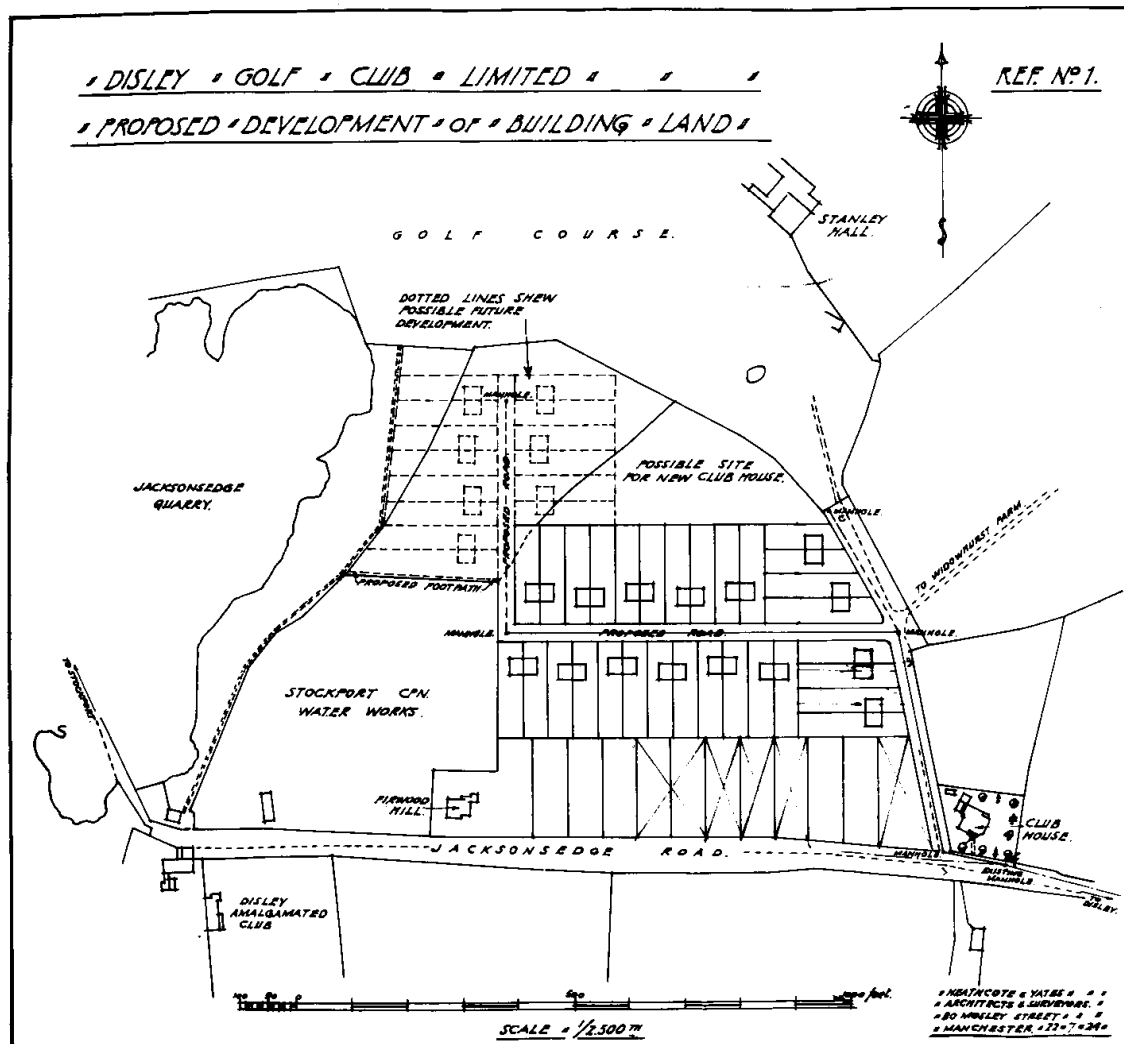
which would cost the Club over £300 per annum in interest charges alone. As the total subscription only amounted to just over £500 it will be realised that although the Club had acquired an invaluable asset it had also mortgaged its future for many years to come.

So how did it reconcile its debts. The answer is in a number of ways. Firstly, the Club was floated as a limited company and shares were sold. Nearly £2000 was raised by this means. It should be noted, however, that all members were not required to take up shares. A new category of members was set up; the Special Country Member who did not hold any shares and consequently did not have any voting rights nor could they hold office. This in fact led to the situation eventually that only a relatively small number of members could stand for Committee or be elected Captain. But more of that later.

The second means of raising finance was by the sale of building land. The land that the Club acquired in its 124 acres included the fields from the course to Jacksons Edge, bounded on one side by Stanley Hall Lane and on the other by Jacksons Edge Quarry. There were no buildings between Stanley Hall Lane and 'Firwood'. This frontage onto Jacksons Edge and on to Stanley Hall Lane was ideal for residential property and the Club wasted no time in putting it on the market, at a price of £600 per acre. This was the equivalent of about £10,000 today. Although that may seem a ridiculous price in these days, great difficulty was found in finding buyers at that price. This was due to the recession after the war which saw the Retail Price Index falling by 35% between 1920 and 1923.

It was because of this fall that the sales of building plots became very protracted. The plots fronting Jacksons Edge were sold by 1923. These were followed by Stanley Hall Lane (part of the old stone wall can still be seen as you turn into the Lane), but before these could be sold the Club had to incur road charges. This entailed laying sewers and the road along the Lane to the junction with Hilton Road. Hilton Road itself was only sold for building in 1930. This again was sold by the Club after the road had been laid and named Hilton Road after H.H. Hilton, the ex Open Champion and Life Member of the Club. Despite all the problems and the costs incurred, the Club still raised over £3000 over the period from 1920 to 1935. The final sale, however, was made on the far side of the course by what is now the 11th green when the land where 'Oaklands' now stands was sold to Mr. Crozier. This is the reason for the hole being known as 'Crozier's' although Mr. Crozier left there in 1938.

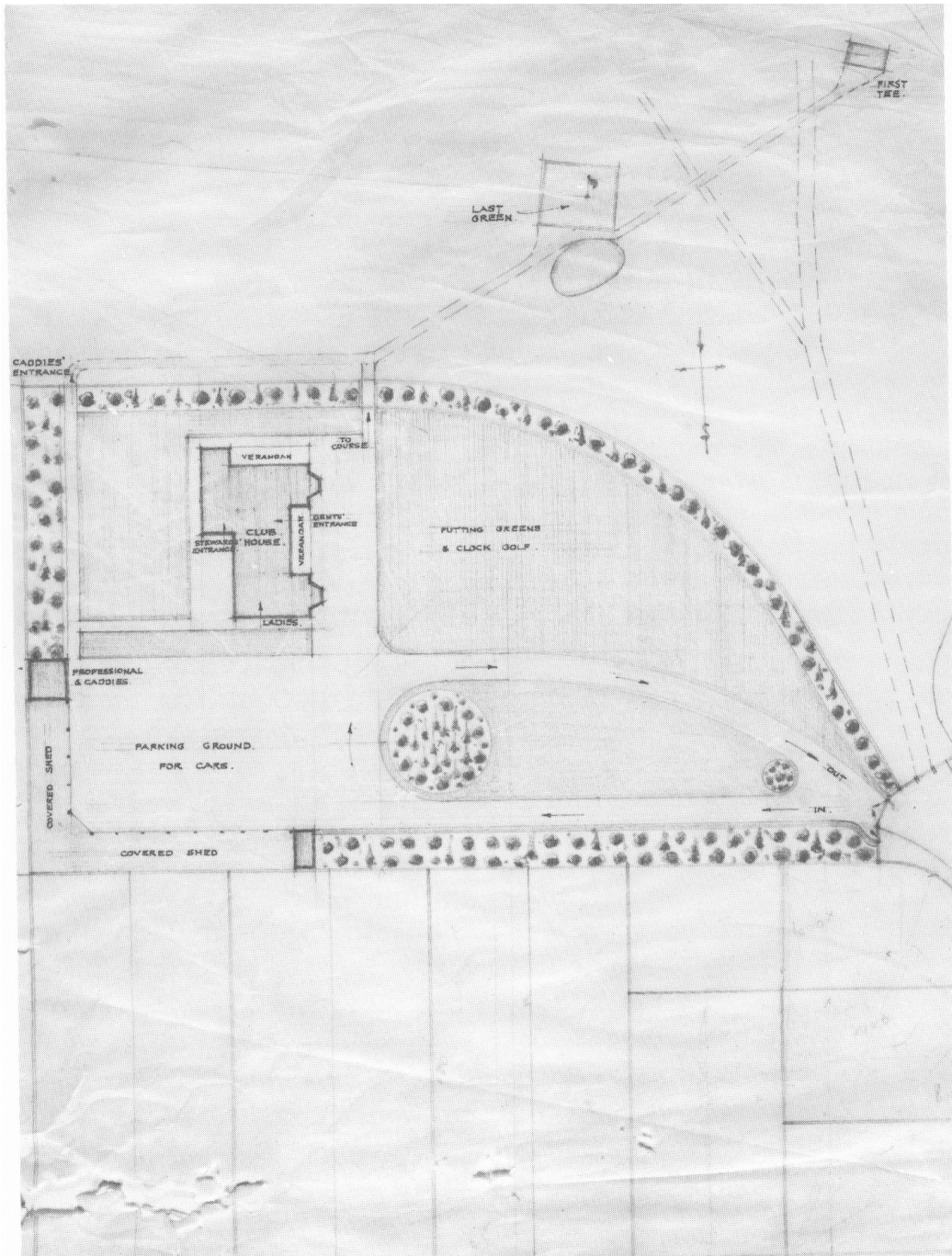
Proposed Site 2



The final method of raising finance was really a means of reducing the overheads the Club had to pay. That was the reduction in the mortgage rate from the 6.5% initial rate. Fortunately the treasurer who took over in 1923 was a local bank manager, Mr. Kerfoot, and he arranged with his bank an overdraft at 5%. Traditionally, since then, the treasurer has always been the bank manager despite the various changes of name of the bank over the years from the Manchester & County Bank, the District and latterly the National Westminster. This tradition has now been broken due to the present (1989) treasurer having remained in office after his retirement from the Bank.

Before we leave the sales of building land, mention should be made of one plot which the Club earmarked for its own development. In 1924 plans were drawn up for a new Club House. This was to be situated by what was the 18th green (now the 16th) and if proceeded with at that time would have saved arguments which were going to continue and on occasions split the Club for the next 55 years. The fact that this Club House was never built at this time, was no doubt due to the lack of cash and the desire on the part of the Club to put the course in order before it embarked on any other major expenditure. This in fact was the reason which was always given whenever the question was raised in the future and it was not until the latter half of the 1970's that the nettle was eventually grasped. Suffice it to say that the proposed plot was eventually sold for housing in 1932 and ever since the garden has acted like a magnet for wayward drivers at this hole.

## Proposed Club House 1925



Having at last acquired the land on which the majority of the course was situated, the Club set about re-establishing the course to a full 18 holes. It became obvious immediately that the needs of the Club conflicted with the needs of Mr. Wild. As we have seen, there was no love lost between the two and so at the end of January 1921 he was given 12 months notice to quit. To the last Wild proved awkward as shown by the fact that as soon as he received his notice he turned his cattle out on the course. (Cattle which have been confined to a barn and fed on hay become very loose when they first start eating green grass in the spring. Add to this the course would be wet and soft and it can be imagined the effect that this action had on the course.) In some ways this action was to the benefit of the Club because Wild had a prima facie case for compensation against the Club under the Agricultural Act at that time, which would have been an almost intolerable burden if it had had to be met in full. Despite the Club's successful counter-claim we still had to pay some £250 which under the financial situation at that time caused a great deal of embarrassment, but the benefits of being able to develop the course and maintain it as we wanted were well worth it.

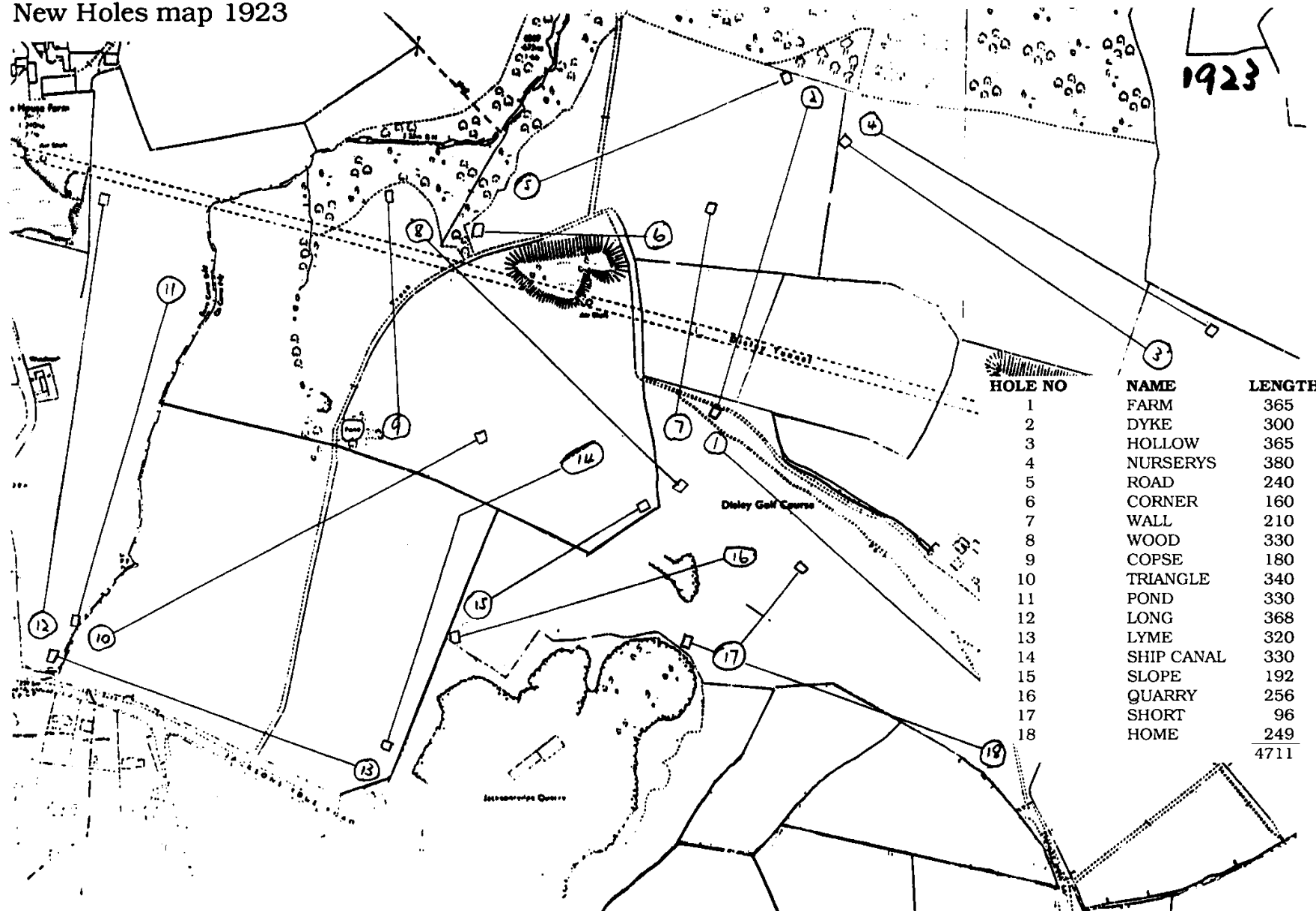
The first essential on the course was to re-establish the 18 holes and to this end it was decided to build two new holes to the right of the 2nd green (then and now). It is ironical that having started work on these holes the Agricultural Board released the fields containing the old 8th and 13th from the ploughing restriction. As this land linked the two parts of the course it was essential that these were also relaid and brought back into

use. This suddenly meant that the Club were in a position that it had 20 holes available. It quickly overcame the problem by dispensing with the old 10th and 11th holes (two short holes on land which did not belong to the Club). This left a course opened in 1923 of which only two holes were on land not owned by the Club. The next stage was to construct two new holes to the right of the 2nd tee (what are now the 1st and 18th). When these holes were opened in 1924 it left only the 13th tee on land for which we were paying rent. This situation may have continued for some time if it had not been for the farmer at Dove House Farm (a Mr. Warburton) giving the Club notice to quit this small area.

As it was, it precipitated the final changes which entailed the construction of what are known as the 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th holes. These were finally opened in 1927 by when the Club owned the whole of the course and the course was now in a form very similar to that which we know today. It has been said that Disley was laid out by James Braid. As will be seen, this is not true. However, in 1935 James Braid was consulted about the course and he made certain recommendations, mainly, about bunkering the course, much of which was done. The two recommendations as to changes to the course entailed the building of a new green at the 2nd (old and new) in the trees behind the one that was in use and the siting of the 5th tee behind this green: this was done and is still in use today. The other course change entailed moving the present 4th green to the right into the trees: this was never carried out. Most of the bunkering recommendations were carried out although those at the present 3rd and 4th were levelled when these holes were ploughed up during the 2nd World War. The alterations to the second green completed the alterations to the course until the 3rd green was moved in the 1970's. This does not mean that the course remained exactly the same over those 40 years, tees were relaid and enlarged and greens were relaid and reshaped. (Even after the 2nd World War the present 1st green was on two levels, with a bank running down the middle of it and the present 12th sloped from right to left for the full width of it.)

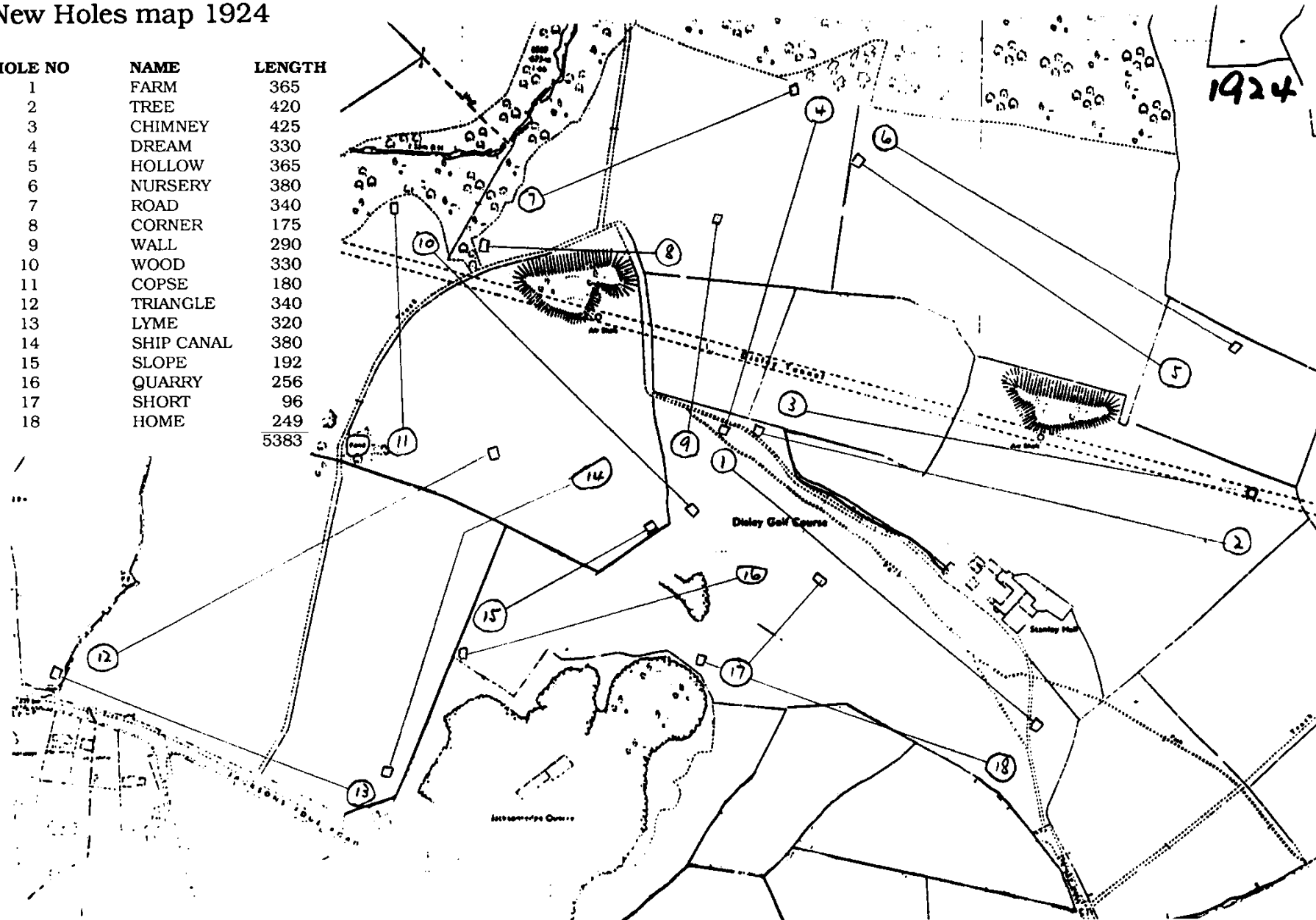
Of the new holes the 'Nursery' (the present 4th hole) is probably the most interesting. It was named after the Rhododendron nursery tenanted by James Yates - Seedsman, situated in the woods to the side of this hole. The remains of the greenhouses can still be seen to the side of the present 5th tee. Access to the nursery was by way of a road from beside the present 6th green to a point to the right of the 2nd green. This was eventually closed in 1926 when the nursery was closed.

# New Holes map 1923

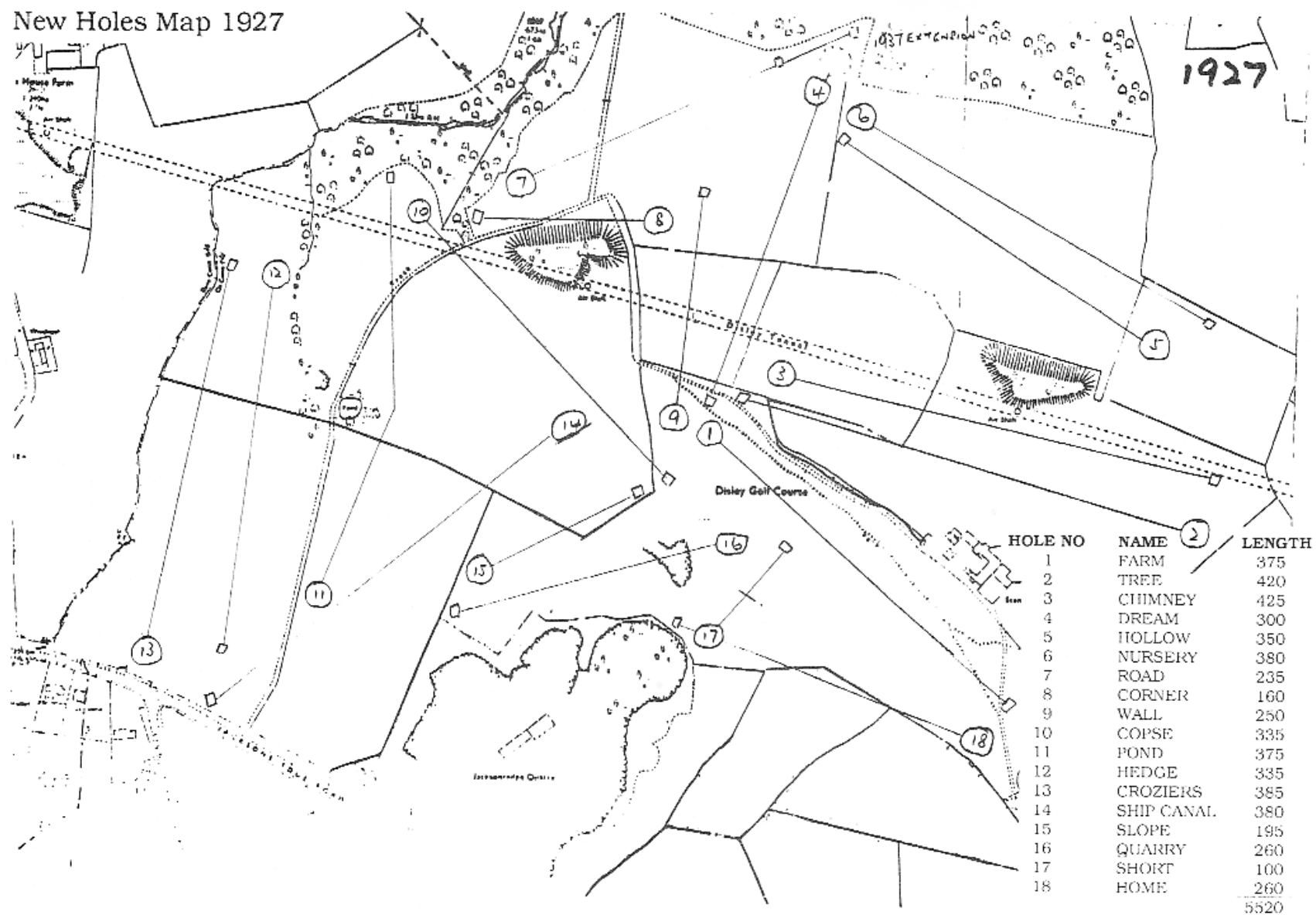


# New Holes map 1924

HOLE NO	NAME	LENGTH
1	FARM	365
2	TREE	420
3	CHIMNEY	425
4	DREAM	330
5	HOLLOW	365
6	NURSERY	380
7	ROAD	340
8	CORNER	175
9	WALL	290
10	WOOD	330
11	COPSE	180
12	TRIANGLE	340
13	LYME	320
14	SHIP CANAL	380
15	SLOPE	192
16	QUARRY	256
17	SHORT	96
18	HOME	249
		5383



# New Holes Map 1927





By the end of the 1920's the Club was in a comparatively comfortable position. It owned its own land and course and although it still had a large overdraft it had building land available for sale but because of the world recession it was still short of members. This created interest in other Clubs and in 1929 the following proposal appeared in the Daily Dispatch,

*"The Daily Dispatch is able to announce today an interesting proposal shortly to be discussed for a merger between the Hazel Grove and Disley Golf Clubs. Mr. A. Berry a member of Hazel Grove is 'fathering' the scheme which has for its objective the consolidation of the improved position enjoyed by the Hazel Grove Club and at the same time increasing the popularity of the Disley Club with visitors. Mr. Berry estimates that from visitors fees alone the Hazel Grove Club will this year receive approximately £700. The Disley Club's course is only two miles further away and Mr. Berry is of the opinion that the number of visitors would greatly increase if they can enjoy the novel experience of becoming members of the two Clubs for the one membership fee.*

*A meeting will shortly be called by Mr. Berry to consider the proposal and it is possible if the scheme meets with support that other Clubs in the immediate locality will be invited to join the proposed merger."*

Needless to say, the Club were not aware of any proposed merger nor did they know Mr. Berry. The following week a denial appeared in the same paper signed by the Secretary and as far as is known the matter was never raised again.

The problems of membership remained, however, especially the lack of full (shareholding) members. This showed itself in the fact that in the late 1920's and early 1930's, Captains were being elected for two years and on occasions elected for a second term. It is interesting to note that when William Gladhill came up for re-election to the Committee at the end of his first term in office as Captain in 1922, he was not re-elected despite there being only 6 nominations for 5 vacancies and yet 8 years later he was elected Captain again and remained in office for 2 years. He was also subsequently elected a Life Member in 1938. It is interesting to speculate in what way he had upset the rest of the members (the minutes give no clue to this).

Over the years the club have had many donations from members, generally of time, prizes and money which are too numerous to mention but during this period there were two donations which have lasted to this day and have given great pleasure to those fellow members over the years. The first was in 1923 when Mr. S.J. Mitchell presented the snooker table to the club. In accepting the gift the committee hoped that it would further the social side and also be a source of income to the club; statements which have proved justified. The second was by Mr. E. Elsteb in 1935 when he presented the shelter and weather cone at what is now the 17th tee (this was of course originally the 1st). The inscription carved in the partition "Many happy games have we played together" express the pleasure and rivalry which succeeding generations of golfers have derived from the course.



Cheshire County team  
Israel Sidebottom (Back row - extreme right)  
T.N (Norry) Sidebottom (Next to Israel)

Having purchased the land and reorganised the course so that it was entirely on our own land, it would seem safe to assume that the problems with local farmers and our neighbours was a thing of the past. Unfortunately this turned out not to be the case. The quarry at the side of the present 14th provided the first problem. This was being worked between the wars and continued until about 1952 and the Club had a number of disputes due to boundary lines, and rock being thrown on to the course. Although most were settled amicably, we did get to the stage of putting the matter in the hands of the Club's solicitors when the quiet approach did not seem to be having the desired effect. It must have been rather nerve wracking to be playing that hole when they were blasting in the quarry and then to be showered with stones. There were, however, no reports of any injuries.

The other problem arose with farmer Jepson who owns the farm to the right of Stanley Hall Lane and Hilton Road. Jepson saw the possibilities of developing his own land for building but required access. His only access was off Stanley Hall Lane and as the Club owned this he required our permission to use it and lay drains etc. into our services. This was refused on the grounds that they were not adequate to accommodate any additional building which he may contemplate. The resultant poor relations between the Club and Jepson have been evident for 50 years. Although the reasons have generally been forgotten.

There was to be one final change in this period. That was to be an extension to the Club House. Although the original proposal was to "extend the present accommodation or the building of a New Club House" the latter does not appear to have been taken very seriously, due, no doubt to finance. So in May 1934 it was agreed to build a wooden structure at the back of the Club House to provide a new club room, bar and locker room. As the total cost was kept to under £ 1,000 and was still in use when the Club House was sold in 1979 it was probably good value.

So we find that by 1935 we have a pleasant course on our own land and the Club has a generally comfortable membership. It would seem that things were set fair for many years to come. We will see that this is how events turned out although what was not appreciated at that time was that another war was only just around the corner but fortunately it was not to have the same effect or bring the same changes that the 1st World War had had.

## CHAPTER 5

### 1936 - 1960 THE QUIET YEARS

The period has been so named because there were very few changes either in the Club House or on the course. Anyone who had left in 1936 and returned to the Club in 1960 would have thought that the time had stood still. Even many of the members although older, would still have been around including two of the Committee (Neville Parker and Israel Sidebottom).



Israel Sidebottom Captain 1939 &  
Committee Member 1922 - 1960.  
Won Cheshire and Midland Counties  
Championship in 1923.  
Runner up in Cheshire Championship 3 times and  
twice semi-finalist in English Amateur  
Championship.

The reasons for this apparent inactivity are numerous and varied but all of them contributing to the whole. We must firstly look at national and international events which continued to put a damper on any development which may have been considered. In the 1930's the country was in the middle of economic depression with a large number of people out of work; consequently there was generally no spare money available to indulge in a pastime which was still considered one for the wealthy. Consequently, most Clubs were suffering from a shortage of members and because by now there were many Clubs closer to Manchester, Disley always tended to suffer more than most. The means adopted to overcome this shortage was to set up two new classes of membership. The Special Country Membership was open to members of any other Club who lived more than two miles from the Club House (in other words were resident outside Disley or High Lane). They could play in all competitions but were not shareholders and did not have a vote. The other class was the Annual Member who did not have a vote, could not play in competitions and had to be elected each year.

This policy of membership proved to be very successful and we find that by 1938 the total playing membership was not subsequently exceeded until 1960.

The comparative figures for 1938 and 1960 being as follows:

	<b>1938</b>	<b>1960</b>
<b>Full Gentlemen Members</b>	81	151
<b>Full Lady Members</b>	33	53
<b>Special Country</b> - Gentlemen	50	20
- Ladies	20	4
<b>Annual Members</b> - Gentlemen	39	
- Ladies	12	
<b>Juniors</b>	14	29
<b>Life Members</b>	12	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>270</b>

There were, however, 55 Social Members in addition in 1960, a category of membership which did not start until after the Second World War.

As will be seen, although the total membership was almost identical, the number of full members had increased considerably. What was found was that when the War did come in 1939, although the total membership declined, the number of full members remained static and in fact showed an increase by the end of the war.

The War was of course the second factor which curtailed any thoughts of development within the Club. It was more a battle to survive but although the Club lost the 5th and 6th holes to the plough, it did survive and in the process raised over £600 towards the war effort (although this might not sound much it compares with annual total subscription of £620). It should be realised that during the War, besides the number of members being reduced, the number of ground staff was also reduced; this led to members being organised on a Friday night to cut the greens and fairways ready for the weekend. It also meant that there were shortages of supplies for the Bar, even after the War spirits were only sold at weekends and it was no use complaining if the Bar ran out, the Club only had a certain quota. Equipment both in the Club House and on the course could not be replaced and repairs were effected by various means. There was little food available for catering so that the Club had to plan a long way in advance if any sort of 'party' was to be held. But the Club survived and it is only natural that those that were involved in its survival felt they had a right to guide its future.

Although the War ended in 1945, it was the early 1950's before it could be said that the Club was back to normal. There were still shortages of every kind and although the course was soon back to full 18 holes, sheep were still grazing the fairways until 1948. Food rationing did not end until 1949 but the quota system for bar purchases was still in force until 1952.

Overriding all the external forces restricting change there was one big internal factor, that was finance. The Club was running an overdraft of about £2,000 at the end of each year. This had remained outstanding from the purchase of the land and the subsequent sales of building plots and while it was fully secured by the Club's assets it meant that there was never any available money to finance any capital project. In 1948 the proposal was raised for piping water to the course but this was not proceeded with due to problems in obtaining materials and the cost. Similarly when the question of a new Club House was raised in 1947 the same problems arose and although the view was expressed that it was hoped that conditions would improve in the next four or five years, the question was not raised again for some fourteen years.

The overdraft was only cleared in 1958 when the land which now constitutes the top end of Hilton Road was sold for £2,000 for building; this was the last sale of land which the Club made and it left the situation whereby the club could embark on any project without having to clear debts owing from previous ones. It was also the first time that the Club had not operated with any kind of overdraft since it was founded.

Finally the whole structure of the membership was against change. As we have seen in 1938 less than half of the members were Full Members. As only Full Members could be shareholders, they were the only ones who had a vote. But in addition entrance fees were paid in five equal instalments and only when the entrance fee had been fully paid would shares be allocated. So we find that the Club was being run by Full Members who had been members for at least five years. This inevitably led to confusion at General Meetings and

resentment from new members who felt they were not part of the Club and this eventually caused a rift in the Club when the membership started to increase in the early 1960's, but more of that later.

Generally the Club's relations with its neighbours remained good, although problems still existed with blasting in the quarry right into the mid 1950's. This only eventually stopped when the Club's solicitors were involved. When the quarry came up for sale in 1959 the Club put in a bid of £450 but unfortunately this was not acceptable. So potentially the problem may still remain.

Mention should also be made here of visiting Societies. While many societies have visited Disley over the years it should be recorded that the National Boiler Assurance Golf Section have had an annual competition at Disley since at least 1947 and the association may go back as far as 1908 when the Insurance Golf Association had a meeting at the club.

So by 1960 we find a Club which has hardly changed in nearly thirty years. The course is little different from that which was opened in 1927, the Club House has not been altered since 1934 and the membership has remained about the same since 1930's. Only some of those members have changed. But at this time there were two events which were to create an increase in demand for golf at Disley. The first was local, that was the closing of Whaley Bridge Golf Club (when their lease ran out) but the other was to affect all golf clubs and that was Television. Up to 1960 little golf was shown on television but the Centenary Open at St. Andrews and the coming of the likes of Palmer, Player and Nicklaus, created such interest that there was a resurgence in the demand for membership of golf clubs and this was felt in Disley as everywhere else.