

125th ANNIVERSARY EDITION
1889 - 2014

THE HISTORY OF A COUNTRY GOLF CLUB

**THE FIRST HUNDRED AND TWENTY FIVE YEARS
of DISLEY**

by

G. Yeomans

with contributions from

J.A. Lomas

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INTRODUCTION

This is the history of a Golf Club. A Club similar to many which were formed in the late 19th century but unlike most of those clubs, Disley members still play over the same land and generally the same holes which were laid out a hundred and twenty five years ago. Although there are many much older clubs in the country this puts Disley in the top 10 oldest inland courses in England and predates any course in America. But its main claim is that in the hundred years of existence it has brought together people from many walks of life and varied backgrounds who have had one interest in common - to play golf.

It traces the founding of the Club; through the early years when the land was rented and the running battle the Club had with the farmer who did everything he could to cause trouble: to the period between the wars when the land was bought and the course reconstructed. It follows the fortunes of the Club through the difficult times during the wars to the present day when a modern Clubhouse now dominates the course and the Club, which was once a small country golf course with access only by rail from Manchester, is now a thriving suburban Club in a desirable area of Cheshire.

The original document was produced as a book in 1989 to celebrate the club's centenary. This second edition was produced in 2014 to mark the 125th anniversary of the formation of the club.

FORWARD BY THE CAPTAIN, 2014

Firstly let me say what an honour it is to be the Captain of Disley in this its Quasquicentennial [125th] year. I follow a distinguished line of Captains and none more so than my former foursomes partner Mr. Keith Bleakley who was Captain in Disley's Centenary year.

During this special year, Disley has hosted many societies and golfing organizations including The Manchester Captains, The Manchester Alliance, The Cheshire Golf Union and the Houldsworth Trophy, all of which were generous in their praise for the club and its course.

It has been a particular pleasure to share my year with Mr. David Ward, my President, and Mrs. Lindsay Pulley, the Lady Captain. Thanks are due to the members of the Committees who have worked tirelessly to make this such a special year. I must also thank all the Members of Disley who make this such a special club.

Finally on behalf of you all, I must thank Mr. Geoffrey Yeomans for all his hard work in researching and producing this record of the past 125 years which I can highly recommend.

Neil O'Brien

Captain, 2014

FORWARD BY THE CAPTAIN, 1989

It is my privilege and honour to be elected Captain for Disley Golf Club for 1989, the year in which we celebrate the 100th anniversary of our coming into being.

A century ago the founder members of this Club laid sure foundations on which it has prospered and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their foresight and for their parts in seeing the Club grow from strength to strength.

Many changes have taken place in the past 100 years, but the members of Disley are still playing the same ground used by founder members. Of course, the holes have been re-constructed several times. Also, I must mention that for 100 years, Disley members have been enjoying their golf on what must be one of the most natural scenic courses throughout the United Kingdom - the setting is a joy to the eye whenever one sets out for the first tee.

My thanks go to all those good people concerned in any way with the organisation of the special events which will occur during the Centenary Year. I know that our members will enjoy their golf, whatever the weather conditions, because we all play one of the greatest and fairest games devised by man. Golf is the winner each and every time we get together to play the game.

My thanks also to Arthur Hunstone, who kindly accepted my invitation to be the Club President during this momentous year - to the Lady Captain, Mrs N. Woodall and the lady members in the Club - and to all the members of the Men's Committee who, day in day out, work so hard for the good of our members.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to thank, in particular, Geoffrey Yeomans, who is responsible for the content and publication of this History of Disley Golf Club. His long hours of work, both in research and compiling the written word are evident in the following pages.

To everyone connected with this great Club - have a good Centenary Year.



K. BLEAKLEY J.P.

CAPTAIN 1989

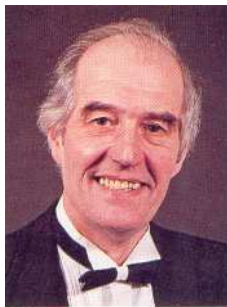
OFFICERS 1989



CAPTAIN
Mr. K. Bleakley



LADY CAPTAIN
Mrs. N. Woodall



PRESIDENT
Mr. A. Hunstone



SECRETARY
Mr. J. Lomas

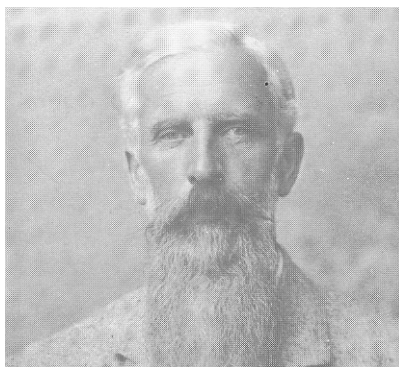


TREASURER
Mr. D.A. Thornley

CHAPTER 1

THE START

Disley Golf Club was a product of the leisure revolution which took place in this country in the late 19th century. With the reduction in the working week, there was a growing interest in sport at that time, mainly in the industrial areas of the North and Midlands as evidenced by the setting up of the Football League and the development of the County Cricket as we know it to-day. Golf was given a boost when in 1885 the first open amateur tournament was held at Hoylake (this was accepted later as the Amateur Championship) and in 1888, when the first winner from an English Club (Jack G. Burns) brought the Open Championship trophy south of the border.



"William Bell Founding Member"

It is safe to assume that as regards the land, T.W. Legh (eldest son of William Legh, first Lord Newton from 1892), influenced his father in providing the land for the course. Thomas Wodehouse Legh M.P. was already a keen golfer, playing in competitions at Disley in the 1890's a number of times and winning the British Parliamentary Championship in 1893 and 1896. He succeeded to the peerage in 1898 and became the Club's Honorary President until his death in 1942.

At that time, there were only two Golf Clubs in the Manchester Area: the Old Manchester Golf Club, which had been founded in 1818 but was continually dogged by not having a permanent course, and the Manchester Golf Club, which had been founded in 1882 on fields at Whalley Range. As most of the successful business and professional men of Manchester were finding homes out of the city, any thoughts of starting a Golf Club were automatically directed to these areas and we find that a number of Clubs were founded in the late 1880's and early 1890's in what is now the Greater Manchester area. Disley, however, has proved to be unique amongst all these in that the original ground (and course) is still used - but more of that later.

It is against this background that we find in 1889 three men, Dr. Alexander Hodgkinson, M.D., J. Arthur Hutton and William Bell, getting together, probably over lunch at their club in Manchester, and the subject of golf being raised. What is known is that both Dr. Hodgkinson and William Bell already played the game although it could not have been on a regular basis because Dr. Hodgkinson was a member at Hoylake. It is safe to assume, however, that the subject of the Amateur Championship must have been raised and the interest this had evoked prompted them to start thinking about starting a club of their own. As William Bell and Arthur Hutton lived in Disley they no doubt voiced their opinion on the merits of Disley for such a venture.

In those days, the requirements of a golf club were quite modest; the availability of cheap land - which normally meant poor meadow or grazing land (this was why many early courses were founded on links land - the term means the land linking the land and the sea), access to the ground - normally by train as there were no cars or buses in those days and the availability of a good hostelry - for both accommodation and satisfying the inner man. Disley was able to satisfy these three requirements in full. The hill above the village to the north provided poor grazing land being between 600 and 700 feet above sea level and exposed to the prevailing wind (giving it the feel of a seaside links), there was a direct rail link from Manchester - the journey time being only half an hour and between the station and the course was the Rams Head Hotel to provide for the needs of tired and hungry golfers.

So it is not surprising that on the 23 November 1889 we find three gentlemen meeting at the Rams Head to discuss the details for setting up the Club.

Preliminary Meeting 23 Nov 1889

At a preliminary Meeting held at Disley on Nov 23 1889 there were present Dr Hodgkinson & Messrs Bill & Hutton & it was resolved if possible to form a golf Club to be called the Disley Golf Club.

An ~~arrangement~~ inspection was made of the ground available & a course was planned subject to alteration, & the course was played over & it was considered that it would form a fine sporting ^{links} course with plenty of hazards.

Afterwards Mr George Mld of Stanley Hall farm was visited & it was arranged that if a club was formed he should be paid the sum of £15 annually, & that the club should be allowed the sole right of playing over his ground,

and it was resolved that a certain ^{by} of gentlemen be approached asked to join the Club & that a meeting be arranged at the Rams Head Disley for Dec 4th 80.

It was subsequently decided that Mr Bill see Hudson with reference to starting the work on the putting greens at once.

Mr Hutton was appointed Secretary pro tem & it was resolved that if possible the club & the greens be got into working order at once so that the opening meeting could be held in January.

Dr Hodgkinson also promised to present a gold medal to the Club to be competed for annually.

A further meeting was held on the 30th November when the Agenda for the General Meeting was drawn up and it was resolved that the "tins and flag staffs" be ordered.

This brings us to the General Meeting which founded the club.

General Meeting

Held at Disley on Dec 14th 1889

Present Dr Hodgkinson & Messrs Bill Willoughby Murray Graham & Hutton & Hutton Miles. Porson

Dr Hodgkinson was elected chairman & he read the minutes of the preliminary meetings that had been held & afterwards gave an account of what had been done towards forming the club, & the ideas he hoped to see carried out.

A discussion followed & general approval was expressed of what had taken place.

The following resolutions were then passed ^{unanimously}.

1. prop. Dr Hodgkinson sec Mr Bill

"That a club be formed called the Disley Golf Club"

2. prop. Mr Graham. Sec Mr Willoughby

"That the number of members be limited to fifty."

It should be explained at this stage there were no uniform Rules of Golf. It was only in 1897 that the Royal and Ancient were invited to assume responsibility and the first Rules of Golf Committee was set up. Prior to that date each Club formulated their own rules. Disley decided to adopt the Hoylake rules and sent copies to Hoylake, St. Annes, Blundell Sands, Buxton and Manley Park (Old Manchester) for comment.

The course 'construction' continued and by April the Committee were able to agree the date of the opening meeting. This was resolved as Saturday 17 May 1890, but before this could take place the holes had to be

named, rules for caddies had to be drawn up and fences and notices (warning members not to enter fields in search of balls) erected.

The rules for caddies make interesting reading.

DISLEY GOLF CLUB.

CADDIES.

TARIFF { 1st class Caddies, Blue Badges, 3d. { a round or
 { 2nd „ „ Red „ 2d. { part of a round.

Caddies are allowed to charge 2d. for cleaning clubs. Members must make their own arrangements with Caddies for carrying their clubs to their houses or to the station.

All boys who wish to be employed as Caddies must apply to MR. JAMES MURRAY, Disley, who will enter their names, and will supply each boy with a badge, on paying a deposit of one shilling.

RULES.

1.—No Caddie is allowed to carry clubs unless he is wearing his badge, or to go on the course or greens unless he is engaged in carrying clubs.

2.—Any Caddie found trespassing in the fields, or crossing the walls or fences, or looking for balls, will have his badge taken away from him, and will no longer be allowed to carry clubs.

3.—Any Caddie offering balls for sale will have his badge taken away.

4.—Any Caddie allowing another boy to wear his badge will have it taken away.

5.—Any Caddie reported for misbehaviour will have his badge taken away.

6.—Caddies must replace and tread down any turf cut up in playing.

It is, however, the names of the holes and a newspaper report of the course which appeared in January 1893 and is reproduced here, which gives an idea as to what form the original course took.

- | | | |
|----|-----------|---|
| 1. | The Farm | Now the 17th and the name remains unchanged. |
| 2. | The Wood | Now the 2nd, but the name was changed to the 'Dyke' when the course was extended to 18 holes and only later changed to the 'Dream'. |
| 3. | The Field | Now the 5th. The name was changed to the 'Road' when the course was extended to 18 holes. |
| 4. | The Comer | Now the 6th and the name remains unchanged. |
| 5. | The Lane | Now the 7th. The name was changed to the 'Wall' when the course was extended to 18 holes. |
| 6. | The Pass | Now the 13th. The name was changed to the 'Slope' when the course was extended to 18 holes. |

- | | | |
|----|------------|--|
| 7. | The Quarry | Now the 14th. The name remains unchanged. |
| 8. | The Tree | Now the 15th. This was changed to the 'Short' when the course was extended to 18 holes. |
| 9. | The Pond | Now the 16th. The name was changed to 'Home' when the course was extended to 18 holes and changed again when the new Club house was built and this hole became the 16th. |

"The first hole is the hole of the links, as, if it is not the best it is undoubtedly the most interesting and difficult. There are many ways to it, one of which is along the cart-ruts at the bottom of the hill. I tried it myself and I can solemnly assure you after my own experience that it isn't the right one, as, although it may be interesting and very good exercise it is neither conducive to goal scoring nor cleanliness. Another way is along the top of the hill to the left. Although it is safer and easier than the bottom route it makes the final approach too difficult, as the green is very small and also very keen and if you once run below it, it may cost you many strokes to regain it. In order to play it correctly you have to drive two very straight shots and even when you have done that the iron approach is still difficult consequently making the hole at any time a very good five (length 375 yards).

The second hole from the tee looks extremely easy, as you drive from a raised tee right down into the valley; in fact the shot from the tee looks so tempting that it is almost an impossibility not to press but it is after the tee shot that the difficulty comes in as the iron approach is still downhill whilst at the back of the hole a nasty clay ditch runs, which seems to have a magnetic influence on your ball. Even if you escape this the hole is a capital four, on account of the slope of the putting green which makes holing out difficult (length 300 yards).

The third hole is not of much account, there being really only one formidable hazard viz a wood behind the hole which however is very difficult to get out of when once in. However, if played carefully no one should take more than five, four being perhaps par play (length 240 yards).

The fourth hole is a short one necessitating an iron or a cleek to clear the road and boundary fences just short of the hole; a capital three at any time, it may fairly be called a four hole (length 160 yards).

The fifth hole is undoubtedly the best hole on the green as it is a hole in which a good tee shot may give you a possible three whilst a topped, heeled or badly hit ball may necessitate double figures. The first hazard a thick set hedge is some fifteen yards in front of the tee whilst some 120 yards further on is a high stone wall with a cart road on the far side, the hole being some thirty yards past the road. On the right hand side is a ploughed field which is out of bounds and as the putting green is some distance above the level of the tee anyone can well imagine that the drive is not an easy one; in fact at any time the hole is a capital four and a fair five (length 165 yards).

To the sixth hole you are still driving uphill the chief hazard being the ploughed field on the right. The difficulty, however, is in the approach, the green being right up against the wall and placed on a diminutive plateau which makes the putting and short approaching difficult in the extreme. However, carefully played it is an easy five (length 190 yards).

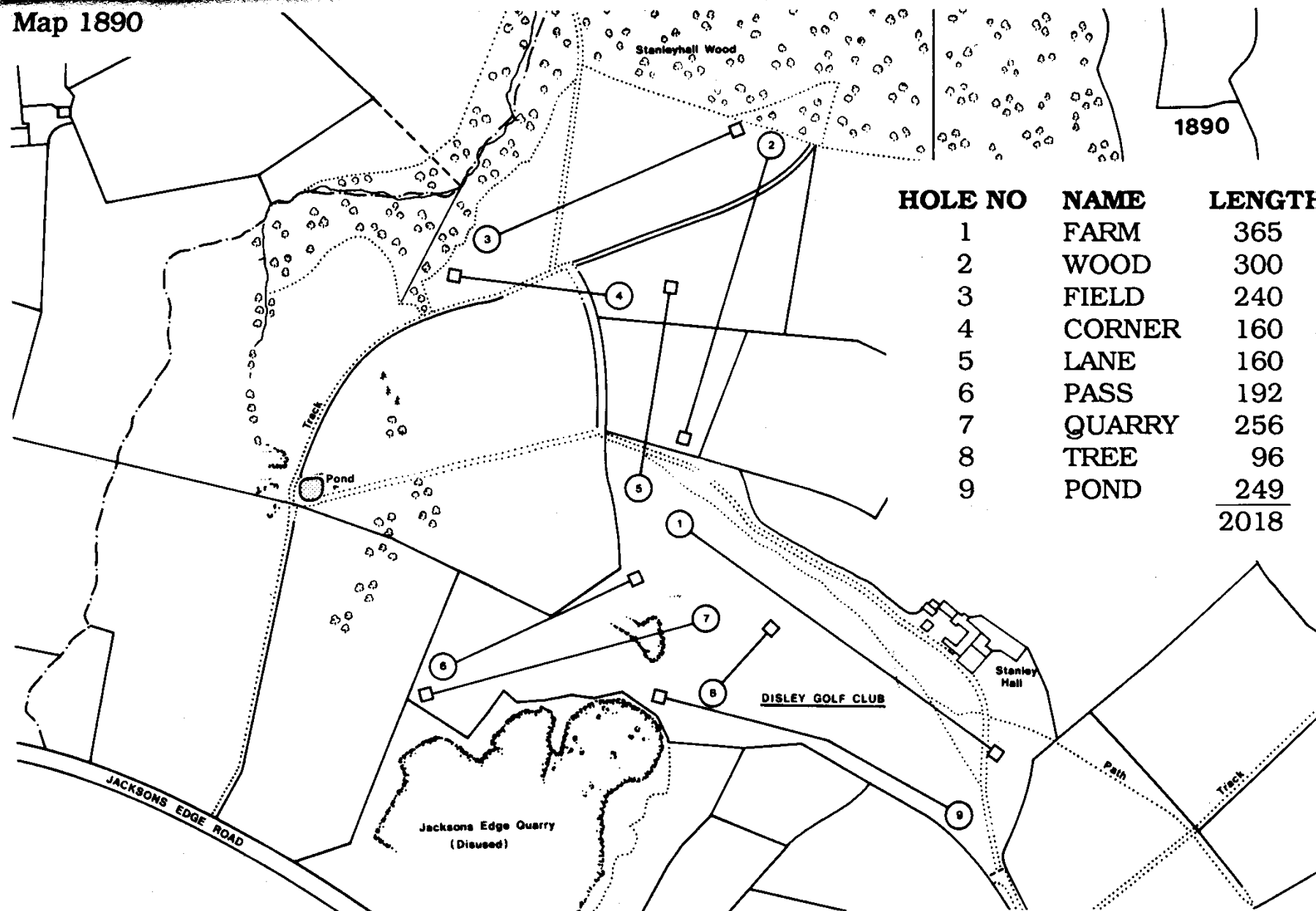
Again at the seventh hole the difficulty really lies in the approach, that is if you manage to steer clear of the quarry, which lies some 200 yards from the tee. However, generally speaking this will not be reached except with a strong wind behind you. The approach from short of the quarry is very awkward on account of the lie of the green, the ball having to be dropped short of the green and well to the right so as to let it roll slowly down. If you once get over the edge at the back of the hole it may cost you four or five before your ball finds the bottom. If the hole is done in five there should be no cause to grumble although four is really par play (length 256 yards).

The eighth is the short hole of the round being only about 100 yards in length, the difficulty lies in the shot being considerably uphill on to a small green, the only hazard being an artificial stone wall just short of the green. On a calm day it should be a three, but on a windy day a fair four.

The last hole is rather uninteresting the only difficulty being in the peculiar undulations of the putting green. A drive and short iron should put you somewhere in the proximity of the green from whence if you get to the bottom of the hole in two you may consider you have done fairly well (length 250 yards).

From this description it is possible to draw up a plan of the original course (See 1890 Course Plan)

Map 1890



And so we come to the Opening Meeting of the Club held on the 17 May 1890. It is recorded that the wind was rather strong (which was probably a Disley understatement as the Sporting Chronicle reported that there was a 'high wind') and there were a good many spectators who interfered rather with the play. There were fourteen entries for the sweepstake and nineteen members played round.


The following were the scores:

	Gross	Hcp	Net
R.W. Hutton	127	28	99
J.A. Hutton	130	25	105
H.C. Garrett	137	28	109
A. Hodgkinson	110	Scr	110
D. Tonge	117	6	111
W. Bell	114	Scr	114
G.J. Hutton	147	28	119
T.C. Norris	160	36	124
F.S. Willoughby	183	36	147
G. Wild	178	36	152
E. Wittington	188	36	152
J. Murray	190	36	154
J.W. Hague	202	36	166

No returns from Messrs. Mortens, G.H. Norris, Preston, Lee Slater, Schofield and Shorrocks.

(It should be noted that besides there being no universal Rules of the game, there was no universal handicapping system.) The handicaps were allotted from the best player who was on "Scratch" to the highest who was given 36. Thus a member who was a member of two Clubs could have very different handicaps at each club (e.g. Dr. Hodgkinson had a handicap of "Scratch" at Disley while holding a 22 handicap at Hoylake.)

The Opening Meeting was followed by a General Meeting, at which Dr. Hodgkinson was formally elected Captain for 1890, and a dinner at the Rams Head Hotel when a considerable quantity of food was consumed as evidenced by the menu.


SOUP
Ox-Tail. A-la-Reine.
FISH
Salmon. Soles.
JOINTS
Sirloin of Beef. Fore ¼ Lamb.
Calfs Head, & Bacon
POULTRY
Roast Chickens. Roast Ducklings.
.....
Fuddings, Pies, etc.
Cheese, Salad.
Rams Head.
May 17th 1890.

And so the Club was launched.

CHAPTER 2

1890 - 1896 ESTABLISHING THE CLUB

Having launched the Club, as we have seen in the last chapter, the job now was to establish it. This was the main object of succeeding Committees during the period up to 1896. Fortunately, by then the Club had built firm foundations and subsequent events which threatened the very existence of the Club around the turn of the century and extended to a greater or lesser extent until after the First World War, were able to be overcome. But more of this later.

The first area that was used to establish the Club was on the course. Three matches were arranged with other Clubs in 1890 (obviously to show off the new course). These were as follows:

July 5 th 1890			
Match v Rylye's Golf Club of Atherley played at Disley			
Disley	holes	Rylye's	holes
Dr Hodgkinson	2	C Harvey	0
W Ball	2	Saene Tonge	0
R W Hutton	2	J MacLaren	0
J A Hutton	0	A Harvey	2
Rev J H Bourne	4	L Marriott	0
	<u>12</u>		<u>2</u>
Disley won by 10 holes			
July 12 th 1890			
Match v Wilmslow Golf Club played at Disley			
Disley	holes	Wilmslow	holes
Dr Hodgkinson	1	W A Threedaie	0
W Ball	6	J L Gilchrist	0
Saene Tonge	8	F Godlee	0
R W Hutton	0	A Darbyshire	6
Rev J H Bourne	11	P Swannick	0
J A Hutton	7	J Beaumont	0
	<u>33</u>		<u>6</u>
Disley won by 27 holes			
Oct 4 th 1890			
Match v the Macclesfield Golf Club played at Disley			
Disley	holes	Macclesfield	holes
W Ball	3	Dr Saffell	0
Dr Hodgkinson	0	G C Greenwell	1
Saene Tonge	0	A G Gray	3
R W Hutton	8	J Tylecot	0
Rev J Bourne	2	Rev R Cobbold	0
J A Hutton	3	J Edmondson	0
G J Hutton	0	W Burgess	0
	<u>16</u>		<u>4</u>
Disley won by 12 holes			

It should be noted that in those days matches were played over a full 18 holes and the result was the total number of holes up or down.

As will be seen, Disley won all the matches and history shows that the Club did not lose a home match until 1896 when they lost by 11 holes to Bowden. Over the following years matches were arranged with Buxton (High Peak), Macclesfield, Cheadle, Didsbury, Manchester, Western (Eccles), Huddersfield, Llandudno (North Wales), Wallasey and Chester. In addition to golf matches, an annual Cricket Match was played with the Strines Cricket Club. This continued for over ten years.

The next means that was used to establish the Club was to encourage notable players of the day to come and play on the course.

The first of these was in April 1893 when Mr. H.H. Hilton, the Open Champion (and a member of Hoylake) was elected a Life Member. This had the desired effect because in the summer of that year at the Summer Meeting, when the Disley Challenge Vase was competed for the first time, Harold Hilton was among the competitors. Although he did not win, mainly due to being given a handicap of + 7, he did establish a new course record of 74 (he in fact holed the 9 hole course in 35 in the 3rd of the 4 rounds making up the 36 holes of the competition).

The next notable player to play at Disley was Mr. J. Ball the Amateur Champion and 1890 Open Champion, who came in April 1894 to officially open the extended course (the course was extended to 18 holes for the start of that season). He, of course, created a course record when he went round in 78.

By far the most important event which established the Disley course was played on 19 July 1895. This was a 36 hole professional event at which all the English professionals of the time played. The competition was held on the Sunday following the Open Championship which was held on Wednesday 15th and Thursday 16th July 1895 at St. Andrews (and won by J. H. Taylor). On the Friday, a special competition had been held to open the New Course at St. Andrews and the Disley event scheduled for the following Sunday. The quality of

entry was obviously increased by the fact that a prize fund of £60 was offered by Disley with a first prize of £20. This compares with a fund of £100 for the Open, with a first prize of £30. It should also be noted that there were 73 entries for the Open that year including amateurs while the Disley event attracted 47 professionals. The results are worth recording.

£20	1st	Ben Sayers (North Berwick)	75	75	150
£10	2nd	J.H. Taylor (Winchester)	73	78	151
		Open Champion 1895/1900/1909/1913			
£8	3rd	Tom Vardon (Ilkley)	78	73	151
£6	4th	D. Brown (Malvern)	73	80	153
£5	5th	A. Toogood (Minchinhampton)	80	74	154
£4	6th	D. Herd (Bradford)	75	79	154
£3	7th	G. Pulford (Hoylake)	76	78	154
£2	8th	Harry Vardon (Bury)	76	79	155
		U.S. Open Champion 1900			
		Open Champion 1896/1898/1903/1911/1914			
£1	9th	Alex Herd (Huddersfield)	75	81	156
		Open Champion 1902			
£1	10th	J. Kay (Seaton Carew)	79	80	159

Needless to say the 73's by J.H. Taylor, D. Brown and Tom Vardon, created a joint course record.



"Professional Event 1895 -
Driving from the first tee"



"Professional Event 1895 -
Putting on the first green "



"Professional Event 1895 -
Driving from the fifth tee"

It would be interesting to contemplate how much it would cost to stage a similar event to-day with a field which included all leading English professionals including the current Open Champion.

The next method used to promote the Club has been touched on earlier when John Ball was invited to play and that was the extension of the course to 18 holes. A description of the extended course is included from a newspaper report at the time.

"The first five holes remain unchanged. The first new or sixth hole lies somewhere in the direction of the third. Twenty yards in front of the tee there is a stone wall to catch topped shots whilst 130 yards from the tee there is a road, which, however, should be successfully carried. The road and wall, however, some 60 yards from the hole and 250 yards from the tee, make a fine hazard to negotiate in the second shot.

The seventh hole, which is just short of 200 yards amply repays a good straight drive, a wall and road having to be carried some 100 yards from the tee whilst a pond and some trees will catch any ball at all badly sliced.

The eighth hole is sadly against short drivers, the first hazard, a wall, being some 80 yards from the tee and the second a road and a hedge some 160 yards. It is much easier to clear the latter hazard on the right but if that line is taken it is very improbable that the hole will be reached in two which can be easily accomplished by clearing the hazard straight.

The ninth hole which requires two good full shots to reach has only one really formidable hazard - a hedge about 200 yards from the tee. There is, however, a pond a short distance in front of the tee to catch any badly topped drives.

The tenth hole is a beautiful little hole, some 120 yards in length. A well played stroke will give you an easy three whilst a badly played one may require the recording of double figures, the hedge and gully some 50 yards in front of the tee being a truly formidable hazard to negotiate when once in.

The eleventh hole is again a short one which is rather to be regretted but to all appearance it cannot be helped at present. A Cleek shot over a series of gullies should land you somewhere in the vicinity of the hole from whence it will be always an excellent three and a fair four.

The twelfth is the long hole of the course, some 450 yards in length and requiring at the least three shots to reach. It is in all respects, however, a capital hole. A good drive will clear a series of undulating valleys and a stroke of similar excellence will put you within reach in three, where the player must be careful not to pull his approach as an awkward grassy hollow awaits him. It will be always an excellent five to the longest of drivers and will generally cost a short driver six or more.

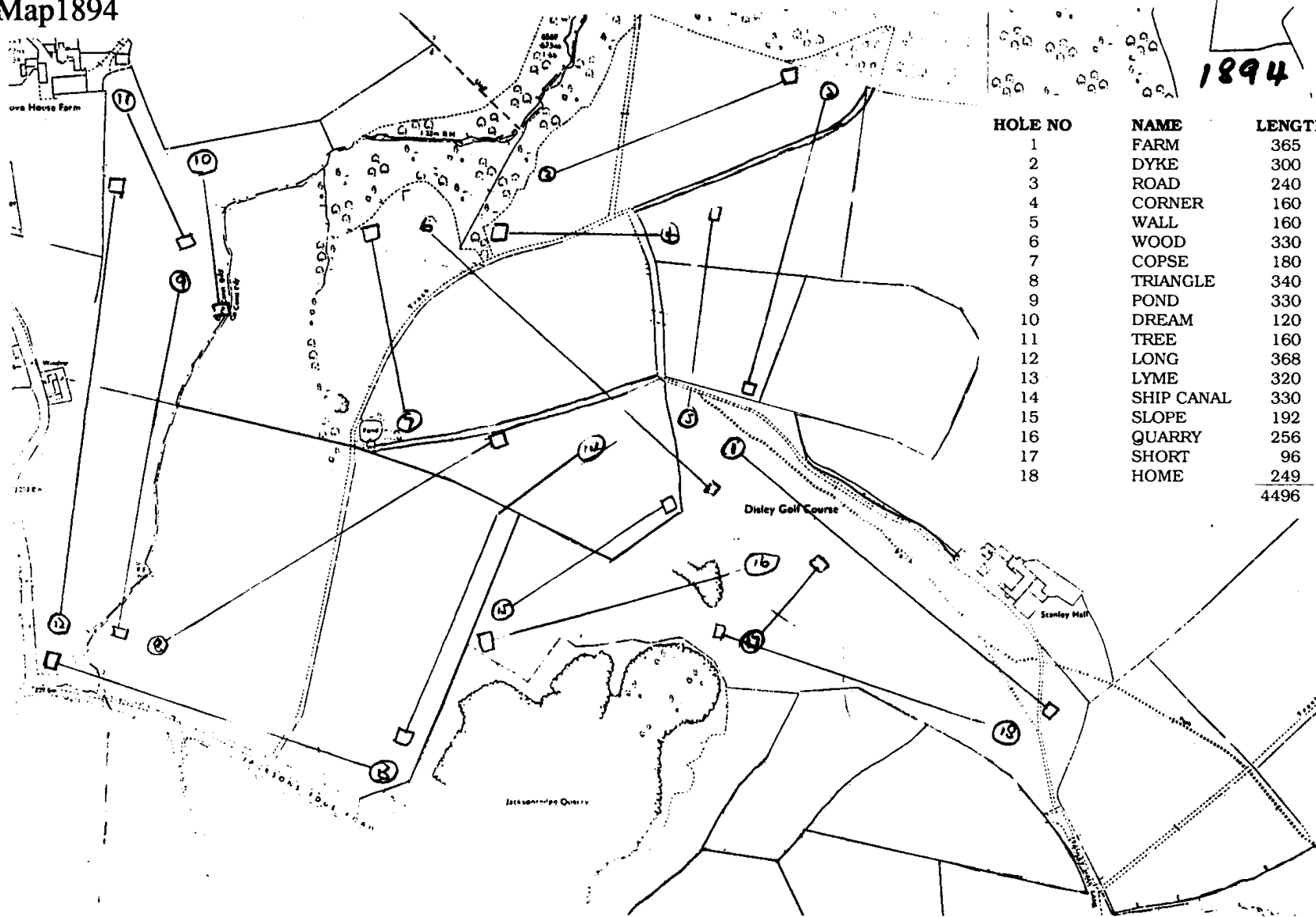
The thirteenth hole should be reached in two being some 320 yards in length. There is a hedge about 40 yards from the tee and a hedge and road about 225 yards. A road with a nasty ditch catches any balls at all sliced.

The fourteenth and last of the new holes has only in reality one hazard, a stone wall over 200 yards from the tee which requires careful negotiation in the second stroke.

The fifteenth or old sixth is where the old course is resumed. The bringing in of the new holes has lengthened the course by some 300 yards, the full compliment of the 18 holes being now just under three miles."

(See 1894 Course plans)

Map1894



HOLE NO	NAME	LENGTH
1	FARM	365
2	DYKE	300
3	ROAD	240
4	CORNER	160
5	WALL	160
6	WOOD	330
7	COPSE	180
8	TRIANGLE	340
9	POND	330
10	DREAM	120
11	TREE	160
12	LONG	368
13	LYME	320
14	SHIP CANAL	330
15	SLOPE	192
16	QUARRY	256
17	SHORT	96
18	HOME	249
		4496

As would be expected, the new holes were given names as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|------------|--|
| 6. | Wood | Now the 8th. The name was changed to 'Copse' when the course was reorganised in 1927. |
| 7. | Copse | This hole no longer exists although the 8th now bears the same name. |
| 8. | Triangle | This hole no longer exists although the tee can still be found between the present 8th & 9th holes. |
| 9. | Pond | This hole no longer exists although the present 9th bears the same name. |
| 10. | Dream | This hole no longer exists although the 2nd bears the same name. |
| 11. | Tree | This hole no longer exists. |
| 12. | Long | This hole no longer exists. |
| 13. | Lyme | This hole no longer exists. |
| 14. | Ship Canal | The present 12th hole is substantially the same as this hole and was named because the Manchester Ship Canal was opened in the same year 1894. |

This course was used until 1918 when the fields containing the 8th and 13th greens were ploughed up as part of the war effort. There was a proposal to rent the fields behind the 18th green to extend the course up to the Club House in 1914 but this was never proceeded with due to the refusal of the fanner who owned the land to rent it to the Club and also to the outbreak of the War.

This brings us to the other area used in establishing the Club. That of providing for the well-being of members. Initially in 1890 the Club had rented a room in Stanley Hall Farm where members could change their shoes. Boxes (the forerunners of the present lockers) were provided. for a small fee, for members to leave clothing and valuables in when playing but it appears that generally conditions were quite spartan. What was required was a Club House but this could not be considered until the Club had become financially self-supporting.

It was in January 1896 that at last a sub committee was set up to arrange with the farmer who owned the land used by the Club, Mr. G.A. Wild, for:

- a. The Club to have permission to build a Club House.
- b. The Club to have the right to roll and mow the course anywhere at anytime.
- c. The Club to have the right to keep a horse and cart to do all necessary work unless Wild will undertake to do it whenever called upon.
And to pay up to £100 per annum.

When these proposals were put to Wild he agreed to the Club erecting a Club House, but not to sink a well if built anywhere near the first tee. (As this would be the only source of water to the Club House these terms were totally unacceptable). Neither would he agree to cut the grass at any time nor would he allow any other horse than his for rolling.

This was the start of what was to turn out to be a continual battle with Wild over the maintenance of the course which was only resolved finally more than 20 years later.

Having failed to obtain agreement with Wild over the site of the Club House the Committee started looking elsewhere and it did not take them long to find an alternative site. to be leased direct from Lord Newton. Although it was not on the course it was only some 250 yards from the 1st Tee on the corner of Jacksons Edge Road and the track leading to the course and it had the advantage that there were no restrictions on development. As the Club House was not connected to the mains water supply until 1910 it is assumed that there were no restrictions on the Club sinking a well.

So on the 21 March 1896 at a Special General Meeting the building of a Club House was approved for a sum of £1,400 to be paid for by raising a mortgage. In fact the final cost amounted to £1,568.18.4d made up as follows:

	£	s	d
Building	1,198	00	8
Furnishing	338	18	8
Legal Expenses	31	19	0

The new Club House was formally opened on 3 April 1897.



“Old Club House opened in 1897”

It was designed so that if there was a decline in interest in golf or the Club fell on hard times and was wound up the house could be sold as a residence. It was only the alterations in the 1960's which effectively excluded this possibility, by which time any thought of the club closing had long since passed.

Other significant events during this period concerned the expansion of the membership. In January 1892 it was resolved that Ladies be admitted as members and two years later sons of members were also allowed as Junior members. (It should be noted that no reference was made to daughters of members.) Neither of these classes of membership were considered full members and in the Club's Annual Report it always stated that *'There were ... members and in addition there were ... ladies and ... juniors'*. It is, however, interesting to look at how the membership increased over this period from the original 50 which were hoped for when the Club was founded.

		Ordinary Members	Ladies	Juniors	Total
January	1891	70			70
	1892	81			81
	1893	85	NA		85
	1894	124	NA		124
	1895	152	40	NA	192
	1896	164	44	6	212
	1897	164	45	7	214

As can be seen the membership had increased steadily over the period, but the problems of the Club were beginning to unfold. In addition to the problems with the farmer, the Club were notified late in 1896 of proposals to dig a railway tunnel under the course. Having incurred a £1,400 mortgage which had to be serviced it can be imagined the concern which was felt when these plans were published and we will see in the next chapter how the Club coped with them.

CHAPTER 3

1897 - 1919 THE DIFFICULT YEARS

As we have seen in the previous Chapter, by 1897 Disley Golf Club was a well established Club with an 18 hole course, its own Club House, a membership which boasted an Open Champion (albeit as a Life Member) and a standing in the area that matches were arranged with other Clubs as far apart as Llandudno and Huddersfield. Despite all this, however, there were two areas which were to cause the Club problems in the coming years.

The first of these was the digging of the Railway tunnel under the course. Under the Act of Parliament which gave the Midland Railway the authority to build its line from New Mills to Heaton Mersey by way of a tunnel under the course, it also compulsorily purchased the land above the tunnel. This was to allow access to the land so that ventilation shafts could be dug to clear the smoke when the trains started using it. It will be appreciated that along the line of the tunnel there would be considerable activity with heavy plant doing the digging, the soil heaps looking barren and stark against the countryside, the whole line of the tunnel looking like a battle field and gangs of navvies causing a great deal of concern to the local population, not least the golfers. It is ironical to reflect that this stretch of railway was only laid because the London and North Western Railway, who owned the line from New Mills to Woodley Junction down the Strines Valley and allowed the Midland Railway to use it as a means of access to Manchester, delayed all Midland trains so that they could not compete for travel time with the London & North Western Railway trains from London to Manchester via Crewe.

It is not surprising to find that during this period the Committee decided that it was not realistic to arrange matches with other Clubs, but of equal importance our own membership started to decline. Every effort was made to reduce the impact of the work and to this end the Club offered membership without entrance fee to officials of the Midland Railway. Although there is no record as to whether this had any effect, it was the 'gentlemanly' thing to do and in the long run could do the Club no harm.

But a measure of the declining membership is shown in the following table:

		Ordinary Members	Ladies
January	1898	159	55
	1899	150	55
	1900	139	49
	1901	140	44
	1902	136	44
	1903	133	53

The whole line was eventually opened in 1902 (and incidentally was the last main railway line built in this country). The Club's claim for compensation was met with little trouble and amounted to £550.

The second problem which the Club encountered and it was to have a much longer term effect, was with the farmer Mr. Wild on whose land the course was built. To be strictly accurate the land was part of the Lyme Estate owned by Lord Newton and George Wild was a tenant farmer who was required to sub let part of the land for the course. Although initially he was happy to do this, even joining the Club himself, it seems obvious that as the Club established itself and the membership increased he became more resentful, feeling that the Club posed a threat to his livelihood. It is ironic that because of his attitude his feelings were eventually proved right.

As we have seen, the first real dispute emerged when the Club had wanted to build a Club House close to the first tee; but it was his refusal to allow the Club to keep a horse and maintain the course itself which provoked the real controversy. The Club, obviously, maintained the greens and tees (the greens being fenced so that the farm animals could not stray on to them), but the rest of the course was maintained by the farmer. It was this dispute as to the maintenance of the course which highlighted itself in 1898 when Wild refused to mow the grass. He felt that his sheep and cattle kept the grass on the course at a reasonable level and there was no need to mow it further, besides if it were mown it would reduce the amount of pasture available.

Although the Club had made many attempts to either obtain agreement or force Wild into allowing the Club to maintain the course as it wished, this situation continued until as late as 1909 when his new tenancy agreement required him to allow the Club to mow the course. The Club was probably fortunate that much of

the course was covered in moorland turf which was slow growing (this being one of the reasons for laying the course on this land in the first place). If the grass had been of a lush lowland variety, golf would have been almost impossible and it is highly likely that either the Club would not have survived or would have moved. It should also be remembered that even if the Club had been allowed to mow the grass, the course would not have resembled the manicured course that we know today with its fairways and semi rough of generally uniform length.

One of the main reasons the Club was able to survive these setbacks to its development can be found in the general upsurge in interest in golf around the turn of the century. Because of the demand, many Clubs were being formed and it could be said that golf was very much a growth industry.

In 1897 Mr. A.J. Balfour, the Conservative Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905 and an M.P. for East Manchester, presented a trophy "to be played for by the golfers of Manchester". On hearing this the Hon. William Houldsworth, another Manchester M.P., also presented a trophy to the golfers of Manchester. These trophies were the first Open competitions for Club golfers in the Manchester area (i.e. within 20 miles of Manchester Town Hall) and have been administered since then by a Committee representing the Clubs in the area. As two Disley members, G.E. Schofield and Dr. J. Howie Smith won the Houldsworth Trophy in its inaugural year, and was repeated in 1966 by C.E. Swann and H. Morrison. and in 1989 by T.D & C. Tye, an association was built which still exists. (It is even recorded that when the reconstructed course was opened in 1927, the official opening was postponed for a week because the date clashed with the playing of the Balfour Trophy that year.)



G. E. Schofield & Dr J. Howie Smith
First winners of the Houldsworth Trophy 1898



C.E. Swann & Morrison
Winners of the Houldsworth Trophy 1966

A further indication as to how golf had gripped the nation at that time comes from a book published in 1905 by Louis M. Hayes, entitled 'Reminiscences of Manchester' (the copy from which the following extract is taken was owned by Mr. W.A. Tonge, Gentleman of Disley and a member of the Club) where he records that:

"he could recollect quite well when more than fifty years age (1855), golf was played over the whole of Kersal Moor (the Old Manchester Club) but those who took part in it did so in a very quiet, undemonstrative kind of way. There was none of the wild excitement which we see so often exhibited by its present devoted followers, who make golf a very material and important part of their existence. Talk about a man having 'a bee in his bonnet', as an illustration of this commend me to a whole hearted enthusiast holding forth to the world on his wonderful deeds of arms accomplished at golf: I was down at Matlock Bath some time ago, with a friend who was then suffering badly from a severe attack of golf fever. There were no golf links in the district, so he engaged a field all to himself, in order that he might practice there alone, as there was nobody else to play with. Here day after day he would go and knock the balls about, seemingly quite happy."

It would appear that although golf may have changed from those days, the outlook of golfers generally has not. Due to the tremendous increase in courses there is no need now to rent a field in which to practice; Driving Ranges are provided for this but I would suggest that most golfers are just as boring to non golfers as they must have been in the early 1900's.

But back to Disley. As we have already seen in Chapter 1, among the first things which were decided were the rules as to caddies. It was not surprising because until after the Great War any self respecting golfer would not venture on the course without a caddie. In fact, the Club had a rule which required members

playing in any Club Competition (including Tournament rounds. i.e. Knock Outs) to employ a caddie if available. This inevitably led to disagreement on occasion with the local schools when boys would miss lessons to make themselves available for caddying. It also brought the Club into conflict with the local Labour Exchange as the following letter explains.

All communications should be
addressed to the
Divisional Officer,
and the following number quoted:—

Telephone No. 1607 Central.
Telegrams —
LABEX, MANCHESTER.



LABOUR EXCHANGE,
DIVISIONAL OFFICE,
SOUTH EAST LANCASHIRE DIVISION,
54, LEVER STREET,
MANCHESTER.

6th August, 1940.

Dear Sir,

I think that all Golfers will agree with me when I say that a great deal of harm is done to the rising generation by allowing boys to go into casual occupations such as caddying which unfits them for sustained hard work in after life.

Not only this, but Caddies give those years of their lives which should be spent in learning a trade to this somewhat demoralising occupation.

As a Golfer myself, I have given a good deal of thought to this matter and since the inception of Labour Exchanges, I have thought out a scheme which will certainly do something for these boys.

I quite realise that as long as there is a demand for caddies so long will there be a supply, since it is an occupation which appeals to the class of boy who is not fond of hard work, therefore, it is incumbent on those who create the demand to do what they can to mitigate the consequent evil effects.

I would ask your Committee to force every boy who is registered as a Caddy to register his name at the Labour Exchange and to renew his registration every week.

When the Labour Exchange has found a suitable position for any caddy, then the Committee should refuse to let that boy Caddy any longer unless he could show very good reasons for not taking the position.

We could then draft another boy in to fill his place.

It would be our constant endeavour to find these boys places and so fit them to earn their living in after life.

The interval of caddying would, I feel sure, cause little demoralisation if the Caddy Master were to keep strict discipline amongst the boys.

There is no excuse for any boy Caddying unless he cannot get other and more suitable work and I would ask you to help me in my attempt to leave no stone unturned in the effort towards giving every lad every possible chance of entering some occupation which holds out some sort of chance for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Divisional Officer.

It is not recorded what the Club's views on this letter were, although, there is no evidence of there being a shortage of caddies until the war intervened. A last word for the moment on caddies is that it was minuted in 1911 that "N. Parker be promoted to be a 1st class caddy" so starting an association with the Club which was to last until his death in 1977.



Neville Parker
Captain 1960
Secretary 1928-1977

During this period the Club appointed its first professional or to be more accurate it appointed a succession of professionals. In those days the professional besides being a club maker and repairer and teacher, was also required to help on the course. The main reasons why none of those appointed lasted very long, was because of the competition. Not from their fellow professionals but from three local players who earned a living by playing matches either between themselves or with members for large wagers. They would no doubt also give a few 'tips' on the way round. Although for a number of years the Club officially frowned on this, by firstly refusing them membership and requiring members to pay a small fee whenever they played on the course, it is obvious that it was little more than 'lip service', because whenever a complaint was received from the incumbent professional about his loss of income, reasons were found why he was unsuitable and he was either dismissed or resigned.

This finally came to a head when the three local players, Israel Sidebottom, J.H. Sidebottom and Jessie Taylor, were elected members in 1912 (all were given 'plus' handicaps). At the Committee meeting after their election, the question of amateur status was raised but deferred, never to be raised again. Jessie Taylor did not remain a member for very long, but Israel and J.H. both remained with Disley for the rest of their lives. They both were prominent members of the Club with Israel serving 39 years on Committee. They were both elected Life Members and both brought great distinction to the Club by their exploits on the course. Israel at one time held a handicap of +7 while J.H. could only reduce to +6.

No doubt both Israel and J.H. on occasion played the Disley 19th hole. This was not part of the course nor was it the bar; it was from the gates of the Club House to the door of the Rams Head. It came about because so many members came to the Club by train that when they were homeward bound they would make a point of leaving in good time to catch their train and what better than a little wager (the loser buying the drinks) on how many strokes it would take to hit the door of the "Ram". It's understood that the record was 3 but whether this constituted a 'birdie', an 'eagle' or an 'albatross' is not known.

What is known, however, is that by the end of 1913 there was a feeling that the Club House was rather too far from the course. As it was not possible to move the Club House it was proposed to extend the course. The 18th was to be extended 'round the corner' to a new green close to the Club House and a new 1st hole to a point behind the current 1st (see the 1894 course plan). This would not increase the course to 19 holes because it was also decided to eliminate the 17th. Unfortunately the negotiations for the renting of the land broke down (the farmer in this case was not Wild) and with the outbreak of the War in 1914, these proposals were then dropped. It is interesting to speculate whether the controversy which was to keep recurring in the Club about a Club House on the course would have ever occurred had we been able to extend the course to the old Club House in 1914. But that's history.

As we have seen, the Club suffered with the coming of the tunnel and the problems of mowing the course but in 1914 there started an event which was to reduce the membership by half and when it was over to change the Club completely. The Great War. The membership list over this period shows graphically the effects.

	Ordinary Members	Ladies
1912	163	64
1913	152	56
1914	141 (1 Suspense list)	53
1915	109 (18 Suspense list)	51
1916	107 (24 Suspense list)	57 (3 Suspense list)
1917	96 (37 Suspense list)	42 (3 Suspense list)
1918	90 (34 Suspense list)	42 (5 Suspense list)
1919	84 (32 Suspense list)	41 (7 Suspense list)

At the end of 1919 the Suspense List was written off because most did not return.

Besides trying to run the Club on such drastically reduced membership, prices doubled between 1915 and 1919 thus increasing the problems for the Committee. Fortunately golf was still to a great extent the preserve of those with money and the Committee, relying on the generosity of members, opened a subscription list to see the Club through.

However, in 1918 even the course was affected. The Club were notified that certain fields had to be ploughed up as part of the war effort. This was going to affect the 8th and 13th holes but it was agreed with the Agricultural Board that the greens and fairways would be spared. The Club had not reckoned with Wild. When the contractors arrived he amended the instructions and both fields including the greens were ploughed. This probably sealed Wild's fate as events unfolded after the War, although at that time he no doubt felt he had scored again over the Club, but that was for the future. The result was a course split in two as will be seen by the 1919 course plan.

As we have seen the Club to date has had its ups and downs, but from its current position if it was to survive as we know it did, things could only improve and we will see in the next Chapter how they did.

Map 1919

