



The only time that
SUCCESS
Comes Before
WORK
is in the
DICTIONARY

By
Mike Ford

FORWARD

This is not a story about some superb athlete with many skills and much technical ability but one of a very normal Amateur who made the best of what limited skills and athletic ability he did have, so as to achieve the most he possibly could during a much varied and interesting life in sport.

I sometimes wished I was that superb athlete, but am now happy I was not, had I been I would never have experienced the trials, sweat and endeavour needed, to succeed as an individual.

This story covers some 70 years of my life and looks at the many and varied facilities and opportunities afforded to those who wish to enjoy the pleasures of playing sports, and the trials and tribulations needed to achieve just a minute measure of success

Hopefully it will show that if you work hard with what skills and ability you have you will be able to achieve a level you never thought was possible, and that you only get out of life what you put into it, the world of sport owes you nothing, but with trial and error, it will reward you.

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Page</u>
1.	<i>The Beginning</i>	
2.	<i>The School Years</i>	
3.	<i>Senior School</i>	
4.	<i>The Rugby Years</i>	
5.	<i>The Football Years</i>	
6.	<i>1978</i>	
7.	<i>Polytechnic of North London</i>	
8.	<i>Sports and Leisure Centres</i>	
9.	<i>Sandown Golf Centre</i>	
10.	<i>Some Years are Better than Others</i>	
11.	<i>Practice</i>	
12.	<i>The Greencard Years</i>	
13.	<i>Laleham Golf Club</i>	
14.	<i>ILAM, Secretaries and Hindhead Golf</i>	
15.	<i>Thailand</i>	
Annexe A	<i>Golf courses played.</i>	

This book is dedicated to my wonderful daughter

Michaela

Of all my achievements, she is the ultimate



Chapter 1 The Beginning.

Whenever I meet someone and they ask the question, where did it all begin? My reply is at the beginning.

I was born in 1938, in Sussex, England in a area of Bognor Regis called South Bersted, just before the start of World War II. This meant that by the time I came into the world, my father was away in the Army, and I lived at home with my mother and brother. My brother was 3 years older than me, and Mum later had 2 girls each at 3 year intervals, why every 3 years I do not, not even my mother could answer that question.

My first ever memory of this world was when I was about 3 years old. I remember walking with my mother, who had my newly born baby sister in the pram. We were walking near Nyewood Lane, in Bognor Regis where we lived. Nyewood Lane was the home of both Bognor Regis Football , and Cricket teams, 2 separate playing fields. Strange that my first every memory should be associated with sports.

Suddenly my mother threw me, the pram and herself into the ditch alongside the road, and I watched a German airplane spray the road with bullets, why us I do not know, but for my mothers quick actions, perhaps life could have finished before it begun. Fortunately none of us were injured in any way, and we quickly returning to our house.

Life in those days was not easy for anyone, dads were away at the war, therefore mums had to take care of everything. Items, such as food etc. were in short supply, school was very much a hit and miss situation, especially when the warning sounds went off. This was a siren that indicated that some type of attack was imminent, so it was stop lessons, off to the shelter, and stay there until such time as the all clear siren sounded, you may think that lesson could continue in the shelter, but because all pupils went to the same shelter, it was not possible.

However these times did have there pluses and minuses. The pluses were few, but one that always stays in my mind was that sweets were not available, now in those days for me that

was not a plus, but years later I realise it was, and the reason, because sweets. which every child today takes for granted, are the main reason for bad teeth. Children of my era all had good teeth, and even now at 72 years old I still have my own teeth.

On the minus side was the lack of essential foods, for example, milk, which resulted in the lack of calcium, this was the reason why so many children of those times had brittle bones, resulting in many breaks, I broke some 3 different bones in my early life, and in my teens another 3.

The South Coast was always a target for aircraft, and V2 rockets, which we called 'doodlebugs', and we spent a great deal of our time sheltering in the mesh metal cage, situated in our living room, sometimes wearing our hideous Mickey Mouse gas masks.

On the occasion we did manage to get out and kick a ball around, we always had to be aware of the aircraft overhead, and especially those doodlebugs.

They were easy to detect because of the noise they made, but the real problem was that you never knew when they would fall from the sky. They were fuelled for a certain distance, and when they reached that distance, they just fell from the sky and exploded as they made contact with the ground. Most of them were targeted for London, but many went astray in the wind etc.

We the children, had a routine, as soon as we heard or saw one in the sky, we found the nearest cover, and just laid on our stomachs, hoping for the best, as soon as we heard the bang, we carried on kicking the ball around, thankful that this time it was not us.

So as you can imagine, the years 1939 to 1945 did not give us much opportunity for play, apart from the interrupted game of completely unorganized football.

I think the first time we had any idea that life was going to get better was on VE (Victory in Europe) day when we had an enormous street party with all the mothers cooking and supplying many lovely things for us children. A long table laid out in the middle of the road, and lots of goodies, such a jelly, and fruit and home made cakes etc.. It was one big party as you can see from the picture.

My Sister Molly

Me

My brother John



Chapter 2,

The school years

By the time my father came home from the war, I had already been at school 2 years. I attended South Bersted Church of England School, a small school for children aged from 5 to 11.

The only play facility we had was a small school playground which was marked out in a very amateur way for many sports for both boys and girls. You can imagine the discussion as to which game was going to be played during lunch break, needless to say it nearly always resulted in football, however this did leave a small area for the girls to get on with their activity. You can take it from that comment, that in those days' girls hardly participated in sport, except for maybe netball and rounders. How times have changed with National Ladies football rugby and cricket teams, and their own World Cup Competitions. There was no equality in those days.

There were a small number of playing fields nearby, but unfortunately, none of these were available for play, mainly because they were being used as storage areas for the war equipment, or they had not been maintained during the war years, because that type of work was not a priority. These were all eventually returned to their formal function, and became our new play areas later on.

Because us young people needed somewhere to rid ourselves of that excess energy, we did what everyone did in those days, made do with what was available and organize ourselves as best we could to achieve our aims.

It seems such a pity that in modern times the same principals cannot be applied. It just seems that today, unless someone does everything for tem, the modern day children have no get up and go, or perhaps I am being too harsh, after all this is a much changed society, with many other evils lurking around every corner

I lived in Towncross Avenue, which ran from Chichester Road, through to Linden Road. The first road on the right was Marina Avenue, which ran north for about 200 yards to join Hawthorn Road, if you turned right at the junction and walked 50 yards, Hawthorn Road joined Chichester Road, and 200 yards down this road joined Towncross Avenue again. So you can see a square 200 x 50 x 200 x 50, a perfect running track. This became our athletics track, around which we compete at 500 yards, 1000 yards and 1500 yards, the long distance races, and in Marina Avenue we had marked out 50 yard and 100 yard courses. The running area was the pavement, so as not to be obstructed by cars of which there were few anyhow, and the road way and pavement became the area for the minimal field events we were able to take part in.

We used to have an athletics meeting about every month, and would compete against the other resident children in both boys and girls events.

The running events were 50 yards, 100 yards, 500 yards, 1000 yards and 1500 yards, plus relay events over 500 yards, and 1000 yards.

The field events were throwing the tennis ball, and the javelin, for this we used a bean stick, as this was the nearest we could get to a javelin, the throwing events took place in the road. Because of the hard surface of the pavement we could not have high jump or long jump, so we supplemented them with standing broad jump, and standing high jump, which both took place on the pavement. The parents would supply prizes in the form of home made cakes, or something of that nature.

Every so often we would have an athletics meeting against our neighbouring street. Not far from us was Essex Road and combined with their next road they had a similar course to ours, except that it was about half the distance for one circuit. We always looked forward to this competition, as we were then a team competing against another team, whether it was on our track or theirs, this used to bring out many spectators, mainly parents and brothers and sister, but it was a very special occasion, and it was great to be representing your team.

Chapter 2,

The school years

By the time my father came home from the war, I had already been at school 2 years. I attended South Bersted Church of England School, a small school for children aged from 5 to 11.

The only play facility we had was a small school playground which was marked out in a very amateur way for many sports for both boys and girls. You can imagine the discussion as to which game was going to be played during lunch break, needless to say it nearly always resulted in football, however this did leave a small area for the girls to get on with their activity. You can take it from that comment, that in those days' girls hardly participated in sport, except for maybe netball and rounders. How times have changed with National Ladies football rugby and cricket teams, and their own World Cup Competitions. There was no equality in those days.

There were a small number of playing fields nearby, but unfortunately, none of these were available for play, mainly because they were being used as storage areas for the war equipment, or they had not been maintained during the war years, because that type of work was not a priority. These were all eventually returned to their formal function, and became our new play areas later on.

Because us young people needed somewhere to rid ourselves of that excess energy, we did what everyone did in those days, made do with what was available and organize ourselves as best we could to achieve our aims.

It seems such a pity that in modern times the same principals cannot be applied. It just seems that today, unless someone does everything for tem, the modern day children have no get up and go, or perhaps I am being too harsh, after all this is a much changed society, with many other evils lurking around every corner

The roads where we played were very special places, I sometimes think back and ask myself, did the tree planters foresee this need. The reason for this is the way in which they were set out. Each road had trees planted into the pavement, these trees were planted at regular intervals, and opposite each other on each side of the road, they were probably some 30 yards apart, and as such became perfect markers for many sports. The pavements were also fairly generous in width, and therefore made a perfect running track for athletics, and spectator points for other sports we played.

Football was played in the street with a tennis ball, the pitch was some 60 yards long, this meant that 2 opposite trees were the goal line one end and 2 more the goal line the opposite end, making the 2 trees between the halfway line, the pavement was the edge of the pitch, and goal were made from anything that would stand up to create a post, or even a sweater or coat. Other sports we played using these trees as marker points, were Rounders, Handball, and sometimes if we had enough old walking sticks, or home made sticks, hockey. We played these not only by ourselves, but also against neighbouring streets, the competition was good.

One sport that we played had a large influence on my later life when working at a Leisure Centre. That was cricket.

Cricket in the street meant that we had to make up new rules so that the game could be played without interference to residents. You will realize that our cricket pitch was long and narrow, and the sides were bounded by gardens, with fences or walls. This required the need for the ball to be kept as close to the ground as possible, so as not to go into some residents garden.

The cricket pitch started in the centre of the road between 2 sets of trees, here we set up a piece of board with 3 stumps drawn on it and rested it against an old bin. The perimeters of the pitch consisted of the garden fences or walls, and the set of trees some 60 yards away being the only boundary, behind the stumps was a no score area, runs could only be scored in front of the wicket, and boundaries scores were the opposite to what they are in the real game, because of the need to keep the ball low, a ball crossing the boundary without touching the ground was a 4, and a 6 was scored if it crossed the boundary

after it had touched the ground. Anything else had to be run to score. Teams consisted of 6 players, 1 wicket keeper, 1 bowler, and 4 fielders. The innings consisted of 10 overs, each player except the wicket keeper bowling 2 overs. The ball had to be pitched when bowling between two marks some 4 feet and 6 feet from the wicket, or it became a 'no ball'. If you hit the ball, which by the way was a tennis ball, it was your decision to run. Runs were made by running to the bowlers marker, for 1 run and returning to the wicket for 2 runs etc. You would be run out if the wicket keeper touched the bin with the ball before you had made your ground either end. Making runs was not easy as there was a fielder at, what today is called mid-wicket, and cover, and 2 more fielder at mid-on and mid-off. If you hit the ball in the air you were liable to be caught out, and if you hit it to mid-wicket or cover, it was liable to bounce off the fence or wall and go straight to the bowling end. Later I will explain how this game influenced a period of my time as a Leisure Centre employee.

So there we have it, the perfect sports stadium made from everything that was already there, and converted to apply to any activity we wished to play.

It must have been a year or two after the end of the war before the grass playing field that was some quarter of a mile from our house became ready for use.

There was much to do to return it to a recreation ground, but the council did, and it soon sported a Cricket square, Cricket practice nets, some four Football pitches, a 440 yard oval running track and associated changing rooms. These however were for use by the organized adult football and cricket teams, and athletics clubs.

Fortunately we were allowed to use the pitches, but we had to organize our own football post, and other equipment.

We were very happy to do this, as the road had begun to get much more busy, with many more cars and motor cycles, and our Stadium was becoming a dangerous place to play. Soon we would be seen disappearing to the recreation ground with our bean poles for goals, a real football supplied by our parents along with various other pieces of equipment related to the game we were playing that day. So we had our new

stadium, and the same competition took place, but now on grass instead of ashfelt or stones.

Gradually our Dads returned from the war, and took up their employment, and pleasures. Football and Cricket teams were formed, leagues were organized, and it was not long before competition home and away took place within a distance of some 10 miles. This of course meant that us children could go with our Dads on Saturday for Football, and Saturday and Sunday for Cricket. It also meant that for the first time in my life I had a pair of football boots

When I look back at those boots, and compare them to modern footwear, I wonder how we ever played in them. They had a high ankle, made of tough stiff leather, and the studs were 3 layers of leather, cut to a circle about the size of a farthing* and fixed to the sole of the boot by 3 nails. There were 6 studs on each boot 2 on the heel and 4 on the foot. They really were a cumbersome piece of footwear, but they did the job and protected your feet.

****A coin about half inch in diameter***

My Dad was a fairly useful full back and he played for South Bersted FC. I went with him to the matches along with other children, and we always took a ball so we could kick around while they were playing. This actually had a big influence on my later playing days, because my Dad always made me wear a football boot on my left foot and a plimsole on my right, this influence me to use my left foot the one with the football boot on, and this of course taught me to kick with my left foot. The influence on my later playing days was that I played most of my football on the left side of the field, but had power in both feet, also in my rugby days I was able to kick with both feet, which was very useful in the position I played. I don't know whether this influenced other sporting activities, but I could and can even today play most sports left handed, even though I am entirely right handed and right footed at everything.

My Dad was not much of a cricketer, but his brother Ron was, and captained the South Bersted Cricket team. He was a good batsman, but his biggest attribute was his bowling. He was left handed and bowled quite good spin both off breaks and leg breaks. I used to go to Felpham Recreation ground, their

home ground to watch them play, he would be accompanied by his wife Rene and along with some other wives she would prepare the tea for half time. We of course were supposed to be watching the game, but that soon turned into our own game, having borrowed a bat and ball from the cricket team. Unfortunately, although I liked cricket, it never had a big influence on me, and although I played for many years, and for some good teams, I never really got into the game in a big way, to me it was just another sport to enjoy, and it did not really matter if I made a success of it, I just enjoyed it.

On Tuesday evenings the cricket team had net practice on the playing fields near my house, uncle Rons house backed onto the field so I always went on Tuesdays having first had my tea with my auntie Rene. We were able to use the adjoining nets and got on with our practice whilst the men did what they had to do, I later developed into a medium pace bowler, and a middle order batsman. I did not have much technique, but I was a strong hitter, and had a very good eye

Chapter 3 – Senior School

Bye now it was 1949, and I was coming to an important time in my life, eleven years old, and in those days we had an exam called 11+ the results of which determined where your next education would take place. I fortunately or perhaps unfortunately passed the 11+ which entitled me to go the Chichester High School for Boys, some 7 miles from my home. My older brother had passed the exam 3 years earlier and was at the school, so I knew what to expect. I cannot say I particularly looked forward to this, as school was not one of my more pleasurable activities, and I was going to be subjected to a number of people, situation and tasks that although I could cope with them, were not really my choice. However it was my parents desire that I try to pass the 11+ exam and follow my brother. I think in those days it was one upmanship for your children go to Grammar School, and not Secondary School.

Daily I encountered the long walk to the railway station, followed by a 2 train journey to Chichester, changing trains at Barnham, then the 2 miles walk to the school followed by the daily muster in the playground with the prefects taking charge quite frankly it was not my schene.

To get to school I had to get up at about 7 am to catch the train, and I arrived back home again at about 5.30 pm, that is if I had not attracted detention, when it would be 6.30. Then after eating my tea, I had some 2 hours homework to do nightly.

The other annoyance was the uniform, grey trousers and green blazer sporting the school badge, and this was supported by a green cap, the prefects all had green caps with yellow trimmings, and the school Captain had the same prefect cap but with a yellow tassle. The teachers all wore black gowns over their daily clothes and it was just pomp pomp pomp, really not for me. If it was not for the sport, we

were able to take part in, I think I would have asked to have left after one year.

Earlier I had mentioned how my Father, had helped me with my then favourite game Football. You can imagine the disappointment when I was to discover that although the school played football it was mainly a rugby playing school. Choices had to be made, I wanted to play football, but I also wanted to play for the school team, and the only team that competed against other schools was the rugby team, these games were played on a Saturday morning. So off it was to discover another game that I had never played before, so that I could satisfy my ambitions. I worked very hard at training sessions, learning and listening, and eventually proved to myself and to the PE teachers who were responsible for the rugby teams, that I was good enough to play in the 1st XV, they decided that I could play at either open side wing forward or at scrum or stand off half. I later found out the reasons for this was my build and speed over the first 10 yards, both of which were necessary for those positions, also from my football time I was able to kick with both feet, and I progressed into a very good touch line and place kicker. You can imagine my fathers face when I told him I had been selected to play rugby for the school.

Fortunately each individual school year had its own football team, so I was also able to play my beloved football.

During my time at Chichester High School, I was fortunate enough to meet, I cant remember how, but it had nothing to do with school, with a man called Bob Pennicot, he had a brother Lloyd, and they both played table tennis for probably the best club in the Bognor Regis area, it was called the Southdean Sports Club, and situated a few miles outside the town in a village called Middleton. They took me under their wing, and taught me to play table tennis. I don't know why but it was a game which just seemed to come naturally to me, we had club nights twice a week, and they would pick me up and take me to training, then return my home later. This of course interfered with school, mainly because I either rushed or did not do my homework at all, or I did it on the train ride the following morning. It also meant that I went to bed later than

usual, so getting up the following morning became a small problem. My mother had no sympathy, she was happy for me to play table tennis, but made it quite clear that it should not get in the way of my school results, or getting up in the mornings. I continued playing table tennis, and by the age of 12/13, I was taking part in County tournaments, and representing Southdean in matches against other clubs. You can imagine the opponents face when they saw a 12/13 year old at the other end of the table in matches.

I must say that this was a particularly enjoyable time of my education, I was doing everything I wanted to do, playing, enjoying, and improving at both table tennis and rugby, the problem was that at the same time my education standard was dropping and my class status dropped also. However this situation was to change. Between 13 and 15 I had the unfortunate experience of what I am certain was a failing of the war years, and lack of calcium. I managed to break my elbow and ankle playing rugby, and later my wrist when some idiot decided to pull me feet first off a metal box I was sitting on during lunch break at school, I landed on the ground with my hand underneath me and snap went my wrist. This obviously hindered both my table tennis and my rugby, but it did afford me more time for homework, which saw an improvement in my exam results, pleasing my parents.

By this time my brother had left the school to join the Royal Navy. I think he had the same feeling about school as me, although we were very different outside of school, he was really a non sporting guy, so we had little in common. However that was to change, when I followed him into the Royal Navy in January 1954, aged 15.

Chapter 4

The Rugby Years

I previously mentioned that during my school years at Chichester High School, I was introduced to rugby football, and this became my main game. I still played association football, and I continued playing both these games when I joined the Royal Navy at HMS Ganges in 1954. However my school report, that followed me to the RN, detailed my abilities at rugby, and consequently this became my major team sport.

The first 6 weeks at HMS Ganges were spent in the annex, where we learned much. How to look after ourselves "domestically, including washing clothes, and ironing. How to sew and mend clothes. All of our kit was stamped with our name, but then the name had to be sewn over in red cotton chain stitch, every item of clothing had to be done. We also learned how to march, change direction when marching, changes in marching formations, everything that was required before advancing to the main building to commence our chosen profession. I had wanted to become a wireless telegraphy student, but after aptitude tests, it was decided for me that I would train as a visual signaler. We did not play much sport while in the annex, however we did have physical training sessions, and the early morning runs followed by the dreaded mast climb. The mast was very high, and we had to climb the first part, probably about 60 feet on rope ladders, that was fine, but to progress to the next stage, or to return you had to transit the elbow, also rope ladder but at an angle of some 45 degrees to the horizontal, so basically climbing with your back to the ground. There were safety nets, but you had little thought for them. Having completed the ascent, you now had to transit the elbow once again to commence the decent, for me quite scary, but it had to be done, so we just got on with it.

On advancing to the main establishment, I became part of 371 class and Drake division. It was not long before I was chosen to play for the division at rugby, and also football. This led to me being chosen to play for the HMS Ganges boys team, who played locally on Wednesdays, don't ask me why Wednesday,

like Tuesday is always ladies day for golf, Wednesdays always seemed to be sports day throughout my naval career. It was not long before I graduated to playing with the Establishment side, 'the men', and this allowed me to travel with them on a Saturday to play away matches, however there were no special privileges, I had to return to Ganges on completion of the game. It was most unusual for a boy entrant to play with the men's team, but I took it as a very big compliment, and treated it as such.



HMS GANGES BOYS TEAM. I AM TOP ROW FAR RIGHT

As my training progressed I got bigger and stronger, I like to think that it was from the physical exercise that we all had to do as part of our training, but I am sure that some of it was due to the amount of punishment I seemed to attract. For some reason or the other I was always in trouble, and would hate to recall the number of times I have run up and down Shotley Hill with a 303 rifle over my head, or run up and down Faith, Hope and Charity, 3 sets of steps leading from the

establishment to the river jetty, each set containing some 20 steps, again with said 303, and occasionally bunny hopping across the lower playing field with the same 303 rifle over my head. Still it did me no harm, and certainly made me a very fit guy.

HMS Ganges as well as being a training establishment for our profession, gave many opportunities for sport. There was a very good gymnasium where we were put through our physical exercises, a large swimming pool, where we had to pass our swimming test, 3 minutes swim in a canvas duck suit, followed by 3 minutes floating in same suit, rifle ranges where we learned to shoot rifles, automatics and pistols, playing field for just about every sport imaginable.

I will never forget the gymnasium for 4 reasons, one this is where we had our weekly movie, two, I had to box another trainee in the ring, a sport I have always liked watching but never wanted to do, however this was mandatory, and needless to say I lost very easily. Thirdly because I loved the physical training we did there, and finally because of the wall next to the stage. On either side were the verses of a very well known poem written in large red letters on gold backing, and against a white background, and penned by Rudyard Kipling.

Your may remember it:-

***If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowances for their doubting too,
If you can wait and not be tired of waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise***

***If you can dream-and not make dreams your master,
If you can think- and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposers just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,***

***Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:***

***If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginning
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them; "Hold on!"***

***If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings-nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And which is more you'll be a Man, my son***

Rudyard Kipling

The poem will always stay in my memory, it says a lot to me.

***I continued to play rugby for my division, the boy's team and
the men's team for my 15 months at Ganges, fortunately
keeping clear of injury. I also played football for my division,
and competed for Drake division at athletics in the field events
Javelin and Discus***

Sports Day on the Lower Playing Field



In March 1955, having completed my training and passed out, I received my drafting to join HMS Comus, a destroyer in the Far East, based in Singapore. However this never happened, my brother who was a Navigators Yeoman serving on the submarine HMS Sidon, was killed when an HP torpedo being loaded into the torpedo tube alongside the mother ship HMS Maidstone in Portland Harbour exploded, and moved backward through the submarine with many deaths. I was sent home on compassionate leave, and sad to say, the first time I wore my new uniform with my new gold branch badge proudly, and firmly attached to my right sleeve was to my brothers funeral. For reasons never explained to me, but I assume something to do with my brothers death, my draft to HMS Comus was cancelled, and I was drafted to HMS Loch Ruthven, based in Londonderry.

My rugby in Northern Ireland was very limited, there was a Naval Air Station there, and other ships, and there was a Navy

rugby team, which was able to get into, however matches were few and far between, and this combined with much time spent in the Irish Sea carrying out antisubmarine exercise, afforded me little play time. Needless to say my training routine and keeping fit exercises did not change. Nightly when in harbour you would see me on the road from the Naval base, crossing the border at Buncrana, and then returning into Londonderry from my 5 miles run.

It was not until I was drafted to HMS Mercury, the Naval signal school, in June 1956 that I was able to play Rugby regularly. However this was not to last long, as on completion of the promotion course, I was drafted to HMS Loch Killisport, a frigate who's tour of duty would to be in the Persian Gulf for 18 months, mainly in the protect the oil interest there. As most will know the Persian Gulf is no place to play rugby, so my sporting interests moved to cricket and football. You've heard the song mad dog and Englishmen, well that is the Persian Gulf, and we were those Englishmen.

In 1957 we returned to Portsmouth, and I was drafted to the Signal Tower in Portsmouth dockyard, this was probably the easiest job I have had during my whole time in the RN. I had lots of time to train, and I played rugby and football for HMS Victory, and also at weekend rugby for United Services Portsmouth. Unfortunately at that time I never made the 1st XV who played high quality opposition, but played for the Casuals, I was able to play a complete season for once and it was most enjoyable.

One year on, and I was again on the move, this time to another Naval Frigate, HMS LLandaff, as the name suggests this was named after a Welsh city, and as should be there were a number of welsh people in the crew, which led to a rather good rugby team. Our tour of duty was as consort to HMS Centaur the aircraft carrier, mainly in the Far East. This allowed me to play rugby for the Far East Fleet, a team made up of UK, Australian and New Zealand sailors, a wonderful bunch of guys, and some wonderful matches. I still played wing forward in those days, and will never forget my opposite side wing forward, an Australian servicing on HMAS Queenborough, his name, Michael Kevin Patrick Fitzsimmon Aluisous O'Neil. What a guy he was, as his name suggests he

came from Irish stock, and he really lived up to all that is said about that countries men.

I well remember one of our nights out to the local village near the Naval Base, sometimes we stayed locally rather than go into Singapore. On those nights we usually took a rugby ball with us, so as to pass to each other on the way there and home. On this night Michael missed the ball which went into the monsoon ditch at the side of the road. In jumps Michael to retrieve the ball, and next out he comes like a flash followed by a very large python.

For a team consisting of New Zealanders, Aussies and Brits we really did get on well, and played some really good matches. I think we were lucky to have the Kiwi's and Aussies, without them the team would have been very average

As I said HMS LLandaff had a good rugby team, and below is a picture of a group of them, I am the on the left, as you look



May 1960 saw me returning to HMS Mercury to commence my leading rate course, this lasted 6 months, followed by 1 year on HMS Beachampton, a minesweeper based in Portsmouth, and then a return to HMS Mercury to take my Petty Officers Course, which completed in September 1962. This of course gave me ample opportunity 1960 to 1962 to play all my sports, but rugby was still my main sport. Not only did I play for HMS Mercury when there, but for HMS Vernon while I was on Beachampton, Vernon was our base, these games were on Wednesdays. On Saturdays I played again for United Service Portsmouth, this time managing to play a few games for the 1st XV against such teams as Harlequins and Wasps. Having tasted that standard, I was loath to return to the Casuals, and instead transferred to Portsmouth City RFC for the 1961/62 season.

I did have one disappointment in that period. I had always had a great interest in the Field Gun Competition, an event which was always the highlight of the Royal Tournament at Earls Court, London. The trophy, was competed for between teams from Portsmouth, Devonport and Fleet Air Arm.

Selection for the teams normally took place between January and April, however teams were not allowed to train with equipment before April 1st.

The selection test were very hard physically, but the selectors main interest was not the physical ability of the applicant, but the desire to go that extra yard when there was nothing left. I was fortunate enough to be selected, and did some prior training with the team. Unfortunately my ship was unable to release me, a really great disappointment. However, I always took great interest, attending their open training nights and keeping up to date with the results. In later years I had a number of ex field gunners playing football for me, especially in the Portsmouth Royal Navy FC

Portsmouth City RFC was something different. Rugby in those days was not the sport it is today, with diets, specialist training, special foods and non drinking, it was a game played by fairly fit, enthusiastic men, who enjoyed the game and the after game activities.

Played hard, played fair, and as soon as the conflict was over, all good friends. I must say of all the teams I have played for Portsmouth City comes very high up the list. One of the unusual things about the team was that we had 2 Roman Catholic priests, brothers, playing for us. Both were great fun, and joined in all the after match activities. One of them Cormack Murphy O'Connor went on to high office and became Archbishop of Westminster in 2000, later being created a Cardinal by the Pope in 2001

Our ground and clubhouse were at Tamworth Road in the Southsea area of Portsmouth. You must remember, in those days there were no drinking and driving rules.

I well remember one of the after match games we played On completion of the after match food, we would always play draughts, you know that game played on a chess board. This game however had different rules. The team was made up of 4 people from the home team and 4 from the away team. The board was the tiling on the floor, black and white tiles set out as a chess board. Instead of draught pieces, the board was set up with half pints of beer, one side straight glasses 12 in number and the other side 12 glasses all with handles. The team lined up behind each other. The first person in line made the first move for his sides, and of course this was followed by the opposition. If you removed a piece by jumping over it, then the rule was that you had to drink the contents before the next move was made, if however you failed to jump a piece when it was available, known in the game as a Huff, you had to remove and drink your half pint from the board. There was a time limit imposed on downing the contents. Each player made his move, then moved to the back of the queue.

In the game of draughts, when a piece arrives at the opponents side of the board, it becomes a King, to achieve this, the contents of the half pint glass were transferred to a similar style pint glass and topped up to one pint.

The game continued until one team had lost all its pints or halves, that team then had to pay for all the beer that had been played for.

I was quite comical when one players was set up to take off two or three pints, ever tried to down 2 or 3 pints in a time limit.

Good days, never to re-appear.

In September 1962, I was posted to Malta. In those days all sports in Malta were played on compacted sand, and I am afraid that is no surface for rugby. Respecting this, I gave up playing rugby, and returned to my still favourite game football, and so the rugby days were over, I never played rugby again. However I have been a keen follower of the game, and am amazed at the changes that I have seen over the years. Tall very fit athletes, not like my days. Still time changes everything, and it is probably for the better.

Chapter 5

The Football Years

Football has always been my number one love from a very early age, only later in life did I find out that it was almost impossible to play football and rugby at the same time and reach a high level in both. If I had words of wisdom for any up and coming sportsman, it would be that you must concentrate on one sport only, it is the only way that you will achieve your goal.

I played football and rugby from the age of 11 to 26, however for all those years rugby was my major sport. Because of this I lost some 15 years of learning, playing, and perfecting the art of football, with the result that I probably never reached the potential it was possible for me to achieve, and I spent the years from age 26 trying to make up for those lost years. Because of this I never really made the grade as a player, This is most certainly the reason I converted to coaching and managing . I regret those wasted years so much, because I know I had the ability to succeed as a player. Those lost 15 years, did see me play football, but unfortunately only as a second string to rugby, consequently I played at quite an average standard, and with average players, the result being that I had little practise and even less coaching thus made little improvement to my skill or technique. But I never lost my love for the sport. Apart from being a very willing team member, and giving my all in matches I played in, nothing of note happened during those years, so I will turn the clock forward to 1962.

I was now in Malta, based at the Malta Communications Centre, Lascaris, and HMS Surprise. In reality I had 2 jobs. I was part of Allied Forces Mediterranean (AFMED), having received security clearance to a very high level. This was because my NATO job was personal cryptographer the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, Admiral Holland-Martin, while he was at sea on HMS Surprise.

Every year the Commander-in-Chief made tours of some 3 weeks at a time to all areas of the Command. For this he used his yacht, as it was called, but was in fact HMS Surprise a

Frigate that had been converted so that the rear third of the Ship was the Commander in Chief's quarters. His quarters contained the sleeping and entertainment areas, And the quarterdeck was his and his staff's relaxation area. That was when we were in harbor, because when at sea, the Quarterdeck was home to his Rolls Royce and Austin Princess, Both necessary vehicles for his tour of duty. There was some room left on the quarterdeck while at sea, and here was where his staff and any guests entertained themselves by skeet shooting and deck bowls

The annual tour of his domain of responsibility commenced at Gibraltar, and worked its way from there to North Spain, then around the French southern coast, onto Italy, and clockwise around the Mediterranean Sea, until we reached Libya. Whenever he was away on HMS Surprise, myself and my sidekick Jock Warren went with him as his personal cryptographers. We also carried a Royal Marine band, which became very much part of all the official occasions.

I and Jock were both decent footballers, and we both represented HMS Surprise in football matches during these tours. I also represented the ship at cricket.

On return to Malta, after each of these tours, each tour was about 3 weeks; both Jock and I became part to the Communication Centre based at Lascaris. Which was underneath the City of Valletta. I was married and lived in married quarter's accommodation in a part of Malta called Spinola. For those who knew Malta back then, the road I lived on, Niger Road had the Dragonara Palace, later to become a gambling casino at the bottom of the road. Nearby were St Andrews Bay, and where the Hilton and Sheraton hotels stand today, was nothing but rocks, where we sunbathed, picnicked and dived into the sea, spending many hours snorkeling.

I had now given up playing rugby, and was able to devote all my time to football. I started to play for the Malta Communication Centre team, and was soon noticed and selected for the HMS Phoenicia team, my parent establishment. From there I made it into the Royal Navy

team. It was this quick advancement that told me that I had perhaps made a mistake, long ago, by sticking with rugby, however I have no regrets, I had enjoyed my rugby days and had played to a fairly high level, and after all the Royal Navy in Malta was not that big, and therefore the football team was not the highest standard.

I think it was at this stage that I started to become a student of the game. I used watch many games at the Gazira Stadium. Sundays was the Maltese football league day, all the weeks matches were played on one day, starting early morning and continuing through the day, and all matches were played at the one stadium, so we would spend several hours in my friends flat overlooking the stadium, watching games, having a few beers and enjoying ourselves. From our high point of vision, it was easy to see the movement of players, and I started to observe how players moved into space, how other players created space for a pass, or to take a defender out of position, and create space etc.

The best teams in those days were Sliema Wanderers and Hibernian, and they supplied the majority of the Maltese National Team.

I had only been in Malta about 6 months when playing one day I was ankle tapped from behind, more an accident than a foul, my ankles crossed, and I finished with what was diagnosed by the medical staff at HMS Phoenicia as a twisted/sprained ankle. However the following day I was unable to walk at all. Having reported in sick, I was resting at home, when my landlord arrived for his monthly visit. My landlord was a Maltese doctor, and of course he was interested in my condition, so had a look at my ankle. He made a different diagnosis, which was not good news. He said that I had snapped my Achilles tendon, and probably several smaller tendons around the area. He advised me to go back to my Naval medical people, and suggest this, as he could not interfere with their diagnosis.

This I did, I was then transported to Bhigi the Services hospital, where my landlords diagnosis was confirmed, and I left in a plaster cast. After 6 weeks they removed the cast and immediately recasted it for another 3 weeks. 3 weeks

later I had the cast removed and left with crepe and elastic bandage from toes to knee, for another 6 weeks wait. Altogether it was 6 months before I was even allowed to kick a beach ball, this I did for hours against a wall, trying to build up the muscles, and occasionally trying a football, until such time I could actually kick a football without pain. In all it was 9 months before I played another game. A very serious injury which probably had a great deal of influence on my future in the game.

During the injury time, I became very much involved in the teams from the sidelines, in what would be considered a coaching role, and it was from this that on my return to UK, I applied for, and was accepted on the FA Preliminary Coaches course held by the Royal Navy in Portsmouth. The staff coaches were Lt Cdr Denis Probee, and WO2 John Ellis Royal Marines, both full badge coaches with the FA. I passed the course, and little did I know that some years later I would be a same staff coach on the same course.

Denis must have seen something in me, as at that time he was managing the Royal Navy football team that played in the Hampshire 1st Division, Portsmouth RNFC, and invited me to help out with the training and coaching sessions, and also Saturday matches.

Between 1965 and 1967 I spent 18 months at HMS Mercury the Naval Signal School, I had been promoted to Petty Officer by now and became an instructor in the New Entry Division. I suppose it was here that I first became interested in youth football. So in addition to playing for HMS Mercury and assisting in coaching the Portsmouth RNFC, I became involved in coaching sessions for the HMS Mercury new entries. As they say all good things come to an end, and in early part of 1967, I was drafted to Aden, and stayed there until the withdrawal. Aden was no place for sport. Every day was a trip to work, armed with an SMG over my shoulder and a .38 on my side. After dealing with the daily signals early morning, it was off to the Landrover with the Chief Writer, as either driver or driver escort, transferring Officers from the base in Steamer Point, through the streets of Marla (known as murder mile) to

the RAF base Kormakser. We would then pick up other officers who had just arrived, and drive them back to Steamer Point. Having said Aden was no place for sport, I do recall one game of cricket I played during that time, and detailed elsewhere in this book.

On return to the UK, I was posted to the communication Centre on Portsdown Hill, near Portsmouth, and based at HMS Victory. This was a 2 days on 2 days off watch keeping job, so I had plenty of time for sport. I played football for HMS Victory, joined John Ellis with Portsmouth RNFC as his assistant, and kept fit by playing an hours indoors five a side most lunchtimes with the PTI's of HMS Victory

In Oct 1968, I was posted to the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle. I new the Physical Training Officer, Vic Barry, and most of the PTI's, and they all new me well through football, so it was no surprise when I was asked to coach and manage the ships team.

HMS Eagle was probably the best football team I have been involved with in my life. It was not an easy job, because basically there were 2 teams. When all the aircraft were onboard and we were operational, the crew numbers increased, this meant a number of extra players, and the reverse occurred when we returned to Devonport, and the aircraft flew off to their base air stations along with the pilots, maintainers etc. In reality we had, a seagoing team and an in-harbour team. Fortunately the basis of the team was always there.

I took over a team that was quite good, however, many of these were posted and the team changed quite dramatically.

One major problem that had to be overcome was training. When we were operation, there was nowhere to kick a football, the flight deck was a no go area except for those involved with flying, so the only training we could do was circuits. We were able to run on the flight deck during non flying times, but kicking a football was a complete nono. Nevertheless I managed to keep the players fairly fit, and

living on an aircraft carrier with its many decks and ladders helped a great deal.

HMS Eagle football team backed by one of our aircraft



I did have access to classrooms, for tactical talks, and we were able to watch videos of games for instructional purposes

During the commission HMS Eagle played 30, 1st team matches, winning 19, losing 6 and drawing 5. As pure figures that looks quite average, but when the opposition is taken into account, you can see why I am very proud of those achievements. To give you some idea of the opposition, St. Luke College, Exeter (Physical Training college), Royal Marines, Lympstone, Hudson Benefica (previously the Boston Astros), Plymouth RN Command, The Army Gibraltar,

***Gibraltar FA XI, Sliema Wanderers (Malta), RAF Malta, Combined Services Malta, Hibernians(Malta), Combined Services Gibraltar, French Navy (Toulon) and Sporting de Toulon, the French 2nd Division professional side
I think it only correct to enlarge on some of these matches.***

Hudson Benefica.

Hudson is a town outside of Boston, as their name suggests it is mainly a Portuguese community, but the team originated from the Boston Astros of the US football league of that time. Most of their players were or had been professional footballers. For reasons best know to Hudson, our visit to Boston was hailed in Hudson as Hudson Soccer Week, and advertised as Hudson Benefica versus the British Royal Navy. Hudson was some 40 miles from Boston, and as our trip to the area, including playing Newton Sports Club, (an Italian outfit) was to last 3 days we were accommodated at the Framington Motel, on the Pensilvania Turnpike. A motel, which at the time had Diana Ross and the Supremes staying there.

On day one we travelled to the motel, and drew a fantastic welcome from everyone. The following morning we were scheduled to train on the ground where the match was taking place, called Hudson Bowl Stadium. Whilst waiting on the grass area of the motel for our transport, the players all dressed in their matching track suits, started to kick a couple of footballs around. It was not long before we had quite a large audience, even to cars stopping on the Turnpike to watch.

The transport arrived and we made our way to Hudson.

The stadium was actually there American Football arena, but they had converted it for the match. On arrival at the ground it took 1 hour before we could train. The reason, there were some 4 camera crews there from local television stations, and they all wanted a piece of us. Eventually we were able to get in a hour or so training, followed by a shower and change into Navy Uniform, so as to meet some local dignatories, be interviewed by all the local papers, and generally made to feel like very important people.

The evening commenced with some 100 community youth musicians playing on the pitch, both teams were lined up, so as to enter the stadium in file, flowers were presented to both Captains, and eventually we kicked off in front of some 3000 spectators. The match was very even and played in a wonderful sporting manner, unfortunately we lost 3-2 to a very late winner, and the evening was completed with a lovely meal and entertainment in their sports club, along with a group of wonderful ladies they had invited to keep us company. On completion we returned to the motel, and prepared ourselves for the next days match against the Italians of Newton. This ended quite dramatically, we were leading 1-0 with some 10 minutes remaining, suddenly they scored and with 8 minutes left the referee blew for full time. Perhaps 1-1 was good for all. During our visit to Boston we spent more time in Hudson, having become friends with many of the residence, a visit I will always remember fondly.

HMS Eagle football team match versus Hudson Benefica



Gibraltar

Our first stay in Gibraltar, was a very busy time for the team playing 5 games in 10 days. We had been successful in the first 4 but unfortunately lost 3-2 in the final match versus Gibraltar F.A. XI, virtually their National team. This match was played at the National Stadium, rarely do service teams play here. There was a good crowd, and the match was played in a good atmosphere.

I have always been a bit of a practical joker, so decided that day to get one up on my soccer officer, a young Special Duties Communications Officer, and a qualified referee. HMS Eagle played in all red, shirts, shorts and stockings. Our second strip was all yellow. When he arrived in the dressing room, the players were dressed in red shirts and stocking but yellow shorts. He asked why no red shorts, and I explained they were not dry from yesterdays match, to which he replied 'what a pity'.

After he left the dressing room, the players changed from yellow to red shorts, and of course there were questions when they took the pitch.

My reply 'you know I love my practical jokes, what colour is the Spanish flag',

And what is the relationship between Gibraltar and Spain? needless to say I was not his flavour of the evening, although he did forgive me later.

From Gibraltar, our next stop off was Malta. Arrangements had been made for matches there, including playing the two top professional side, previously mentioned, Sliema Wanders and Hibernians. Both of these matches were very near to being cancelled. Unbeknown to HMS Eagle, Flag Officer Malta had banned service teams from playing Maltese teams due to some problems related to players and referees, however after some diplomatic talking the matches were allowed to be played.

The first match versus Sliema Wanderers was to be a curtain raiser to the Amateur International between Malta and Italy. It was a very good match played in really friendly manner, which unfortunately saw us losing 2-1. However good came from this match in that the ban previously mentioned was lifted. Our second match against the professionals was again a good match, but unfortunately we were no match for Hibernians who fielded 7 International players in their team. I somehow feel there was a great desire for them not to lose.

Our tour to the Mediterranean, saw us visiting Gibraltar again, and from there we went for a maintenance period in Toulon (France). Toulon is to the French Navy what Portsmouth is to the Royal Navy. Here we played and beat the French Navy team, but unfortunately lost to Sporting de Toulon the French 2nd division side, by the odd goal in 3.

There are many stories related to HMS Eagle football team, a bunch of real good guys, and a team that I am sure would have held its own in the lower divisions of the Football League. I still to this day have the book containing all the results, teams and goalscorers, and am still in touch with Mickey Calvert the top goal scorer who on leaving the RN played semi pro football in the Central league. He tells me that Trevor Baugh the teams Captain went on to manage Telford Town.

HMS Eagle had a radio network, with many varied programmes, and of course all our results were part of the sports programme. The main broadcaster was one of my leading signalman called Tony Revett. Tony had a weekly programme where he interviewed members of the crew. It came to my turn one evening, and I was introduced to the listeners as 'Sir Rug Busby', he soon explained to the listeners who I was and that because I was only 5 feet 6 inches tall I was not big enough to be a Matt.

The Captain of HMS Eagle was Captain John Treacher. He was married to a lovely Scottish lady called Kirsty, who loved her football, and watched many of our games. Captain

Treacher later became Admiral of the Fleet, Sir John Treacher.

The photo below shows the Captain at my birthday party in 4e2 mess, he is the one wearing shorts. I am third from right



My time on HMS Eagle completed in early 1970, when I was posted to HMS Mercury once more, this time to take my Tactical Instructors course. This allowed me to link up with Portsmouth RNFC again in a coaching role, this time assisting John Ellis. It was also at this time that I started working with the Royal Navy and Royal Navy Youth teams. In the 1973, I attended my Full Badge Coaching course at St Lukes College, Exeter, and then took over from John Ellis as manager of Portsmouth RNFC. I found it quite daunting at first, mainly because the squad consisted of a great number of PTI's, and it was my job to take them through there physical

fitness training Tuesday and Thursday every week, prior to coaching sessions. I designed my own training schedule, and it was a big complement when those same PTI's said how much they enjoyed a different style of keep fit.

Most of my session were based around interval training, where one exercise would build up the pulse rate, and the next would allow the pulse to return to normal. I also included a number of exercise that not only fed the body, but stimulated the brain, there is nothing better than an intelligent footballer, perhaps that is why I had 3 Naval Officers in the team, which was most unusual for any RN team.

I have always employed a theory in football, that by promoting good technique, in passing and control, and keeping things simple tactically, you create a much easier environment for play. From that you can take it that most of my coaching sessions were based around these ideals. I also disliked too much change, and I suppose that is why in that season I used a total of only 16 players, kept to the same 4-4-2 system whether at home or away, and maintained the same set plays, regardless of whether they had been seen before or not. My theory was that it was up to the opponents to work out our set plays, and counteract them, there problem. An example of this was our set plays from corners.

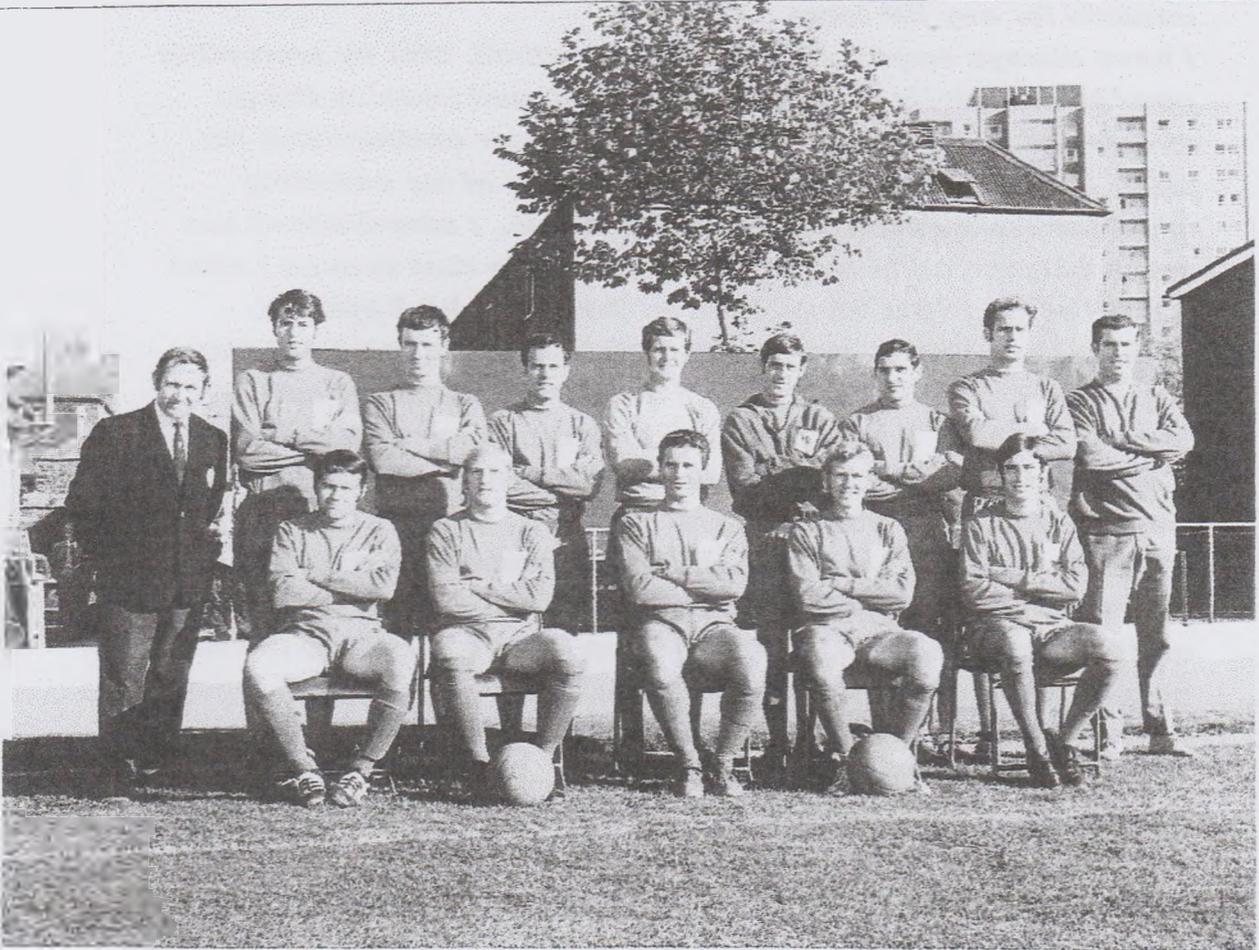
We had one set up and used it for all corners: One player stood next to the goalkeeper, one took the corner, one stood on the penalty area D, and 5 lined up in an escelon on the far corner of the penalty area.

This left the goalkeeper plus 2 defending any break.

At a signal from the corner kick taker, the player on the goalkeeper would run towards the taker as a decoy, the taker would then deliver the ball into an area between the 6 yard box and the penalty spot, and the 5 players on the corner of the area would make timed runs into the delivery area. As you can imagine, this was impossible to defend against, and there is nothing worse than players running into the danger area, when you as a defender are static. It was very successful for us, but I have never seen it used anywhere else.

The theory behind this tactic, which we also used for free kicks in the attacking third, was the area where you want space, is usually packed. For example if you put 7 attackers in the penalty area, there will be 8 defenders plus a

goalkeeper, a total of 16, consequently no space, and most players static. If you move the attacking players out of the penalty area, and make movements from there into the area, then not only do you create space, but also create a problem of marking, and the advantage of a player on the move being able to jump higher than the defender who is static. Overall the 72/73 season was good, and we finished in 6th position in the league, the highest position since we entered the league.



As happens in the RN, it was time for me to move, and in May 1973, I was posted to HMS Undaunted, based at Portland in Dorset, and Captain of the 2nd Frigate squadron. Along with our 3 sister ships, our job was to work up ships that had been newly commissioned, with new crews. They came to Portland for 6 weeks of intensive training at sea and in harbour, so as to acquire the necessary team work to join the fleet. As you

can imagine, there was little time for sport, except when we had a maintenance week, and as all 4 ships had a complement of about 120 each, Undaunted as Capt F had a few more, it was not easy to organize good teams.

However, me being who I am, suggested that if we selected a team from all the ships, we could put together a reasonable team. I sold this idea to the higher authorities, in the knowledge that no sea going team had ever won the Navy Cup a competition played for by all the naval establishments and ships that cared to enter. What a feather in the cap if the 2nd Frigate Squadron could be the first. Having got the green light, I went about selecting players, organizing training and coaching session, and convincing Capt F (Capt Burgoyne) that if we were to succeed, we needed to be left ashore when the ships went to sea in the morning on certain days, so that I could coach and train the players, and travel to Portsmouth so as to play matches, as there was little opposition in Portland. I managed to do this, and to cut a long story short, we got to the semi-finals, where we played HMS Blake in Weymouth Towns Football Stadium, unfortunately losing 3-2 on the night.

From HMS Undaunted, I was posted to HMS Bristol, which unfortunately caught fire at sea off Wales, resulting in the ship being towed to Portsmouth, where we were dry docked for repairs. This gave me to opportunity to work again with the RN Youth team.

In 1975, I was given my final posting to HMS Mercury, where I instructed in the Officers Training section. I say final posting, as I was assured there would be no more postings.

Shortly after that I was appointed Manager/Coach of the Royal Navy Youth team season 75/76

I was also asked by the Football Association to assist Ian White, the Southampton FC Coach, with the southern counties schoolboys coaching course to be held at King Alfred College, Winchester, I accepted this, and was please to find out that 2 of my nephews were to partake. I coached this course again in 1976 and 1977.

In 1976 I was appointed as a staff coach to the Royal Navy coaching course held in Portsmouth Picture below:



Royal Navy Youth Football

The Navy Youth team was something quite different from any other football experience I had encountered. I had been involved with the team for a couple of years, but as a coach, nothing to do with background administration. The main objective of the Youth Team was to win the Inter-Service Cup played for annually in late April/early May, the 3 services sharing the home venue on a rotating basis. To play in the Inter-Service Youth Cup matches, the players had to be under

18 on September 1st of the current season, in general this meant that a new team had to be found annually. There were one or two who still remained within the age group, but generally they had completed their training courses, and could be on ships, abroad, and in most cases not available. So it was that having been appointed the RN Youth Manager/Coach that I set about firstly finding players, then organizing coaching weekends, (we could only have the players at weekends because of their training courses), arranging matches, and knitting together a squad of 18 players to represent the RN in this competition.

I did have one or two players from the previous season that were not only still within the age group, but available in UK. My next task was to travel the UK visiting new entry training establishments to select possible players. Because this had to be done very early in the season, July/August time, I arranged with these establishments to hold trial matches with their best players on specific weekend dates. The reason for weekends, was if selected they would need to travel to Portsmouth for training and coaching, and if they were not prepared to play on Saturday/Sunday in a trial then they were not the players I wanted.

So my tour of selection commenced in Scotland, viewing those players from HMS Caledonia, then to Plymouth, followed by Naval Air Station Yeovilton, the Royal Marines Deal, and lastly the many establishments in the Portsmouth area. I suppose in total I watched some 10 matches. From these I selected a group of 70 players to attend the first weekend session in HMS Collingwood (Gosport). Messages were sent to the players selected via the Naval Communications network, and the arrangements for travel and accommodation were left with the parent establishment, to arrange with HMS Collingwood. We were informed of those selected player who could not make it for one reason or another, and made decision regarding their future involvement from feedback. I must say that all the establishment with players involved were very co-operative.

It was the responsibility of every player selected to travel to Portsmouth. They were given instruction, a travel warrant, and where possible allowed to leave Friday lunchtime. This

was quite daunting for these young 16/17 year old, but part of the learning task if they wanted to become a squad member. On arrival at Collingwood they were given accommodation and bedding and told to report to the soccer ground a 9 am Saturday morning, with instruction how to get there.

And so the 1975/76 Youth season began. We had some absentees, but most turned up on time. After the initial introduction, they were, divided into groups, goalkeepers, defenders, midfield and attackers, and from there into teams. So as we could observe them playing with an assortment of players. They only played 30 minute games, then the teams were shifted around so that we could see them playing with a variety of different players.

The afternoon session took the form of specific coaching on control and passing, this gave us the opportunity to see how they reacted to something that many had never had before. Sunday followed a similar pattern, and on completion they were released to travel back, and await further selection.

Weekend session were held on alternate weekends, it would have been unfair to make these players travel every weekend, and could have also created a negative response from some players. On completion of the first weekend, myself and my assistants sat down and reduced the squad to 35 players. Eventually the squad was reduced to 24, and at that time we commenced playing matches.

We were fortunate to be able to play in the South East Counties Youth league, and also against Southampton Youth. The SE Counties consisted of Surrey, Sussex, Berkshire, Dorset, Devon and Wiltshire, all good opposition, and a excellent learning experience. Most of these games were played on Sundays.

Laurie Mcmenemy, was the Manager of Southampton at that time, and I have to say what a gentleman, and friend of the Youth set up he was. I remember him coming to Collingwood to play one Sunday after we had a deep frost. He asked me about playing, and said can you get anything out of this, I replied yes, see how they react to difficult conditions, his reply, good then lets get it on. On completion of the match

one of my youngsters asked me if he could get a picture taken with Laurie, I asked him, and he said certainly, but wait a minute, we must have Mr Bates also, Ted Bates was Southampton chairman in those days and most footballers will recall him, another perfect gentleman. Picture taken and one very satisfied youth player.

On another occasion when we played Southampton Youth we were supposed to play at the Dell. Unfortunately the weather had not been kind, and Laurie explained such and that the match would have to be played at the training ground, because they had a cup match against Manchester United the following Saturday. However he came to the dressing room where we changed before being transported to the training ground, and explained to the boys, with the quote, "remember boys, next Saturday it will be Man Utd players in here" He further surprised us when on completion of the match we changed and went for food in their club social room, and there he had one of his 1st team squad sitting at every table. A terrific man!!

In April every year the RN Youth Team were rewarded for their efforts prior to the Inter-Service Competition, by a tour to Newcastle. There we stayed in the Merchant Navy hotel in Jesmonde, and during the 10 days stay played 5 matches as a warm up to the forthcoming competition. We had now reduced the squad to our 18 players allowed for the competition, and we played against Newcastle Youth, Sunderland Youth, Gateshead Senior Schools, Durham County Youth, and St Marys Boys Club, many times the champions of England. Our host were Newcastle FC, and they were represented by Malcom McDonald, Terry Hibbert and Ian McCaul, all first team players, and all great guys.

As you can imagine having 18 young men on tour could be a problem. Because of this, the team to play 11 + 2 substitutes was selected the day before, and posted on the notice board. The rules, one of the staff was duty in the hotel, and if any players selected was not in the hotel by 10 pm his name came off the team sheet. We never took a name off the sheet. It was a wonderful tour, and on the Thursday we departed for

Pirbright in Aldershot to play against the Army and RAF. The RN won both matches, and retained the trophy

My 1975/76 Inter-Service Cup Winning Youth Team



During the Youth years a few players have been lost from the RN to Professional Football. These are players who have slipped the net in their 10,s and 11's, and then joined the RN. On many occasions scouts watched our games looking for such players.

Below is a picture which contains an example. The lad in the bottom row, you cannot miss him the odd one out in, joined the RN, and played for the youth team. Portsmouth FC purchased

his relief from the RN. He played for Portsmouth FC, and was later transferred to Leeds United, then went on to Manage Bradford City. Today he is a Sun columnist, and a Sky Sports Pundit, his name Chris Kamara



I carried on working with the RN, RN Youth, and Portsmouth RNFC teams but only in an assistant capacity, it was time for the new guys to take over. With only a year or so before I was due to leave the RN, I felt the time should be devoted to my future

The years roll on and it is not long before I am due to leave the Royal Navy, pensioned off at 40 years old, but not before I have one final season playing this glorious game. I had now reverted from the flying winger of old, back to the tactical midfielder, probably because the brain knew what to do, but the body was not what it used to be years ago. I played my final season for HMS Mercury in the United Services

Portsmouth league and it was fitting that we should win the league in our final home game. I was very proud to be Captain of that team. Below is the winning team, me in the bottom row, amongst all the youngsters. I was 39 going on 40, and that was my last ever game. Because I never achieved employment in my favourite sport after demob from the RN, it was also the last time I put on a pair a football boots, sad, but all things must come to an end. Still no regrets, my time in the RN I would never change, nor would I the pleasure, fun and experiences of the wonderful game. As the title says success only comes before work in the dictionary.

HMS Mercury, United Services league winners 1977/1978, and below me receiving the cup from the Captain of HMS Mercury



Chapter 6.

1978

The year 1978 was a very important year for me, I was due to complete my 22 years Royal Navy pensionable service, which meant there were big decision to be made.

It would also probably mean that my football playing days were over, so there was a need to find a new sporting activity to supplement that lose.

I would leave the RN with an index linked pension, plus a lump sum gratuity, and this would supplement any employment I found.

During the year I attended many resettlement seminars, and talked to colleagues who had already left the service. The results of these, was that the world outside the RN owed you nothing, and anything you were to achieve would only result from your own determination.

It was time to look at my options from a realistic point of view. communications for me was a last resort. What I really wanted was employment in the world of sport. I could have signed on in the RN for another 15 years, which would have allowed me to continue my love for coaching and managing football. However, if I did this, I would not receive my pension until that 15 years had been completed. I realize that the pension would be much larger, but it also meant I would have lost 15 years pension, and I would then be 55, and find it much harder to gain employment. So that became a no, I needed to find a new career, and 40 seemed to be a good age to commence that.

My love of football, was my real desire. I wrote many letters to professional football clubs, to assess the possibility of a coaching job. Most of the clubs failed to reply, but those that did said they liked my CV, but because I had never played at a professional level, my chances were very minimal. It became quite obvious that there was no place for amateurs in the world of professional footballers, which probably answers the question, "why are managers appointed to clubs even though they have been sacked 5 or 6 times by other clubs" I think

they call it a closed shop, and is much the pity, because there are many well qualified and good experienced coaches out there, all capable of doing a great job. It is probably also the reason why so many clubs in modern times look abroad for coaches.

Unfortunately in the late 70's early 80's football academies were not part of the modern professional club system, seems I was too early, because I am sure I could have been successful in that area. So there it was! eliminate that avenue.

A few of my Physical Training Instructor friends in the RN had been successful in taking up employment in what was a fairly new concept in local government, Sports and Leisure Centres, and that had a certain appeal for me. This steered me to investigating the possibilities. I discovered that a majority of Sports Centre Managers and assistant managers were either ex service physical training instructors or ex school P.E. teachers. I further discovered that the ex school teachers had managed to get themselves the necessary qualifications. It appeared that the best qualification for sports centre managements was the Diploma of Management Studies in Recreation and Leisure, and the premier establishment for this was The Polytechnic of North London. I also found out, that at this time there were grants available for re-education, in particular for ex servicemen. Knowing that places on this course and availability for grants would be limited, I quickly investigated the possibilities. With the help of the Resettlement Officer, I managed to apply for a place on the course at the Polytechnic of North London, and also apply for a grant to attend this course.

I was fortunate in both applications, however it was now May, I was not officially due to leave the RN until October 1978, and the course did not commence until January 1979. I now had one string to my bow, and hoped that nothing would change re the grant between this time and Jan 79.

Having hopefully sorted myself out for the immediate future with regards to future employment, my next step was to find something to replace my football. I had been a partial lover of golf for some time, and had actually dabbled at the game from time to time. At that time the Royal Navy were building their

own golf course on land adjacent to HMS Dryad called Southwick Park. The construction was well underway, and the membership application were being received. I decided that even though I knew very little about the game I would apply. My application was not only successful, but I knew a number of the other members through football, and to my astonishment I was among the first 50 members to join, so joined as a founder member.

Due to owed leave, plus demobilisation leave, I actually left the RN in July 1978. some 10 weeks before the official date. It was not difficult to remember that day.

To be demobed you had to go to the the Royal Navy Barracks in Portsmouth, the routine was quite simply and straight forward, it took 2 days, and after that time you were a civilian. The problem was none of your long time friends were there, you were an unknown individual amongst many other individuals, and there was not so much as a thank you or goodbye, just here are your documents, and your instructions in case of emergency recall, your free to go. Seemed to me such a poor reward for serving such a long time.

So I now had 5 months before my Diploma course commenced. I decided that having just spent 25 years in one job, I would use those 5 months as pleasure, practicing, playing and trying to improve my golf. With help from the more experience players around me, and without taking one lesson, I managed to get my first golf handicap within 2 weeks, which was 18. By the end of the 5 months I had reduced that handicap to 14.

And so a very busy 1978 ended with me playing my new sport to a reasonable level, and a place on the Diploma course aided by a Government grant, not a bad result, but as I said in the introduction to this story. You only get out of life, what you are prepared to put into it.

Chapter 7.

Polytechnic of North London

Diploma in Management Studies(Recreation and Leisure)

Situated on the Holloway Road in North London, the Polytechnic consists of two buildings. The smaller of these on the crossroads of Holloway Road and Tufnell Park Avenue is where the Diploma Of Management Studies Recreation and Leisure is taught. Very different from most courses held at the Polytechnic, this was a more adult group. The course members consisted of 24 persons, 18, including 2 ladies were all ex university students, with degrees previous obtained, and now trying to gain more work qualifications towards any future employment. The remaining 6 were all ex servicemen, 2 from the Royal Navy, myself and a ex physical training instructor, 2 ex Army, an Major and a Lt Colonel. the remaining 2 were ex RAF.

Except for those who happened to have accommodation locally, or who decided to find their own accommodation, we all lived in the Polytechnics halls of residents at Tufnell Park. The accommodation was pretty basic, we had a good sized room containing bed, sink and wardrobe, space for my television which I brought with me and also my small fridge/freezer, a necessity, for my food, especially my frozen meals. There were cooking facilities in a communal kitchen, and we were all accommodated on the top floor of 4. The only other people living on this floor were members of the building staff and some catering ladies from the main buildings. The hall of residents had a small bar on the ground floor, a fairly large dining room, that could be used for social functions, and some grass area outside.

The policy for accommodation was that you could live in the hall of residence year 1 and year 3, but year 2 you had to live out, why I do not know. Our course being 1 year meant we lived in. In total there were some 200 living in and 70% of those were female

The course we were about to commence was for 1 year however in reality it was a 3 year degree course condensed into 1 year. Consequently much work had to be carried out

Away from the classroom of the polytechnic. For those who lived in the hall of residence this is where this work had to be done. I decided that to be successful, there was a need for me to manage my time related to work, sleep, food and relaxation. Our day commenced at the polytechnic at 10 am and completed at 5 pm, outside of those times, it was entirely up to the individual, or group for a group activity, how we managed our time.

I tried to do my work in short spells, and soon settled into a daily routine. Fortunately most of my meals were made by my wife at home, frozen, and on Sunday when I returned from the weekend at home, I would transfer them to the freezer section of my room fridge, and used them daily. Others were not so fortunate, but like all students they managed.

My Monday to Friday routine did not alter much. Normally up at 6.30 am, then out for my morning run on Hampstead Heath returning at about 7.15 for shower, breakfast and 2 hours work before leaving for 10 am start. I normally got back to the accommodation at 5.30 pm, when it would be shower, evening meal and 2 hours work until 8.30 after which it was leisure time, either in the residence bar or out somewhere locally, and to bed at 10.30 pm. Not a very interesting routine but much needed if success was to be achieved.

Apart from the study work at the Polytechnic, we had a number of field trips. These were an opportunity to study leisure of a varying nature and the ways in which these were managed in a live situation. Locations visited were Birmingham in England, Pontypool in Wales, and the foreign trip to France. Each of these visits required feedback in the form of a presentation on what we had observed and learned.

France was the most interesting visit and lasted 10 days. Having crossed the English Channel with our coach and driver, our first stop was Vannes. Here we visited a sports centre very similar in construction to those in United Kingdom, but with a completely different philosophy on usage. It seemed that there was a priority list for use that started with organised teams and finished with general public

Following the visit to Vannes we visited the Olympic Training centre in Vitel. Vitel was chosen at the time it was built as an olympic training centre because it was on the same latitude as the next games to be held in Munich. Its modern day use is very different, in that the main users are rugby teams and football teams needing some warm weather training, the centres hotel accommodation was good, there were many facilities outdoors, and an excellent gymnastics arena indoors. It was interesting to note that the cost of running this facility mainly came from Vitel water, who paid a % of every bottle sold towards the running costs.

From Vitel we travelled to Paris, where we were accommodated in Pigalle. We were divided into groups, and each group had individual projects based on different area of leisure pursuits. The complete visit counted towards the end of the course results, and the conclusion was a presentation to some 400 Sports and Leisure professionals. The presentations were made by 4 of our group, each taking a separate area of the study. I was fortunate or unfortunate perhaps to be one of the 4, and my subject was Parks and Open Spaces.

There were many other studies that had to complete during the course. One was a group study on a subject of our choice. We were divided into groups of 5 or 6, and it was up to the group to decide the subject matter. My group chose Synthetic grass surfaces. For this we chose 6 different suppliers, divided the group so as to tackle a separate area of the product each, such as type of grass, sock absorbing pad, how strips were joined, base surface, playability, and resulting injury problems.

We visited all the suppliers first for their approval and then to gain information and feedback. Having gathered all the information we could, our next task was to convert that information into an assessment report in the form of a typed document, bound and indexed, and to be made available at the previously mentioned presentation on France for anyone attending to read, plus copies were sent to those companies that had co-operated, and additionally to many libraries. I must say that a couple of companies were not too pleased with what they read, however hopefully they took note of the

comments, because even if it was not a professionally produce document, the investigation discovered a number of problem areas and suggested ways in which they could be resolved.

Another project which also went towards our final results was a design project. In conjunction with the architect course. Our project was to design a sports centre, and submit the plans, and costings. Each course member was allocated a student architect, and it was up to the two to get together as and when possible to discuss, the needs, design the building, produce the drawings and plans, and estimate the costings. The final plans etc. were submitted to the adjudicators who marked each pair, and made comments.

Finally, the big one. During our 12 week summer vacation, yes like all college and universities, the polytechnics close for the summer holidays. Our task was to choose a recreation need in our home area, and produce a document of no less than a 30,000 words, which was to include all drawing, designs and costings. The subject had to be for a recreation need that was not already available in the area.

The first major problem for each student was to identify such a project. My first approach was to contact my local council Havant Borough Council, from there I was put in contact with the Leisure Services Officer, who took me to Langstone Harbour an area of Havant, where they were reclaiming land by landfill. I was informed By the Leisure Service Officer that Langstone Harbour was an area of water used by many people for leisure activities, but they had no base off the water where they could meet, socialize and discuss.

Thus my project was to design a shoreside base for all the activities that took place in Langstone Harbour, a large area of water between Hayling Island and Portsmouth to the east and west and Havant to the north. Most of the activites were water based, such as water skiing, dinghy sailing, fishing, the probation service were also involved because they used the water for sailing. Altogether there were some 8 agencies involved.

My first approach was to meet with the organizers of each activity to assess their individual needs in such a proposal,

This not only proved difficult because of times to meet, but also that some organizers such as water skiing did not live in the area. I did eventually meet with everyone except water skiing, and this led to a group meeting at the Town Hall, where all the individual needs were discussed. In general most agreed that it was a good project and one that was sorely needed by them.

Langstone Harbour is a self made harbour of the English channel. To the north there is a small river used by small gravel boats, the gravel coming from areas of the harbour, and then transported along the river to a loading area for onward transportation.

On this river there was a small launching areas for small boats, but nothing else. There was a need for a larger launching area, and it was agreed that any shoreside facility should be close to the launch area. It was also agreed that there was a need for more mooring facilities, by the use of mooring buoys. This proved to be a major problem because the area designated for this belonged to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) enough said.

After much discussion, and many hours spent at meeting plus many visits to suppliers to obtain costings, plus many hours spent on the typewriter (lucky that during my naval career touch typing was a necessity) I managed to complete the project within the allotted time, and submitted it for course assessment.

To my knowledge, a copy still sits in the Havant Town Hall library, and nothing has been done related to the project, although I did receive a very nice letter of thanks from the Leisure Services Department.

There were many other subjects studied at PNL during the course, including Industrial law, which became very useful later in my life, and quantative techniques, a fancy word for statistics, that tool which is used by governments to confuse and lie to the everyone. I remember one day looking in a book shop and seeing a book called "How to lie with statistics" I purchased it for interest, and how true it was.

I have to admit that my year at PNL was probably one of the hardest working years of my life, it is not easy going back to education a 40 years old, however I found it most satisfying, and gaining my diploma opened up many doors that would normally have been closed.

Chapter 8

Sports and Leisure Centre's

My diploma course complete and diploma in hand, I now needed to find employment. During my course I had joined the mailing list for the Association of Recreation Managers, (ARM), which advertised employment within their profession, and discovered "Opportunities" a paper that advertised positions available within local government. It was now time to update and photocopy my CV, and write letter of application.

Before writing these letters, I established certain criteria relevant to situation. I was married and owned a house some 10 miles north of Portsmouth. I had a young daughter who was just about to commence school. I was willing to commute but not too far, consequently I set a radius of 40 miles from my house in which to seek employment. I realised that this would somewhat restricted my choices, but needs must, and so I established a starting and finishing point, to aid my choices.

From the available information I selected 12 possible employers, now it was back to the typewriter (no computer in those days) to type letters and mail with my CV. I was somewhat surprised when from the 12 application I received 4 interview offers. I accepted them all, and attended the interviews. I was not positive as to the outcome, there seemed to be a number of highly qualified applicants for each position, some with past experience, but to my surprise I was asked to attend a second interview at Arun Leisure Centre. From this interview I was offered the position of Recreation Officer (Planning and Programming). I am not sure what swayed Arun to offer me the position, but have a sneaking feeling it was that the Manager, Les Spiers, had passed the identical DMS course as me. I commenced my employment with Arun Leisure Centre in early 1980.

Arun Leisure Centre was a dual use facility situated on the grounds of Felpham School some 3 miles from Bognor Regis in Sussex. During the school hours the school had priority on the facilities, with the

exception of the squash courts. Outside of those hours the facilities were available to the general public, and me and the school liased over any other use requirements.

I found it most strange that having left Bognor Regis at the age of 15 to join the Royal Navy, I now returned at 40 to commence my first civilian employment.

The facilities provided for the school and the public consisted of a sports hall, 4 squash courts, Keep fit/weight training room, storage rooms, a small multi purpose room, changing facilities, various offices and reception, and on the upper floor bar and catering facilities. The main hall was the centre of activity. This was multi purpose and could be divided by ceiling to floor netting into two halves laterally or vertically. There was also a dividing wall that could be erected for football. All of this meant that many activities could take place at the same time. For instance the Gymnastics club and the Badminton club could both operate by dividing the hall vertically with nets so as to leave one half for gymnastics and the other half, 4 badminton courts. The top left quarter was fitted with 2 practice cricket nets, so by the use of nets and the fitted wall, cricket practice could take place in the upper half while 5 a side football could be played in the lower half. The combinations were many.

My employment as Recreation Officer was to plan and programming the centre for its daily use in conjunction with the school. This of course required a good working relationship with the school physical education staff.

Unlike today where computers are used constantly, in those days planning was done on a large usage sheet, containing boxes for the facilities and times. There were block bookings for such organization who had weekly activities such as the gymnastics club and badminton club etc. and these were advanced booked and paid for. The general public could book 7 days in advance, and to do this they either attended in person or booked by telephone submitting their membership number. Each morning the receptionist would have 2 booking sheets, the one for that day, and one for 7 days hence on which to enter new bookings. All block booking had already been

entered on the sheet by me previously, so any blank space was available to whoever required it.

The only booking problem we had was for squash. At that time this activity was very popular, and of course we had the courts during school hours, 2 very successful squash league were organized by one of the players, and the demand for squash particularly in the evenings was large. Because of this, we arrived every morning to find the telephone line ringing, on answering we took the booking, the next caller informed us that the line had been engaged for at least 30 minutes, our investigation proved that some members dialed the number then just laid the phone down, knowing that they had blocked the line from others, at 8 am they picked up the phone and booked. To eradicate this we had a switch fitted to the phone line that closed the line when we left at night, and it did not reopen until the switch was made a 8 am thus everyone had the same opportunity.

The staffing was a Manager and his secretary, an Admin Officer and his assistant, 3 Recreation Officers, a head receptionist who worked days only, and 6 receptionists plus some 6 recreation assistants, and catering and bar staff. Everyone worked on a rota basis, sometimes days, sometimes evenings and overtime was necessary to cover holidays.

My function in terms of block booking and general public use was simple. The problem I had was weekends. Past booking sheet with the exception of squash showed that usage was poor. That did not surprise me; after all there are many other activities in a seaside resort, which included a Butlins holiday camp.

It would have been easy to let this trend continue, we were a public use facility, and the centre cost were covered by the local government which meant the tax payer. We did not need to make a profit. However I was concerned, and felt it necessary to do something about this situation.

I knew there was a disabled organization in the area, and my thoughts were that as part of the community they should have use of such a centre and they should be encouraged to use the facilities. Meetings were arranged, with the conclusion that Sunday afternoon became the

disabled club use. We charged them a minimal fee, and allowed them exclusive use with the exception of squash courts. Soon we saw many users playing badminton from wheel chairs, table tennis, using the weights room, archery, and soon a wheelchair basketball team appeared. The result was very encouraging and they became a well respected group within the centre.

My next concern was Sunday evening. You will remember back in chapter 2, I mentioned how road cricket had a big influence in my later life. It was my suggestion to the local cricket clubs that we should play indoor cricket during the football season. So as to convince them, I invited 4 teams to centre one Sunday to play 6 a side cricket as an introduction to the sport. The rules were much the same as road cricket with the exception that with indoor cricket proper stumps were used, a synthetic surface was the wicket, runs could be scored behind the batting wicket, and a proper cricket ball was used. The evening turned out to be a complete success, and we soon had 8 teams playing in a league on Sunday evenings. The only problem was spectating. It had been observed from the introduction evening that the only place to observe was the entrance to the hall. Because this was also the area where in coming and out going batmen waited there was little room for anyone else. Soon this problem was not only solved, but made so much better for everyone. The Leisure Centre had a video camera. I had this fitted to a gantry in the corner of the hall facing the wicket, the picture was then transmitted to the bar, where the game could be viewed on TV, result all non players enjoying the game and a beer at the same time.

The initial season was a complete success and finished with a presentation evening party in the catering/bar area, and an announcement that next year there would be 2 leagues as 8 more teams wished to compete. Sunday evening sold, and a success.

As things happen in life, I was in town one day and came across an old friend who was now in the roller skating business. He was looking for a large facility to hold roller discos. He had all the equipment required, but needed a large hall. I told him to leave it with me for a week or so. Having discussed this with my Manager, and had

assurances that the main hall floor would withstand such an activity, I set up a meeting with him to discuss the project. We did have one area of disagreement. He wanted roller disco all evening, which in reality only satisfied the teen set, but I had needs for younger children and parents, after all we were a community facility, and that included everyone. We compromise on having 6 to 8 pm open roller skating for all, and 8 to 11pm roller disco. He would supply all the equipment and personnel required, including stewards, skate hire, repair facilities and medical cover, we would charge him a set fee for the evening, and he would charge his customers on entry a fee that was reasonable and agreed by us. Within a few weeks the message got around and soon we had a very busy Saturday evening with many families and later teens enjoying their new found activity. Both parties were more than satisfied. My friend had his venue, and was making a profit for his business, and I had the main hall booked every Saturday night, with the added bonus that we only required minimum staff, because they did everything themselves. The only facilities we had to manage were squash and the fitness room. This also became a big spin off for the bar and catering.

It had been agreed at a staff meeting earlier that Saturday daytime should be left free of permanent booking. We had many request for community activities plus special events such as the local gymnastic competitions, we were also a venue for National gymnastic competitions, we became the home for the local flower and vegetable show, ventured into dog shows, Christmas fayres, fashion shows and many others, including at one time the Antique Road Show for television. Added to this were the community competitions I promoted such as Superstar, and Junior Superstar, which was a very popular television programme at that time, and a club's competition the brain child of our Manager called "Ace of Clubs".

Although the idea of my Manager, the task of organizing the "Ace of Clubs" competition was put firmly in my lap. The idea was that 8 clubs from the area would be invited to take part in a competition which would consist of mainly physical activities in the main hall, the winner becoming the ace of club and winner of the trophy.

I decided that each team should consist of 7 people, 5 men and 2 ladies. That each event should be a race, with the exception of 2 events, tug of war and penalty shooting, That winners would be decided by position against each other or by stop watch timing That each event would have a set number of players, and points would be awarded for finishing position in each event.

Arrangements were made with local firms for sponsorship of the event with a pleasing result that one donated the trophy and others donated vouchers to be used in their outlets as prizes.

Invitation were sent to the 5 Bognor Regis clubs, Cricket, Football, Rugby, Hockey and Tennis, to Middleton Sports Club, Aldwick Sports Club, and South Bersted cricket and football club. All accepted the invitation.

Descriptions of all the events were given to each team well in advance of the competition. These included the make up of personnel in each event, how position would be determined, and the fact that this was a competition of physical fitness and ingenuity.

To design the events I went back to my rugby, field gun, and football/coaching days. The 2 non race events penalty shooting and tug of war were simple.

Tug of war, the teams drew for opponents and all 7 members went against each other the winners going forward to the next round etc. Penalty shooting was 1 man and 1 lady against a goalkeeper draw by them from one of the other teams 5 penalties each total goals scored count.

The remaining events were races an example being the grid run with a difference. Team 3 men 1 lady. Start 4 tennis balls numbered 1 to 4 sit on 4 cones. First team member runs to any cone and retrieves a tennis ball putting it into a box on the starting line, he continues until all 4 ball are in the box. Second team member retrieves a tennis ball from the box looks at the number and has to place it on cone of same number eg ball 2 on second cone. Third member collects and fourth member puts balls back on cone. Each team run timed.

From my field gun time came the vault box transfer. Run in teams of 2, we only had 4 vaulting boxes available.

Each vaulting box has 5 sections, one sits half distance of the width of the hall sideways to the team, the other on the start line, team consists on 4 men 1 lady, all of whom must be sitting on the vaulting box at the

start line. On the start whistle the team jump off the box, they must then dismantle the box pass the box section by section over the central box, and reassemble the box on the finish line opposite end of hall. All equipment and personnel must go over the central box (not round), run completes when vaulting box is reassembled and all 5 teams members sitting on the reassembled box.

One of the events was a multi activity relay, one run of which was egg and spoon leg. A table tennis ball was substituted for the egg for simple reasons. One team complained because their opponents had stuck the table tennis ball to the spoon with chewing gum. My decision as referee was that the instruction the teams received was that this was a competition of physical fitness and ingenuity, and how forward thinking to use the chewing gum.

I wish I could remember which team won the trophy, but I do remember that the support for each team was tremendous, and that every competitor said how much they enjoyed themselves.

Some 18 month after I commenced at Arun, Les my manager moved to Gosport Borough Council to the position of Borough Leisure Manager. It was about 3 months later that he called me and asked if I would care to visit one of his facilities. Puzzled I agreed and met him at Holbrook Leisure Centre. Basically it was a swimming facility with squash courts, and I was not that impressed with what I saw. Later at lunch he asked me what I thought. I have always been known for calling a spade a spade not a shovel, I dot i's and cross t's, and as far as I am concerned everything is black or white, not grey, so what you get from me is exactly how I feel. I have had to make my apologies many times, but that is me and you will not change me. Consequently I told him in no uncertain terms, and it was not very complementary. He agreed. I had my suspicions about this invite and it was not long before the position of Manager became vacant.

I knew that if I applied for the position, I had a good chance, at the same time I knew how much needed to be done there, however if appointed it would be a move up the recreation management tree. Decisions to be made. Location was no problem; the distance from my

home was about the same as Arun. I had never worked in a swimming pool complex and this would be vastly different, and from my visit I knew how much needed to be done. But then it was a challenge, and I have always been up for such, so I mailed my application. Some one month later, I was appointed, and left Arun Leisure Centre to join Holbrook as Manager.

Holbrook Leisure Centre

Holbrook was basically a swimming centre with 2 pool, a 25 meter main pool and a 10 meter teaching and children's pool. These were supplemented by 4 squash courts, a sauna/solarium suite, which included a sun bed, an activity/meeting room upstairs, and a small, dismal viewing room between the 2 pools

The facility was open from 6 am to 11 pm daily, and was serviced by receptionists, management staff, technical staff and recreation assistants. The reason for the early start was that the local swimming club had exclusive use of the pool from 6 to 8 am.

Recreation assistant were new to the centre, they were the same personnel, previously called pool attendants, but shortly before my arrival, they had all been re-contracted so as to change the terms of their employment.

Additional to this facility, I also took over 3 outdoor swimming pools which operated for some 14 weeks a year during the summer which included the school summer holidays.

It took a couple of weeks for me to review the way the centre was run, establish the need for change, and format what I considered the changes needed. On completion of my review I forwarded a report to the Leisure Services Officer (Sport & Recreation) detailing where I thought change was required, what those changes should be and the cost of such changes. It was a large request, but if the centre was to be improved and brought in line with other leisure centre's, in my view necessary. I suppose this was the first time I became a pain in the Borough Treasurers side. Like all treasurers he did not like spending money, and these changes needed such.

The report basically said that the appearance of the staff needed to changed so that they were recognizable to the public. At the time

they all wore their own clothes, and could have been customers unless you knew otherwise.

Within a couple of weeks, the Management staff was dressed in fawn trousers, brown blazers and brown ties with the Borough logo. The receptionist white blouses, blue skirts and a matching neck scarf, and the recreation assistants blue shorts with red and white side stripe and matching shirts. Reaction to this was positive from both staff and the public. The customers commented on how good they looked in their uniform, and how they were now so recognisable and the staff was pleased because of the uniformity, and the fact they did not have to use their own clothes anymore.

The next item on the report was an upgrade of the facilities. The centre was not very old, but in the planning stage someone had forgotten that there was a need for spectator viewing, and most facilities of this type were able to provide users and spectators with refreshment.

The area between the 2 pools was quite large, and contained the entrance to the changing facilities. There were windows through which both pools could be viewed, but the only facility for spectators was a table and 4 chairs. My plan was to divide this area into a comfortable spectator area and a vending area. There was not room for internal catering, but there was ample room for 4 vending machines, and these would be facing the exit doors from the changing rooms.

I was fortunate to have working as a recreation assistant a young man who had previously been employed in the carpentry trade. My offer of him being able to work days, by himself, and for the same salary, plus a small bonus on results, was too good for him to refuse, and so he set about his first task, to divide the room by creating a trellising wall, with an entrance in the middle leading to the viewing room, the base of which would be plant boxes to contain climbing plants. Whilst this was being constructed the inner room was carpeted, new table and chairs were purchased and the room changed overnight to a comfortable viewing area.

I had contacted a vending company, the result of which was that a contract was drawn up to hire 4 machines, and the use of their

associated vending suppliers. Fortunately there was a little used storage room near the viewing area, and this became the vending store. 4 machines were soon in place and operational, supplying everything from crisps to sandwiches, and from cola to tea or coffee, plus a variety of sweets.

The next carpentry task was enclose these machines in a pine cladding room, leaving just the front panel of the machines visible, plus an access door so as to get to the back of the machines, where the cash boxes were situated. As this door was security locked, with the key/code only accessible to the duty Manager, it had to be very solid. We also made it quite clear to everyone that the cash boxes were cleared last thing every night, so as to eliminate any possible break ins.

Access to the vending machines for refilling was from the front. The final task for this room was to re tile the floor, and this was done overnight so as not to disrupt centre usage.

My final change to this area was the ceiling lighting. The cost for this was some 500 pounds, as you can imagine there was some opposition to this by the treasurer, however I managed to convince him that the cost for the change would not only enhance the area, but the costs would be retrieved by less electricity use over the next 6 months. The area was supplied by 24 circular light containers, inside each were 3 x 100 watt lamps, a total of 7200 watts My plan was to replace these with 24 circular fluorescent tubes, not only would this save much electricity, but the tubes could be changed to any colour for a function. This was done, and the quality of lighting improved immensely. I monitored the savings and we in fact recovered the initial cost in 5 months.

One of the changes we did notice after the refurbishment was that a number of teens became users of the area, even though they were not using the centre's other facilities, they found it a comfortable place to meet, talk and refresh themselves. My staff saw this as a potential problem, however I was loath to eliminate them, after all they were public and it was a public facility, they were adding to the income through the vending machines and until such time as they became a problem it was acceptable. However I did instruct the staff members who controlled the area to explain to them that this was a facility for centre users, they would be welcomed as long as they caused no

problems, and they should not deny parents watching their children the use of chair and table space. I think this was appreciated, and they respected the facility. Teens will be teens; they asked if I could install a juke box for them. I did give it some thought but dismissed the request

So there we were, the area changed from a dismal, uninteresting space to a high quality customer facility, and I am sure that over the years, the profit made from vending and the savings in electricity paid for all the changes, and in future would help balance the expenditure.

My position at Holbrook was not just the centre, Gosport Borough also had 3 outdoor swimming pools, and these were my responsibility. These were situated in the town centre, Stokes Bay and Lee-on-Solent. They were in use for 14 weeks a year only, during the summer, and included the school summer holidays. The operation of these was delegated to my Technical Officer. The 2 at Stokes Bay and Lee-on-Solent, created very little problem, both had modern filtration equipment, and were for children only.

The Town Centre pool was a real problem. It was old, salt water fed, and reminded me of an oval version of the Coliseum in Rome. I suppose there were some 15 terraces from poolside to the top, lovely for viewing, but not good for health and safety, and especially children. Ensuring that the condition of the water was acceptable to the council water testers was difficult, salt water plus sunshine are not a good combination in maintaining good water condition, especially if the filtration equipment and plant room has seen better days. I was not happy with the place and in my opinion and recommendation should have been closed down or refurbished. It was eventually closed, and I believe developed into a housing site.

Stokes Bay was a children paddling pool, a lovely facility very near the sea, in a small park, and used extensively throughout the summer by mothers with young children, where the children could paddle and the mothers picnic, all under the watchful eye of our recreation assistant. Lee-on Solent was similarly a children's pool but for the older children 6 to 13/14. I was deeper than Stokes bay, deep enough for swimming. A feature of the pool was the sea creatures painted on the floor and sides. One of my recreation assistance was a bit of an artist, and we used his skill to draw and paint many fish and other sea creatures, the

centre piece being an octopus with its tentacle extending the corners and walls, how the kids loved to run along these. Another feature was the small café area attached to the viewing area. I saw this as a potential asset; however the contract for the catering had already been agreed. Consequently I monitored it and later requested that the following year catering should be in house. My request met with some opposition, but my usual persistence won and the following year we took over the catering. Lee on Solent had many retired people and they were seen regularly walking the promenade adjacent to the sea and our swimming pool. There was no café nearby, what if these people wanted a cup of tea, and maybe a biscuit? Opportunity, and so we advertised OAP tea and packet of biscuits for 10p, not much profit, but a roaring success, and very much welcomed by our older residents.

The beach was very popular, especially as the pool was limited in age, so there was another opportunity. We advertised cold soft drinks by the can, and it was not unusual to sell 4 or more cans at a time for a group of beach users, along with ice cream another of our products. Overall the catering was a complete success, and the profit for the 14 weeks was far in excess of the fee paid by the previous caterers.

As most swimming pool owners or users will know, to produce the correct water quality, chemical have to be used, that is where that chlorine smell used to come from. In modern day pools, chlorine has been replaced by ozone, thus eliminating the smell and eye soreness. What always amused me was the water testing. All of our pools were tested hourly by our staff, and adjustments made in the plant room as necessary. They were also tested daily by the council staff. Alongside Lee-on-Solent pool separated by a four yard wide promenade was the sea. Lee-on-Solent was tested by the council daily, the sea never.

The Sports Council annually hold management award for sports and leisure centre's. These are for the overall centre with supplementary awards. The Leisure Officer thought that after the changes that had been made we should enter this competition. I had been in this competition previously whilst at Arun Leisure Centre, and knew how much administration work was involved. I was not sure we were ready

for it and expressed my concerns, which obviously fell on deaf ears because we were entered, Having completed all the administration and facility inspections by the Adjudicating personnel, we awaited their conclusions. To our great surprise, although we came nowhere in the overall category, we were awarded first place in marketing section for swimming centre's. Remembering my past love for football, it was with great pleasure that I was presented with the award by Jimmy Hill, ex Fulham and England. So what won this award? I think it was a combination of 2 of my projects.

Between the entrance to the centre and the changing room, there was a long corridor some 20 yards long. One side was all glass, the other a bare brick wall. I offered this wall to local firms for advertising. The space was offered in 1 yard sections, all adverts were to be identical in size, and contained in identical frames for uniformity. The firms were charged an annual fee. Fortunately we sold all 20 spaces and had a waiting list. This was not original, so I believe it was my second project that won the award.

Nearby was an Asda super market. I met with the Manager and we agreed to a joint marketing proposal. For every customer that spent 20 pounds in his store, and produced the advert, they would give a voucher to the customer for half price use of our facilities, for 30 pounds or over they would get 2 vouchers.

We realized that some of these vouchers holders would be present users, which would be a lose in income, but hoped that a number would be current non uses and they could be converted creating new users and extra income. Great idea, but then ideas have to be communicated. I decide to take advertising space in the local paper. I produced the advert, and instructed the paper that the advert was to go into the paper upside down, this was met with a frown, but when they read it they understood. It said "Now you have turned me around take me to Asda and use me" followed by the deal. I would love to have known how many readers turned the paper round and read the advert, but by the monitored result it must have been many. The project was a complete success, and I believe won us the award.

Having worked in local government for some nearly 4 years, 2 at Arun and 2 at Holbrook, I began to contemplate my future. I was not that

impressed with local government, I loved to be at the shop floor, and the only chance of promotion was to the town hall as an officer, mainly desk bound and subjected to meeting after meeting. I felt it was time to experience the private sector and so I scoured the adverts for such a position. Fortunately one appeared, United Racecourse Limited required an operations manager for their golf centre in the middle of Sandown racecourse. Sandown was situated in Esher, Surrey a bit outside my commuting distance, but worth a look. I made a visit to check out the facilities, I was not that impressed, the centre was some what run down and like Holbrook needed much done to it. It was however private sector, it was sport and recreation, and it was concerned with my new sporting activity, golf. I consequently applied for the position, and was invited to be interviewed. During the interview it was explained that United Racecourse Ltd (URL) had recently taken the decision not to renew the current lease and intended to appoint a new operation manager to run the facility on their behalf, the answers to my questions assured me that there would be a complete facelift, but nothing would be decided until an operation manager was appointed, and his input digested. In late 1984 I was appointed as Operation Manager Sandown Golf Centre.

Chapter 9

Sandown Golf Centre (SGC)

In the early 1970's, the outer London race courses were identified by the Government as sites for housing. Lord Wigg the then Chairman of the racing betting levy board was opposed to this and wanted to maintain these facilities. He managed to secure 3; Epsom, Sandown and Kempton Park, but Hurst Park became a housing estate. In securing these United Racecourse Limited, (URL) a company under the chairmanship of Tim Nelligan with headquarters at Epsom racecourse was formed. In reality it was a government company, with a board of unpaid directors which read like a who's who list, anyone who was anyone was a director.

Having secured these courses it was now up to the company to manage them. Sandown Park included some other sporting facilities such as a golf centre, and later a ski slope with squash courts.

In the mid 80's Peter Wynn was recruited to URL, with a mandate to increase the use of Sandown Park in general for leisure pursuits. Racing only took place some 30 days per year, outside of these days the place was virtually unused.

About the same time the lease on Sandown Golf Centre which at the time was leased to the Greyhound Racing Association (GRA) was due for renewal. Prior to GRA's lease the facility was leased to John Jacobs the well known golf teacher, and called the John Jacobs Golf Centre. URL refused to renew GRA's lease, and decided as part of the new regime to operate the golf centre themselves. They advertised for an Operations Manager, and I was fortunate enough to be appointed to the position, my first in the private sector.

Joining SGC was somewhat like joining Holbrook previously. From my first viewing it was obvious much needed to be done. GRA seemed to have taken everything out of the place and returned very little.

The facility comprised a 9 hole full golf course, at first sight in reasonable condition, a 9 hole par 3 course, a 9 hole pitch and putt

course, a practice putting green and a 30 bay practice range. The golf bays were covered and floodlit; there was also an area of grass where balls could be hit from, but uncovered. The facilities were complimented by changing rooms, a golf shop, cafe and bar.

Staffing consisted of 4 qualified professional golfers and 4 junior assistant professional, a catering and bar staff, and an administrator. Ground staff were employed at both the golf centre and on the racecourse, and it was always possible to obtain extra staff from the other racecourse. The golf centre ground staff were supervised by a head green keeper.

Although the courses need some renovation, they were reasonable, and being well looked after by the ground staff, I therefore decided that our main source of income the practice range was a priority. The bays themselves were not too bad; the main problem was the range itself and the methods of collecting, washing and bucketing the balls. The range was some 250 yards long and 100 yards wide, the ground was virtually grassless, and had many potholes which made it very difficult for ball collecting. The 5 furlong racecourse was next to the range and many balls were sliced onto this course, and there were four water targets which collected a number of balls. The machine that collected balls was a rotating set of wheels fitted to the front of a tractor, this collected the ball between the wheels and then flicked them into holding baskets. Because of the quoted constraints it was necessary to collect many of the balls by hand. This I achieved by employing OAP's who came in early morning, walked the 5 furlong course throwing balls back on the range, raked balls from the water targets and the many pot holes, piling them ready for collection by the tractor and trailer, combined with what the ball retrieving machine was able to collect from the flat area, we managed to daily collect most of the balls

From here the balls had to be returned to the washing area to be cleaned and returned to the storage area for use. The washing machines were some distance from the storage area, creating a problem of transporting the ball from the machine to the storage area. The storage area was outside of the golf shop which meant that the assistants were for ever leaving the shop to top up small and large

buckets for sale to customers, and added to this a great number of the balls were in poor condition.

To remedy this problem, the washing machines were moved nearer the shop, a storage area in the form of a sloping box was constructed adjacent to the shop. The end of this box finished inside the shop, on completion of washing, the balls were tipped directly into the new storage, where they drained and rolled down the slope towards the storage box within the shop, from here the assistants could fill the buckets with no problem and without leaving the shop. To secure the shop when closed a lockable door was fitted between the storage shoot and the shop.

We did discuss purchasing new equipment and associating it with equipment to distribute the balls to each bay where they would be purchased by inserting discs, purchased from the shop into a slot. Because of the cost and the down time in fitting such equipment we decided against this.

My next concern was the balls; they had obviously been in circulation for some time and needed replacing. I estimated our need for maximum use for one day, and the total was 30,000 balls, enquiries with suppliers established the more you purchased the bigger the discount. My thoughts were, there would be days when collecting was not possible, I took into account winter and the possibility of snow, the range was a major source of income and needed to open at all times possible, because of this I recommended we purchased 500,000 balls with a massive discount.

This total was questioned, however I managed to convince Peter that in due course and in the long term, we would need to replace balls, and that excess stock should remain boxed and securely stored until those times. If we did need to break into the reserve stock for any reason the ball would eventually be re-boxed and returned to the store when the need finished. Approval for the purchased was made.

They say Hindsight is a wonderful thing, well I think at that time I must have found it from somewhere, because that winter we had snow on the ground for some 3 weeks, we could not even see the balls let loan recover them. We broke open the reserve stock and remained open and operating for the whole period, probably the only range in the area

operational. Recovering some half a million balls when the snow cleared took some time, but the income accrued was a massive bonus.

URL had a first class maintenance staff with quality tradesmen in just about every skill. The centre building was in need of a massive overhaul. The golf shop had no way of displaying the equipment properly, the changing room were drab, the catering and bar looked as if it had not seen paint for some years, the floor was partial tile and an old carpet, the window were just plain glass, no curtains etc. The kitchen equipment was reasonable as was the area in general. This was probable because of environmental health visits.

A meeting was held with the maintenance manager, where we discussed changes and alteration, and it was no long before the centre was crawling with tillers, painters, carpenters all busy doing there own thing. The completion of this effort saw the catering divided from the bar by a movable wall, this was so that for big occasions we had the whole area, the restaurant and bar were carpeted from wall to wall, the whole place was painted, curtains fitted on every window and paintings and pictures hung from the wall. The golf shop was almost gutted. Golf club displays were installed, shelves for displaying golf bags etc constructed, clothing display racks installed the counter move to nearer the entrance to the range and range balls, and the whole shop painted throughout, a complete and much needed upgrade. This just left the changing room, not much could be done here except for some painting and upgrading in the toilet and showering facilities.

The golf professional staff at SGC consisted of 4 qualified PGA professionals and 4 junior assistants. These were rostered, team of 1 Profession and 1 assistant so as to cover the times the centre was open. There main function was to staff the shop, give golf lessons, open the centre in the mornings and secure the building at close. The qualified professionals gave lesson, and the first 3 bays on the range were reserved for this. The junior assistants normally looked after the shop. Lessons could be booked for any time, and if the professional concerned was not on duty at that time, then it was up to him to make himself available, the lesson fees was split between the centre and the professional.

I expected sales in the shop to increase after the refurbishment, but this was not visible. Consequently I spent some time encouraging the staff to improve their sales technique and supplemented this by offering them a bonus on sales. The bonus would be paid monthly and they were offered a percentage of sales, this was 0% on first 500, 1% on 500 to 1000, 2% over 1000, 3% over 2000, and 5% over 5000. Each professional was given a key number on the till, and any sale they made was keyed under that number.

The change was immediate no longer did customers walk around viewing; they were accompanied by a professional willing to impart knowledge and make a sale.

One of the services we gave at SGC was much appreciated by the new golfers. Hire clubs could be used on the par 3 course and main course, we also had clubs that could be used by anyone booking a lesson who had never played before, what we then offered was the ability to purchase golf club singularly. For men we stocked Wilson Sam Sneads, Petron Impalas and Mizuno Silver Cup, and for ladies Wilson Patty Berg, plus Silver Cup and Petron. All of these could be purchased individually so as to build up a set over time. Some 12 months later this became a great source of income. I noticed that although the professionals gave individual lessons, except for one group run by the senior Professional Robert Catley-Smith, there were no group lessons, surely there was need for this. Robert had a group some 3 morning per week, which was called a Quoisant coffee and golf morning, it was a ladies session, and consisted of golf teaching, split halfway through when the catering staff delivered coffee and quoisants to the range. I viewed this a few times, and it seemed to me more of a 'show your new golf clothing off, talk a bit about what had been happening and drink your coffee morning'. However if that is what they enjoyed who were we to criticise.

The catering operation was entirely managed by Christine Hancock. She had been at the centre sometime and was in complete control, ensuring everything from stock to staffing for both the restaurant and bar were covered. She had a regular Monday to Friday staff, and the weekends were covered by young girls from further education. Both the bar and catering turned over good business, and it was not unusual to see many personalities there. 2 of the member were Bill Pirtwee

who played the warden in the TV series 'Dads Army' and brother of John Pirtwee and Rick Wakeman the well known keyboard player and composer who at that time was a member of the group 'Yes' Rick learnt his golf at SGC and I played golf with him a number of times. At the time he was married to Nina Carter the "Sun" page 3 girl, she sometimes presented the prizes at the annual prize giving. Others regularly seen were Dennis Thatcher who took lessons from Robert, Felicity Kendal, who played the par 3 course usually every Wednesday, Eric Sykes, who liked to sit at the bar with his hearing aid disconnected, and quite often the trio of Douglas Bader, John Jacobs, and the renowned amateur golfer and ex RAF Officer Laddie Lucas, they certainly enjoyed a drink and a chat together.

John O'Leary the European Tour Professional and ex Ryder Cup player was a resident of Esher, and was invited by URL to be attached to SGC, and his presence, encouraged a number of touring player to visit for practice, in particular the Irish players. John's next door neighbour was Sam Torrance, so we saw him quite often, especially as he normally partnered John in target golf competition held for various charities. Dale Reed the Scottish Ladies tour player and later to become the Solhiem Cup Captain regularly practiced at the centre along with her friend Debbie Dowling another tour player. Both were horse racing fanatics, and I spent a number of enjoyable days at the Sandown races with them. Most of these people lived near SGC and it was a place to go where they were not bothered. Another friend of Johns was Noel Hunt, he had left the tour, it seemed he had problems putting and decided to channel his skills in another direction, changing to trick golf, he was a great striker of the ball, but once on the putting green his game came to a halt. He developed part of his new career at SGC, and regularly gave exhibitions of club head control along with John. Noel doing the tricks, John the conventional. Basically the same applied to each that is if you bring the club head back to where it started, you will hit the ball correctly. Later Noel brought in a cheorographer, and eventually became a first class act, performing at the tour pro-am's, hospitality days and many other places. I think he made more money in his new venture than he ever did on tour.

One of my functions within the complex was the ordering of stock for the shop. There were in the region of some 15 suppliers represented

by some 6 or 7 sales persons. Before, in my early days, they used to turn up unannounced. I found this most unprofessional, and ask each of them to phone me in advance to make appointments, the benefits of this were that I had opportunity to view our stock prior to a visit, I was able to devote time to them, and they would be sure I was present. My main supplier for golf clubs, golf bags etc was Wilson Sporting goods. Their representative, Trevor Milsum visited about every 3 months. However the following year URL held the golf show in the interior of the race course main grandstand. So as to deal only with smaller customers at the show, Wilson's hired a couple of rooms at a nearby hotel and invited what they called there 'A' list customers, to view, and order equipment there. By this time I knew what our annual requirement was, so was able to submit an order for the year, which would be subject to change as necessary, and delivered monthly. This of course gained a good discount, and eliminated meeting time. One of our other suppliers, Mizuno, also had a space at the show, but their representative, Stuart Letts, also dealt in many other aspects of the business, such as shirts, shorts, trousers, golf gloves. He was an independent salesman working for a number of companies, within his own company called 'Letts Golf'. Business with him was still conducted at SGC, and we became good friends playing golf occasionally together, he was a very good 5 handicapper. One other company which I must mention was J.B. Halley. They supplied accessories, such as putter covers, club head covers, tees, plastic balls, pitch repairer tools, studs, stud keys, and all those small items that normally get forgotten. These were all displayed on a rotating stand, and monthly their representative would visit, and top up the stand with items that had been sold. I had a great relationship with Halley's, and was most pleased when they invited me to be their representative in the 'Harry Secombe Classic' being held at Effingham Golf Club. I was teamed with a club member, a professional, and the celebrity was Garfield Morgan of Inspector Haskins of the Sweeney fame, and also the Golf Club Secretary in another TV programme. Memories of that day were, playing the 9th hole; Terry Wogan had just teed off the 1st which was almost alongside the 9th green, a crowd of some 1000 moved to the 9th green in time to see me sinking a 30 footer for a birdie 3. The first time I had ever experienced applause on a golf course, it was quite a thrill. Later when playing the 17th, my drive was

pulled slightly to the left. When I arrived at the ball, it was sitting in the middle of a picnic tablecloth, I felt like picking it up and moving it, so as not to disturb their enjoyment, but rules do not allow that, so I had to mark the ball, make them pick everything up, then drop the ball under the position it laid on the tablecloth. I made my apologies, and moved on. Playing the final hole I hit my second shot, a lovely 7 iron into the heart of the green. I was told that there were some 8,000 spectators that day, and 4,000 of them must have been around the 18th. How disappointing when I proceeded to 3 putt the green, from about 15 feet, but that's golf, it happens to all of us. A great day and such a pleasure to play with Garfield, an absolute gentleman, who ensured that I was introduced to all the well known celebrities present.

I suppose at any one time the stock in the golf shop and in the storage area was valued at some 150,000 pounds and ranged from everything from a tee peg to a driver. Most of the stock was on display, the remainder in the storage room, the individual purchase clubs in racks the golf bags on shelves, and the golf balls, many different makes, of which we always had some 5000, in a lockable cupboard. Keeping track of this stock was a difficult task, consequently I did an in house stock check every week, comparing it with the individual professionals till sales key, and on race days when the centre was closed the company's auditors did a full audit.

The golf courses were a 9 hole full course, a 9 hole par 3 course and a 9 hole pitch and putt course.

The main course was short but difficult, each 9 consisted of 3 par 5's, each over 500 yards long, 3 par 3's, and 3 par 4's. Par 72. The total distance for 18 holes was just under 6000 yards, short for modern day, but when you consider the driving range, and the race course were out of bounds, and the 2 par 5's which ran in opposite direction in the centre were also OOB on the opposite fairway, a large degree of difficulty was imposed. Every hole was OOB to the right.

The only change I made to the course was to introduce 2 holes on each green,

Red flags first 9, yellow flags second 9, this created a bit more difficulty, and variation on the putting green, and was much appreciated.

In modern days we see so many long par 3's, it seems the days of showing your skill with the short iron have gone. The second hole at SGC was a 95 yard par 3, and in some cases a card killer. 30 yards short of the green was a bunker some 20 yards long and 5 yards wide. This visually shortened the hole even more. From 11 o'clock to 5 o'clock was a continuous bunker only narrow but fairly deep, the green sloped from right to left, and attached to the left side was a pond. A very small target to hit. I wish I could see more holes like that. As I mentioned earlier the course was not bad, but was in some need of some improving. The greens had poor growth, mainly because the base of the whole area was very much clay. The bunkers retained water too easily, and the teeing areas were too small for the usage. John O'Leary came to our aid. He was good friends with Gerry Coley who was the head green keeper at Wentworth. Gerry visited and recommended that we should deep tine the greens with wide tines, and then induce sharp sand into the holes so it could get down to the clay and help break it up. This we did with difficulty, only being able to complete one green at a time, so as to remain operational. Each green suffered for a while but it was not long before we saw an improvement in the greens, and I think it was a necessary fix. For the bunkers he recommended that we drill large holes in the bottom, much like as for telegraph poles, line the holes with 'Teram' this is a porous sheet that will let water through but little else, then fill the holes with small stones. It took some time to complete all of the bunkers, but we did get rid of the problem. Whilst Gerry was there he suggested that we construct a new practice putting green, and suggested the site, with his aid we did this and it was an excellent addition to the centre.

Within the centre which was of course was a public facility, there was a private golf club of some 200 members. They were organised by their own committee, I sat on that committee, not as a decision maker for them, but with the power of veto for anything that did not come within the centre's policy. Thankfully I never had to exercise that vote.

The club had a full fixture list of competitions and matches, and they were able to do this because as a member of the club you were able to book 7 days in advance, whereas a member of the public could only book 5 days in advance. The clubs competitions were on Sunday mornings; consequently the 9 hole course was fully booked all morning and only opened to the public when the last group had commenced their second 9 holes. I employed two senior citizens, as starters, on weekends, and they controlled this aspect, and the remaining tee times during the weekends. We had the occasional problem as all public facilities do but they were normally solved.

Although the club had a comprehensive fixture list, the one they all looked forward to was the pro/celebrity/am. Because the area contained so many celebrities, some used the centre; it was not difficult to field four balls of 1 professional, 1 celebrity, and 2 members. Most of the professionals had this date firmly in their diaries. Although the Southern Region PGA supplied some professionals, most were invited by the club and supported this competition every year. Altogether there were 30 teams of 4 players, 15 teams played their round in the morning and the other 15 in the afternoon.

The day continued with dinner and prize giving in the evening followed by a variety performance from some of the celebrities. Even in those days the professional first prize was 1000 pounds, and the winning team was also well rewarded. Actually the day did not need prizes. It was never a problem getting either celebrities or professionals, the whole day was superbly organised, Christine always produced a wonderful meal, she had no problem convincing her young female staff to wait on the tables with so many stars present, and the evening entertainment was wonderful.

Earlier I mentioned the lack of group lessons. If the professionals could or were not prepared to organise these, then I decided I would. From time to time in the afternoons, groups of school children visited the centre for golf under the golf foundation scheme of assisting schools. From what I saw it was a complete waste of money, they had no interest, and if there were any supervising teachers, I don't know

what they were doing. Because most of the time whilst at the centre, the children were in the restaurant drinking coke etc. My thoughts went to education. I had many times read of the opportunities afforded to adult by adult education. Why should golf not be one of them? I contacted the persons concerned, set up a meeting and put my thoughts to them. They were responsive, but not sure if it would be a success; however they decide to add it to the next year's syllabus to assess. The response was amazing, and set me a problem. How would we accommodate all the takers, who would do the teaching, and what space would we have to reserve. My expectation were that we would have some 10/15 students, no it was over 100, in fact 120 It did not take long to solve.

The course would last throughout the year in periods of 10 weeks, (30 weeks total) in conjunction with the school terms. The group would be split into courses of 10 pupils There would be 12 courses. Each session would be 1 hour. The 4 junior assistant professionals would be allocated 3 courses each and they would do the teaching, overseen by one of the qualified professionals The first 10 weeks would be entirely range The next 10 weeks combination of range and par 3 The final 10 weeks would be range and main course and putting green The course would be called 'total golf' and to justify this name, each pupil would be given a question on the rules of golf, and etiquette weekly. They had to return a written answer.

The course was a complete success, we had produced golfers who not only could hit the ball properly, but had knowledge of the rules and the etiquette of the game.

Prior to the start of the courses, my marketing brain went into overdrive. I sometimes think I should have been employed in marketing. I decided that as an introduction to the course, and because most pupils would not have golf clubs, to present each pupil with a 5 or 7 iron of their choice from our individual club range.

This solved the problem for those without golf clubs, but was not my real motive. It was my assumption, that having got 1 club, they would purchase matching clubs to build up a set over the period of the course. If you had a set of clubs, you needed a golf bag, and if you did not like carrying the bag you needed a trolley, then there were the other necessities such as gloves, tees, balls etc. I don't know how many sets of clubs, bags or trolleys we sold. I do know that I had to order a great number of our individual clubs, and I wish I had a till key for all that was sold; it would have been a healthy bonus.

I must say I enjoyed SGC, and in hind sight should never have left there. I increased the turnover year by year, I met many lovely people, I enjoyed my days at the races, I was very much left to manage the facility and I was working in my hobby.

Somehow I had developed a desire to become a Secretary/Manager of a private golf club, why I cannot tell you, and some 5 years after I joined SGC the opportunity arose, and so I left to become the Secretary/Manager of Laleham Golf Club.

Chapter 10

Some years are better than others (1987)

There were a number of companies who found golf a good market for advertising. Consequently, many of those organised golf competitions, with quite lucrative prizes for the winners. In many cases these prizes could be assessed as outside of the limits required for amateur status.

In 1987 I was fortunate to be successful in not one, but four of these, three with different partners and one as an individual. They were the Martini Better Ball, The Hennessy Licensees Cup, Golf Leisure National Better Ball, and the San Miguel Stewards Trophy. I say successful, not because I won, but because I managed to get to the final of each.

At the time I was Operations manager at Sandown Golf Centre, in Esher, Surrey. As such my responsibilities were for the whole complex, including the bar and catering, so as well as a golf manager, I also had what was consider steward responsibilities. Because of this I applied for membership to both the Association of Golf Club Stewards, and the Association of Golf Club Secretaries. I was not at all hopeful of any success, but to my surprise was accepted by the Stewards Association.

My reasons for applying for membership, was that both organizations were very competitively golf oriented, and if I could find more competition I would be happy. Had I not been a member of the Stewards Association, two of the events entered in 1987 would not have been possible, The Hennessy Licensees Cup, and the San Miguel Stewards Trophy.

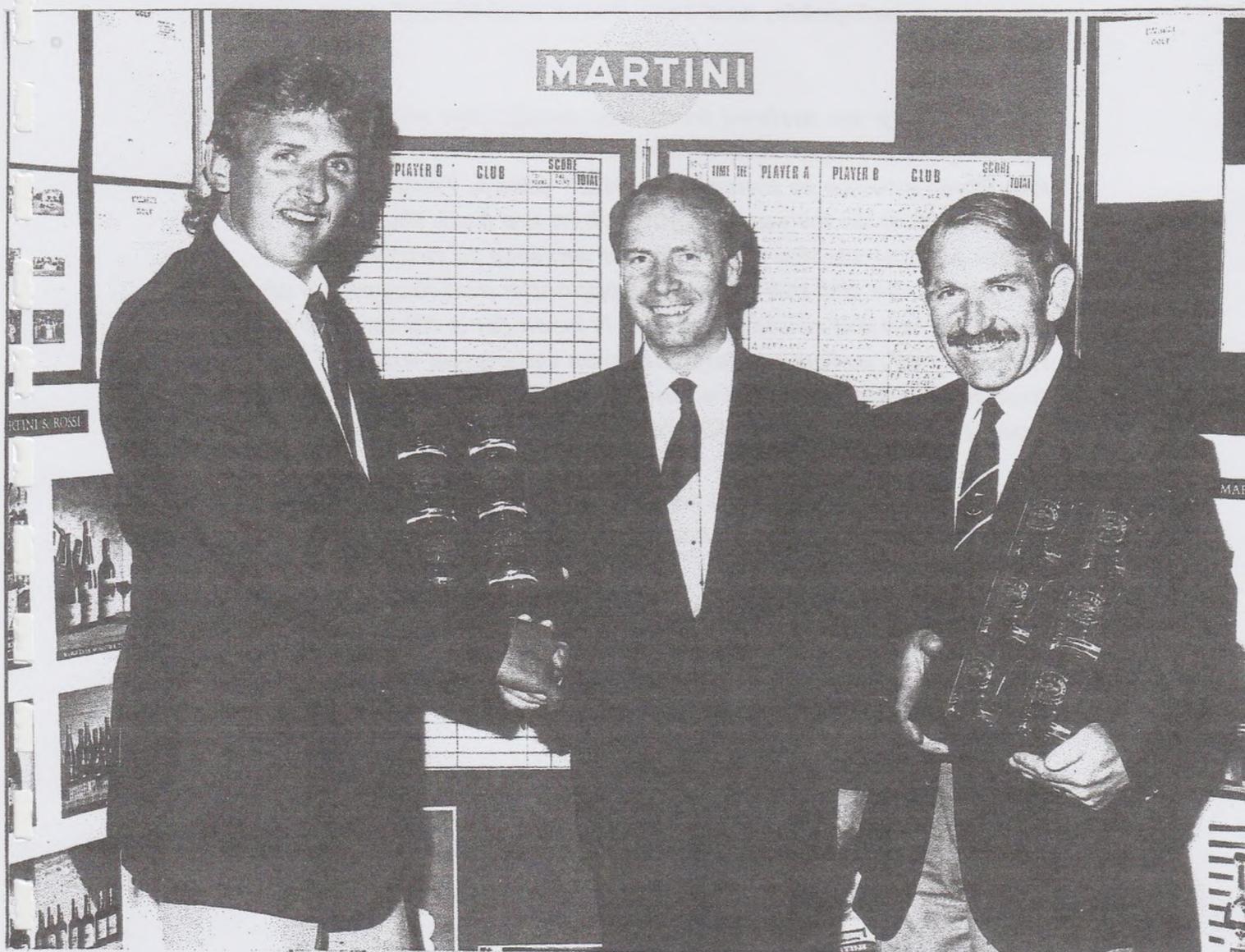
The Martini Better Ball was the first of these competitions. The qualification for this event was to win your clubs competition. My partner for this event was Steve Gudge, who was the head greenkeeper at Sandown Golf Centre. The winners of these club events went forward to a regional event, and the winners at the regional event went forward to the finals.

In the club event, we had a very good day, and won it with a very low score. This qualified us for the South East regional event, which was held at Royal Mid Surrey Golf Club in Richmond, and consisted of some 63 pairs from various golf clubs in the South East.

There were 21 region events in total, and only the winners of those events would progress to the finals.

I have no idea what the initial entry was for this competition, but if there were 63 clubs in our regional final, and there were 21 regional finals, I can only assume that the initial entry was somewhere in the region of 125,000 players.

Royal Mid Surrey was very good to us, and both Steve and myself dovetailed beautifully to record a 9 under par net 62 score. We were early starters, so had to wait to see the scores being returned. As is normal, these were kept somewhat secret, and it was only at the prize giving that we leaned that we had won the day on a countback on the last 6 holes, and had now qualified for the final at Wentworth.



MIKE FORD & STEVE GUDGE - SANDOWN PARK GOLF CLUB
Qualified at Royal Mid Surrey with a 7 under par 62

I must compliment Martini for there organization. Some 3 weeks prior to the final, both Steve and myself received our itinary for the finals. We were to check in at the The Runnymede Hotel on the M25 a few miles from Wentworth on the Monday, this would be our accommodation for the week. Monday evening we would be entertained by Martini to an introductory dinner. Transport would take us to Wentworth on Tuesday morning for the first practice round over the West course, playing from the championship tees. The same would happen Wednesday for practice on the East course, and the competition, from the Championships tees would be on Thursday West Course and Friday East Course, followed by a prize giving dinner, then depart for home. The 2 practise days were very enjoyable, and both Steve and Myself were in good form.

On Thursday we arrived fresh and ready, the weather was fine although a bit cold, and between us we managed a fine 71 on the West course to finish in joint 2nd place, Friday on the East course gave us an early fright, when we both finished in the same bunker on the third. In our anxiety to retrieve this situation, we did the complete opposite and dropped 3 shots, however we did manage to pull it back for a 69 to give us a total of 140, unfortunately this was only good enough for fourth place behind the winners a father and son combination from The Belfry with a 137 total.

It was a superbly organized event and both myself and Steve enjoyed every minute. I am sure it will long remain in our memories.



Mike Ford and Steve Gudge — delighted with Martini performance.

IT WAS not quite the right one for Mike Ford and Steve Gudge, in the Martini National Club Better Ball Championship, at Wentworth.

But despite finishing just out of the prizes in joint fourth place in the 36 hole final over the famous West and East courses, the Sandown Park Golf Centre duo were still "delighted to have got that far".

Mike, the 12 handicap former operations manager at Sandown, and Steve, the 11 handicap head greenkeeper at the Esher course, fought their way through their own club eliminator and then beat 63 rival club pairs, in the regional final, at Royal Mid Surrey.

This earned them a place alongside 21 pairs from all over the country who were treated to three days at Wentworth, staying at the nearby Runnymede Hotel.

"We were looked after superbly by Martini. They did everything to make it a great week for us," said Mike.

Mike and Steve got off to a super start when playing off the championship tees on the tough West course they combined for a fine par 71 to be in joint second place at the end of the first day.

"We thought we must be in with a chance of winning after getting the harder part over with a score," added Mike. "But we were a bit struggling on Friday after we dropped a couple of shots at the third on the East."

They managed to pull their score back to one over par 69, for a two-round total of 140, three shots behind the winning pair from The Belfrey.

"It was a superbly organised tournament and I enjoyed every minute," added Steve. "It was just disappointing to let our club slip after doing so well on the first day."

Mike still has a chance of a national title in a solo capacity, when he travels to Spain next month to play in the San Martin Stewards Championships.

Event number 2 was the, Hennessy Licensees Cup, a four ball better ball event. The qualification for this was that you had to be the licensee, you had to stock and sell Hennessy Cognac, and of course have a legal handicap. I invited a very good friend of mine and a Sandown Park member, John Raven to partner me for this event.

There was no qualification as in the Martini event, but there were regional events, the winners and runner ups would go forward to the final, to be played at The Belfry.

Our regional event was played at Pinner Hill, a course neither of us had played before. Again luck aided our good play, and we both contributed to our good score, managing to win the regional event. This qualified us for the final at The Belfry, later to become the venue for the Ryder Cup

Having received our itinerary, we travelled to Wishaw, near Birmingham, and settled into our accommodation at the course hotel. Unlike the Martini, this event was over 18 holes only and fitted into 24 hours. After photographs on the putting green in front of the hotel, it was off to the 1st tee and 18 holes for the 16 pairs who qualified for this final. Play was from the championship tees, which makes this course much more difficult and very much longer, than playing from the normal daily tee.

John and myself played fairly well, and after the front 9 were well in contention, being 4 under par, however disaster was to strike at the short par four 10th hole, a hole of only 301 yards, but guarded by water to a very narrow and undulating green. Unfortunately we committed the cardinal sin of four ball, both of us dumping our balls into the water for 2, then being too cautious finishing in the back bunker for 4, faced with a very difficult bunker shot to a green running away towards the dreaded water, the ball remained in the bunker with a result of a 4 over par 8, so all the good work was gone in one hole. We did manage to complete the remaining holes in level par, which gave us a level 72 and 4th place, the winners being 5 under.

The day was completed by a champagne reception, and prize giving dinner in the Lichfield Suite, an overnight stay and a most enjoyable evening in the Bell Air night club, the Belfry's own on site club.

Sandown in final

MIKE Ford and John Raven of Sandown Golf Club are in the final of the 1987 Hennessy Cognac Licensee Cup on Monday, at The Belfry, West Midlands.

Just sixteen golfing pairs are left out of an original entry of more than 1,200 teams, each made up of a licensee and a partner. They will be playing 18 holes of four ball betterball golf to decide the 1987 winners.

The tournament is open to licensees who stock Hennessy Cognac, and is now in its second year.

There have been eight regional finals, held all round the country during the summer, and it is the winners and runners-up from each of these who will be playing at The Belfry.

There will be new champions engraved on the specially commissioned silver and rosewood trophy, because last year's winners, The Narrowboat, Daventry, were narrowly beaten at the regional final held at Gog Magog Golf Club, on July 28.

Some may think that all this success, was down to lots of luck or a bogus handicap, neither was the case for me or my partners. In my opinion it was down to hard work, and much practice, taking every opportunity to be out there on the range, or in my case at Farnham Golf Clubs practice areas, which will be detailed later.

During this same period of 1987, I with another Sandown member 8 handicapper Dave Dennis, had worked our way through a few rounds of Golf Leisures National Foursomes. Foursomes is a very difficult game to play. For those non golfers, foursomes is where both the players play with one ball, taking alternate tee shots, and then alternate shots until holed out. Eventually we got to the finals which were held at Broome Manor Golf Club in Kent, and in conjunction with the Ladies PGA world cup. It was there that I first met Laura Davies, looking splendid in pink, slim but well built, with lovely blonde hair. She was among the Lady Pros playing in the Ladies competition, and if I remember correctly she was just 21. The competition format was one I have never played before or since. Each group consisted of 5 players, 4 men playing foursomes, and a Lady Pro playing stroke play, so there were 5 players and 3 balls. Our group was accompanied by an American Lady Pro called Susan Moon, a lovely lady and very nice player. Unfortunately we were not amongst the prize winners, but we did have a fabulous day and enjoyable evening with all the lady professionals.. 2 other Lady Professional friends of mine who were there were Debbie Dowling, and Dale Reid, Dale later to become a Solhiem Cup Captain, both Debbie and Dale I knew very well from Sandown Golf centre, and I mention them elsewhere in this book.

The final success of the year was the San Miguel Stewards National Championships. Again this was played on a regional basis, the winners going forward to the finals in Torremolinos, Spain in November. The big difference was that this was a singles event, no partners.

I considered myself lucky in that I had been drawn to play my regional event at Southwick Park Golf Club, near Portsmouth. This was my first ever golf club as mentioned previously, and although I had not played there for sometime, I knew it well. On the day I played well and finished in first place thus booking my spot in Spain.



This was not just a win for me, but also my wife, as the package was the, flight, accommodation, visits, entertainment, and other extras, for me and my wife, and for an additional small fee, I was able to take my daughter. We were accommodated at the Parador de Torremolinos, which also contained the course we were to play. 11 players qualified for the final, but they were accompanied by some 40 other paying stewards, and their wives.

The week consisted of various golf competitions, evenings eating and drinking, and much entertainment and fun.

The main competition the San Miguel Steward National Championships was played on the final day, an 18 hole stableford competition.

Winning my way to this event was my prize as far as I was concerned, so if I did well in the final good, but if I did not it did not really matter.

During the week I heard murmurings and had a distinct feeling that there was some conflict amongst some stewards.

It seemed that they did not consider me a real steward, and therefore should not be there, even though they had granted me membership, and I had officially qualified for this final.

There were also murmuring about a 12th finalist. He was the Steward from Robin Hood GC Solihull, who had done much work on behalf of San Miguel in the organization of this event, and was consequently invited to play in the final, even though he had not officially qualified.

These murmuring were even more pronounced later on the final day, when both myself and the 12th finalist finished on 37 points each, the result of this being that the 12th entry won on a count back over the last 3 holes. As I said it did not really bother me, I had enjoyed the trip and that was my reward for me, my wife and my daughter.

How things change so quickly, from in some opinions, not being not a proper member, I was now the flavour of the day, and a great number of those present protested that the cup should go to me and not someone who had not officially qualified. I left it up to the organizer San Miguel, and the trophy made its way back to Robin Hill GC

We departed by air the following day, having had a wonderful weeks holiday, and the completion of a very successful year.

CAN MIKE MAKE THIS THE RIGHT ONE

HAT A remarkable golfing year it has been for Mike Ford.

The 48-year-old, four handicap, operations manager, at Sandown Golf Centre, has won his way through to three national finals and is just one round away from fourth.

In the recent final of the Hennessey Cesset Cup, at The Belfry, Mike played with 13 handicap member John Raven.

They were four under par for 17 holes, but they four over for just one, the famous 301 and 10th hole, where both had disasters in the water guarding the green.

That put them back to fourth place on level par, with the tournament won at five strokes.

Mike is also in the final of the San Miguel Awards National Championships, in Torquay, in November; while with another member, eight handicapper Dave Dennis, he is attempting to get into the final of the Golf Insurance National Foursomes at Broome Heath.

Mike's most prestigious final, however, is set on September 30-October 2, when he meets Sandown's head greenkeeper Steve Gudge, in the Martini National Club Best Ball Championship, at Wentworth.

Thirty-year-old Steve, who now plays off five, has only been playing "serious" golf for five years since he moved to the Esher course.

They were convincing winners of the Sandown Club event to earn a place in the regional final at Royal Mid Surrey.

There they took on 63 rival club pairs and

came out on top, with a super nine under par 62 — but only after a countback on the back six which just edged them ahead of their local rivals from Surbiton.

"We just dovetailed together perfectly on the day," explained Mike. "We both had our good and bad holes, but fortunately we never had a bad hole at the same time, and we scored five gross birdies between us."

Added Steve: "We are a good team, as I tend to be quite strong but sometimes a little erratic off the tee, while Mike is very straight, with a good short game."

That teamwork will be put fully to the test at Wentworth where the 21 winning pairs from the regional finals will be joined by the pair scoring the best scratch total in the competition.

It should also be a lot of fun for the golfers who will enjoy an introductory dinner on September 29, followed by 36 holes practice the next day. The competition proper will see them play 18 holes on the West course on the Thursday, with 18 holes on the East on the Friday, followed by the prize giving. All the competitors will be staying at The Runnymede Hotel.

Said Steve: "I expect I shall be a bit nervous on the first tee, but fortunately Mike has been through all this sort of thing before so I am sure he will help me along."

Added Mike: "Judging by the scores from the regional qualifying, the standard will be very high. But if we play to our potential, there is no reason why we should not finish at least in the top 10."

JOHN WHITBREAD



Mike Ford (left) and Steve Gudge — hoping the Martini prove a real tonic.

Chapter 11

Golf Practice

They say that practice makes perfect. I think that statement needs changing. Practice will certainly improve your golf game, but if you do not possess the basic skill, or the actual ability, normally achieved by instruction, you will never get even near perfection. Even if there was that exceptional person, they would still have the course, the elements, wind, rain etc. personal fitness and medical and mental condition and of course the elements of luck, good and bad to consider. I am yet to experience or see the day when all those elements fit together

Golf is a very difficult game to master, the hand/eye co-ordination required to hit that small ball, with what is a relatively small hitting area, is much harder than it looks on television. First you need to acquire the basic skill. There are many ways of achieving these. You can take instruction from a professional teacher, you can get instruction from a fellow amateur, you can purchase books and videos, the choice is yours, but my recommendation is to go to a professional teacher, after all you would no go to a carpenter to find out how to repair the kitchen tap!

Once you have those skills then much practice is required to even gain a handicap, and even more to reduce that handicap. It is a fact that throughout the world the average amateur handicap is 17/18. Each part of the game from teeing off, through the fairway and onto the green with chipping and putting, have to be learned. It may be that you return to your professional for each part, or you even go to specialist teacher, especially for the short game, before you practice these skills, after all it is pointless practicing something that is incorrect.

Unfortunately, I never had a lesson from a professional. Perhaps if I did I would have been a better golfer than I am or was. However I did have the opportunity to watch, listen and learn

In my days as operations manager at Sandown Golf Centre, I used to walk down the 40 bays viewing the customers hitting balls. I can guarantee that 75% of them were using the driver, just to see how far they could hit it. It did not concern them if the ball went left or right, which it invariable did, few went down the center, most were just obsessed with distance. Seldom did see a golfer with a mid or short iron playing to the four measured targets, or even trying to chip into the nets sited some 50/60 yards away.

I said elsewhere in this book, that 1987 was a special year. It was not luck that achieved those results, it was my constant desire to practice and improve my golf. I was fortunate enough at Sandown to have John O'Leary the Irish Ryder Cup player attached to the centre, we also had and ex European Tour player called Noel Hunt, who left the tour to become an exhibition golf trick performer, and did much of his practice at Sandown. He regularly in association with John gave an exhibition of golf, which they called "club head control", basically what they said was "if you can return the club head after the swing to the same place it started, you will hit the ball well," and that is so true. It sounds simple but needs much practice to achieve

John also attracted a number of professional golfers to use the practice facilities, especially his Irish friends like Eamon Darcy.

Sam Torrence was probably John's greatest friend, so we would see him often at Sandown, and in our local pub. There were the two lady professionals Dale Reed and Debbie Dowling who used the range. It was so easy to stand and watch these people, and there was so much to be learned from their practice sessions.

Sandown employed 4 qualified teaching professionals, and they took many lessons each week, you would be amazed how much you can learn and improve yourself by just watching and listening to them giving lessons. It was a combination of tour pros, teaching pros and putting into practice what they said that improved my golf so much

So what about my own practice. My employment at Sandown was basically 5 days a week that included Saturday and Sunday, meaning that I had 2 days off mid week, normally

Tuesday and Wednesday. The days I was at work, I would spend half of my lunch hour on the driving range, except for the odd day when we were not too busy, when myself and a couple of Pros would play the par 3 course, good short game practice, probably the best.

I have always questioned that name Driving Range, why do we call it that, seems to agree with my observations earlier re everyone hitting drivers. Perhaps these facilities should be renamed Practice Ranges.

Anyhow back to myself. On the days I used the range, I would select 1 club, and one target, and then try to hit a bucket of balls into that target. The targets we had a Sandown were 4 small ponds dug out of the ground, cemented and painted blue and filled with water, so they could be easily seen. They were situated at 120, 140, 160 and 180 yards, So for instance if I was using the 140 yard target, I would select the 7 iron.

However it was on my days off when I carried out the real practice. Not far from where I lived was Farnham Golf Club. I was fortunate enough to know the Secretary/Manager very well, and he allowed me to use their practice area.

This area was a field about 350 yards long and 400 yards wide. It was divided into 8 channels about 50 yards wide, designated by stakes. The channel nearest the club was different from the remainder, in that at the bottom it had a bunker, and then a green.

Whenever I could and that was most of the time, there were no many people practicing mid week, I would use this channel. I had a bag containing about 200 golf balls, and I would hit all of these with all of my clubs from driver down to 7 iron. This would mean that all my ball were now 130/140 yards or less from the green, so I would then go the nearest balls, and hit them with which ever club was necessary into the green, continuing this until all balls had been hit.

The result was that some were on the green, some in the bunker, and some outside the green. Next it was the bunker. All these balls were played onto the green, followed by those off the green, these were chipped on to the green, with the pin the target. The green was not good enough for putting so that was eliminated.

Next I would gather up all of my balls, and then drop them at 30/40/50/60 yards etc in piles of 15/20 from the green horizontally across the bottom of the practice area, having done this I would then chip them into the green using what ever club was needed from sand iron to 8 or 9 iron, including my speciality wedge, which I will describe later. The complete session would take some 3 hours, and there were probably about 500 balls hit in total, time well spent, and I have to say I found it most rewarding and enjoyable.

If I had to advise any player what to practice if they only have limited time, then I think it would have to be shots from 70 yards or so. It is quite amazing how many shots you can save on your score card from around the green. I am fortunate enough, through practice to have a good short game. Practicing these shots requires great skill, as they can either be high floating shots, or low running shots depending on the terrain. In my experience there are two things you need to do this, one is soft hands, by that I mean grip the club lightly, don't strangle it, once you strangle it your muscles tighten and you are not relaxed. The second is creating an idea of what power and trajectory you require. I do this by imagining myself throwing a ball under arm, with my right hand, I am right handed, to the pin, and then transferring the movement of the throwing arm to the club, all the other arm does is just hold the club.

One other thing I established some time ago, was that if I could use the same club for every shot from 70 yards to 10 even 5 yards off the green, it would be an advantage, I also needed to be nearer the ball than the average club allowed. What I did was to have 2 inches taken off my pitching wedge, and then by positioning the ball further back or further forward in my stance, creating more or less loft, play the required shots.

This turned out to be most successful, but again only through much practice.

Unfortunately while playing at my home club Hindhead Golf Club one day, I left this wedge some 60 yards from the green having played to the green, and forgot to pick it up on my way

to the next tee, it was never returned, and it was like loosing one of my most treasured possessions. I spent the next 5 weeks visiting golf clubs looking for a similar club in the second hand buckets. I eventually found one, not the same make, but a similar face and feel, and purchased it for 5 pounds. I still have that club to this day, and it has been like a magic wand at times, money well spent I am thinking.

Chapter 12

The Greencard Golf Years

I commenced playing in a national golf knock out competition called The La Manga Masters in 1992. The competition was organised by a golf/holiday company called Greencard golf.

Greencard Golf is a company owned by Richard Vine, the activity of the company is to organize and run holiday golf. It was and remains a much respected company with many regular clients.

The aim is to arrange holidays for golfers, and their partners, who wish to visit good venues throughout the world, and associate the holiday with golf of a competitive nature on good courses and with good quality competition, but more of that later.

The knock out competition was a National competition, and an addition to the main tour.

The preliminary rounds were played on an area basis, and the later rounds involved more travel. Each round was completed until just 4 players remained. These 4 players then travelled to Spain, to play the semi finals and finals, joining all the other Greencard winners and the paying holiday makers for the annual Greencard finals at La Manga.

For a small entry fee, the successful 4 players could look forward to an excellent week's golf including flights and accommodation in Spain. Seemed too good to miss, and if you do not enter you cannot win, consequently I entered in 1992, and played annually until 1996. Unfortunately I never made the semi finals, but I did learn in those years that there are some very dubious handicaps around, and I think that was the reason that around that time Richard cancelled the competition.

This was really my introduction to Greencard. Having no knock out competition to play in, I now became interested in the actual Greencard Amateur Tour as it was called. I asked for a brochure, and was very impressed with what I read.

For 25 pounds I could join Greencard for the year. My next decision was to choose the venues I wanted to play at and enter the competition.

The choices were very good, as were the prices.

Basically you chose a venue, your fee included flights, accommodation, car, all green fees, and entry fees to the main competition. All you had to do was turn up for your flight, get on the aircraft, pick up your car the other end, check in the hotel, attend the welcoming cocktail party, and turn up for your tee time, just too simple.

The added bonus was if you performed well, you reaped the benefits. Each holiday consisted of various rounds of golf, however, 4 of them were the main competition. 4 stableford rounds. The winner was the players with most stableford points over the 4 rounds, and prizes normally went down to 6th place with additional prizes for the best ladies. However if you managed to come in the top 10, you then were awarded tour points from 10 for 1st place down to 1 for 10th place. These points were accumulative, and once you reached 10 points, you automatically qualified for the free trip to La Manga to play in the finals in November.

About this time 1997 I was 59, and looking to retire at 60 the following year. I decided that because of my love for travel, golf and my competitive nature, that I should join this tour, see life once more and enjoy my retirement, travelling, meeting nice people and playing golf.

I feel I was somewhat ambitious with my first choice, I did not know any other members, I did not know the standard of player, but I did have a love for American golf course, having been there a couple of times before, so I decided to opt for the tour to Hilton Head Island in South Carolina, a 10 day tour, which consisted of 8 rounds of golf.

Hilton Head Island is about the size of the Isle of Wight, and is a mecca of golf, having some 35 golf courses, all of good standard, beautiful hotels, and many varied eating establishments. It is commonly known as the upmarket area in comparison to Myrtle Beach a neighbouring area with numerous course. Richard was good to me pairing me up with

a nice guy from Leeds called Neville Scales, both of us having asked to share a twin room, and so it was off to Heathrow to commence another experience. We flew into Atlanta, where we changed aircraft for Savannah, there we picked up our cars, and some 40 kilometers later arrived at our accommodation Palmetta Dunes, a complex consisting of the Hotel, outside swimming, with 2 juczuzi, fitness studio, beautiful gardens, garden walks with bridges over the running stream, which contained many khoi carp, each bridge having a food box so you could feed the carp, the sea nearby, a 24 court tennis complex and 3 high class golf courses, The Fazio, the Trent Jones and the Arthur Hills, and of course that necessity of pleasure, a bar with very friendly staff, and nearby a wonderful restaurant.

Everyone arrived, from the various flights out of UK, and we all met in the bar that evening for the formal introduction and cocktail party. From that point it was quite clear that this was going to be enjoyable, Neville turned out to be a similar age to me and a bundle of fun, with a wicked sense of humour.

Day one was an AMAM, teams of 4 players with the best 2 scores on each hole to count, this was played at Old South. The next day was the first pairs event played at Indigo Run, This was the first time I had ever seen a buggy with a computer screen. This showed the yardage from the buggy to the front, middle and back of the green, the flags on the greens being yellow for front, white for middle and blue for back, this must have been the forerunner of todays satnav on carts.

Old Carolina was the venue for the next days pairs event. It was a great pity the tide was out. One hole on the course has a tee, a fairway and a green, like all course, the difference being that when the tide is in each is separated by the sea, so you play from tee over water to fairway then over water again to green, just not same when there is no water.

Having now acclimatized ourselves, next up was the first round of the competition, this was played at Okatie Creek. The Trent Jones at Palmetta Dunes was the venue for round two, we then had a rest day, followed by round 3 at the Fazio

course in Palmetta Dunes. The final round took us to the Arthur Hills course at Palmatta Halls, and we finished up with a Texas scramble at the Robert Cupp course in Palmatta Halls. The Robert Cupp is quite an amazing course, it was designed by computer, and many of the greens are squares or rectangles, the bunkers also are multi shaped but few circular, and all the mounding goes to a point, instead of the normal curved finish. Quite unusual, but a fine and very difficult course.

So if this was my introduction to the Greencard Amateur Tour, I was impressed, and having gained some 3 points for 8th place, my desire for more was certain. Not only had I enjoyed Hilton Head Island, with its wonderful accommodation, dining facilities, and superb golf courses, but I had met and become friends with so many lovely people. It really was like a big family.

Being hooked, it was time to open the brochure and see what was next. I saw that the September event was at a course I had played a few times, and liked very much, Woodhall Spa.

Woodhall is a golf course that is completely out of place. It is situated in Lincoln, a county with very low lying ground, and not a particularly abundance of trees, the land is more suited to farming. However The Hotchkin course as it is known would not be out of place in the heathland belt of Surrey. Uncommon to the normal terrain, it is full of heather, birch, and some pine, quite frankly it looks as if someone has picked it up from Surrey and dumped it in Lincoln.

Another noticeable feature are the bunkers. It is said there used to be 365, one for every day, however they have reduced them and now there are only about 200 or so. Some you will not see, as they are hidden by some of the rough, and small bushes. It is quite uncommon to search for your ball in the rough, and find it sitting in a bunker. Your sand play needs to be up to scratch, especially if you get into the large trap on the par 3 - 4th, which is about 10 feet deep, with a sheer face. It really is a quality course, and the reason why so many National Amateur events are played there. You can read many comments about the course on the internet, most are very complimentary, a few a bit harsh, but believe me it deserves

its top 100 in UK status. If you ever go there, don't miss the sign on the par 3 - 12th hole. Apparently in 1982 Mr J.A Wilson a 8 handicapper was playing a matchplay event against Mr L.D. Honshaw, a 12 handicapper. They had been playing behind a 4 ball, who called them through on the par 3 12th. The hole is about 160 yards to a narrow green with very deep bunkers on either side. I know I was in one once and could not see over the top, all I could see was the flag on the flagstick. The first player teed off, and sunk his tee shot for an ace. He was followed by his opponent, who also sunk his tee shot for an ace. So hole halved in 1's. I would love to have seen the expressions on the 4 balls faces and listened to the compliments. Quite an amazing feat.

It really is a fabulous course, and has now become the home of the English Golf Union, with the addition of administration facilities, a new driving range, short course training area, and a new course, parkland style with American style green, completely different and complimentary the Hotchkin, called The Bracken.

My adventure to Woodall has two memories, one that I gained 6 points for 5th place, now giving me a total of 9. and two, I met Malcolm Buchanan from Preston, who was to become a very good Greencard friend. It also threw up a problem, I needed 1 point to qualify for La Manga, and there was only 1 event left before then.

Decisions had to be made, and although I had decided I would play only 2 events a year, I now had the chance of qualifying in my first year. It did not take long to decide to attend the final event prior to La Manga.

This event was in Spain, based at a small fishing village called Cambrills, about 100 miles south of Barcelona, and near the holiday resort of Salou.

My new buddy Malcolm, was also going to Cambrills, so it was arranged that we should share a car. Our hotel was a converted monastery called Montebrio, it was very comfortable, and had some wonderful grounds. We played the local course Bonmont Tera Novo, Costa Derago a small drive away, and some 50 kilometers away Paranamica, designed by Bernard Langer. Unfortunately my golf was not too good, and I failed to get my one point.

However I really enjoyed the event, and the companionship of Malcolm, we had some wonderful evenings out, sometimes possibly having more of a holiday than concentrating on the golf.

Lasting memories of Cambrills were the 17th hole at Bonmont, a par 5, some 498 metres, the drive to a dogleg some 210 metres away, the fairway then doglegged to the right, and narrowed to a point, either side of that point was a very deep casm. The green was over the left side casm, which was about 60 meters deep and full of rocks. One look down there and you could see many lost golf balls. There were two ways of playing this hole, a big drive, then take on the casm for the second shot, or play your second shot down the narrowing pinisular for position to approach the green. Option one needed a big drive and a particularly good accurate second shot, option two required a very accurate lay up, and even then you were left with a 100 metre shot over the casm to a small green. I found it very difficult, and if I remember correctly had 2 bogies and 2 double bogies on the hole. My other memory was non golfing but none the less somewhat comical. In 1997 England football team were trying to qualifying for the 1998 World Cup. While we were in Cambrills, England were playing Italy away in the final qualifying game. Malcolm and myself decided that we would find a bar in Salou with television to watch the match. We drove to Salou, found a bar and parked the car. We entered the bar to see a semi circular bar, behind which was this gorgeous young lady in an off the shoulder black dress down to her ankles. She had wonderful long jet black hair tied up in a ponytail, and draped over her left shoulder. All that was missing was a castanette on each hand. I walked to the bar and in my best Spanish said " Dos cevezer pourpovor" (2 beers please). To my great surprise, in a broad scouse accent, she replied, pints or halves love!!!

Recovered we watched the match which was a 0-0 draw qualifying England, which was good reason to celebrate and another late night.

So there we are year one of Greencard completed, thoroughly enjoyed, but a non qualifier by one point.

It is not my intention to bore you with my annual pilgrimage to the golfing events, but I think it only correct to note the

venues and any individual experiences during my many years playing with Greencard.

1998 schedule had many similarities to the previous year. During my Naval career I had become very friendly with Stewart Aldridge, a good squash player. He had now taken up golf, so I convinced him that he should take in a couple of holidays with greencard. He had been very interested in my trip to USA, and so it was that Stu joined my on the early season trip back to Hilton Head Island. The schedule showed many of the same course as 1997, we were accommodated again in Palmetta Dunes, however there was one big change. This year we were to play 36 holes in one day on Daufuskie Island, a small island off Hilton Head, which consisted of a large club house, and few family houses and 2 beautiful golf course, Bloody Point designed by Tom Weiskop, and Melrose designed by Jack Nicholas.

Because of the daylight time available we needed to play a shotgun start for both course, for the non golfers shotgun is when all tees are occupied at the same time and everyone starts on the firing of a shotgun.

The organization for the day was superb. We drove to the ferry point and parked our cars. Our clubs were loaded onto a truck, then the truck and us made the trip across the water followed by a school of dolphins to the Island. We then boarded a bus, meanwhile the clubs had gone ahead of us. On arrival at the clubhouse, the buggies were all lined up with our golf bags on them, how they knew who was paired with who, is still a mystery to me. We changed moved out to our tees and waited for the shotgun.

I had said that light was a premium, and to counter this as we approached the final holes of the morning round, out came buggies supplying us with packed lunches, that we could eat, while playing the final holes. On completion of the morning round, we were transported with our clubs to the Melrose course, where the buggies were all waiting with our names on them. So off we went to our nominated tees to play the pm shotgun event.

On completion we ate at the clubhouse accompanied by some liquid refreshment, before we made the return trip to Palmetta Dunes to prepare for the evenings entertainment.

A truly great day and wonderfully organized.

My next trip for 1998 was to La Baule and La Bretche in France. I had played both course before, and recommended them to Stu. It did not take long for him to decide to join me, so in July we set off in my car to the ferry from Portsmouth to Caen, and then the drive through France to La Baule on the south coast of Brittany.

We had been informed that accommodation was uncertain, because the England Football team who were playing in the World Cup finals in France, were accommodated at La Baule. This meant that there would be some restriction in where we could go, for example we were told that breakfast would be in our accommodation, and not the dining room, and we could not use the swimming pool. However this never became a problem, because England were eliminated from the competition, and the hotel became ours.

La Baule has a combination of apartments, and small cottages. Stu and myself were in one of the small cottages.

Prior to leaving England, I had been having big problems playing my woods. I took them with me, but had no confidence with them. I did take them out on the first practice round, but there was no change, so decision made, I would play the competition with irons only. This was a good decision, because I came 2nd overall gaining 9 tour points, being beaten into second place by a newcomer to Greencard with what I, and many others considered a very dubious handicap of 15. I scored 146 points averaging 36.5 per round, but was easily beaten by 4 points 150, a very high score by Greencard standards. Well that's golf, win some lose some, but 9 points is good.

One comical moment from the trip. Outside of our cottage was a grass area, marked out as half of a football pitch, goal, goal area and penalty area. Behind the goal was a very high net stretching the width of the penalty area. Stu asked me, knowing I was a qualified FA Coach, what it was for. Jokingly I told him it was there for the England players practicing their penalty taking.

La Baule is a lovely place to visit. The golf is good, the wine magnificent, and the beach at La Baule is wonderful. I am sure we will return.

Decision time. 9 points in the bag and 1 needed, and what do I see on the schedule, Woodhall Spa! It just had to be, not only was it my favourite inland course in UK, but I had always played it so well, so in September off I went, keeping to my usual routine, staying at the same guest house etc. Just one thing changed, I played badly, gained no points, and was back in the situation of 1997.

It has always been said in Greencard, that you should not go chasing points, but what do you do when you need one and there is one event left, yes you have the answer, enter, so October saw me off to Sesimbra in Portugal.

My old buddy Malcolm had entered the same event, and along with another pal Paul, we teamed up as a social threesome for the trip. I am not sure this was a good decision, as we all liked to have a drink or two, and enjoy the freetime.

Additionally we were sharing the hotel with 150 Irish landlords on their annual holiday, including bringing with them their own entertainment, and musicians. Every evening in the hotel was party night, needless to say we joined in to what was a very entertaining week.

Everyone will tell you that late nights, too much drink and lack of sleep are no recipe for playing golf, however there is always the opposite to the normal. Paul finished up winning the event, and I gained my 1 point qualifying me for La Manga. I must here make mention of a particular course we played, not in the competition but as one of the fun events. The course is called Troia. Situated in Setabul some 30 kilometres south of Sesimbra, and requiring a ferry ride to get there, it is well worth the trip. This is a most unusual course, designed by Pete Dye, and created on a small peninsular. There is no rough at all. If you miss the fairway or green, then you are on sand, and sand that is never raked, people walk on it, animals run over it, the wind blows it into small hills and vales, and it is dotted with trees and bushes. There are also some greenside bunkers, but the sand rough is played as a normally shot, you can ground your club.

It really is a pleasure to play even taking in to account its difficulty, and straight hitting is a must. I now know why it is called Troia the destroyer.

La Manga

The venue for the Greencard finals must be considered a purpose built golf destination. There are other sports facilities there, including a couple of excellent football pitches. These in combination with the golf seem to attract a number of professional football clubs to carry out some warm weather training.

The accommodation consists of the hotel, plus a number of apartments, so there is a choice, the hotel is a bit more expensive, but the apartments are very comfortable. There are few drinking and eating places nearby, and the alternative is to drive to the villages where there are a couple of restaurants. To be honest as far as eating and drinking is concerned it does not have my recommendation.

The golfing facilities consist of a very good practice range, and 3 course, the North and South, on site, and a short distance away the West course, a very narrow course built through the adjoining woods.

The finals week consist of 5 days golf during the week, and 3 separate competitions. The main competition is the qualifiers competition usually about 30 players, the secondary competition is the Master, this was originally the knock out matchplay, but ever since that competition was cancelled the trophy became the master on finals week, and is played for by those present, who have not qualified for the finals proper.

After the first 2 rounds of the finals and masters, all players that are within 10 stableford points of the leaders go forward to the final 2 rounds. This eliminates a number of players, and these are then paired up for the final event, a 2 round better ball competition.

The North and South course are fairly difficult to play, the south being much longer than the north, and I have to admit that the last time I played there, they were beginning to look tired. So it is no surprisre that Greencard now play there finals at Vilamoura.

I suppose the only thing that the players miss of La Manga is the piano bar in the hotel. Nightly a pianist plays the rather large grande piano, around which the patrons sit using the piano top as there bar top, and later this usually developes into accompanied singing and sometimes to dancing on the piano top. The piano top must have been well reinforced.

1999 saw me making trips Vilamoura in Portugal, La Baule and La Bretche again and to Hawkestone Park in England. Hawkestone is a typical Bank Holiday Weekend trip Friday to Monday playing each day, nothing special but an enjoyable social weekend, as we are accommodated full board at their hotel.

Vilamoura deserves some comment. It has long been a special golfing destination for golfers. There are a number of good golf course in the area, including the ones we played, Vila Sol, Pinal, Quinta da Largo, and Vilamoura Old. Of these my favourite is Vila Sol. A tree lined course with very tight fairways and small tricky greens. Many players will mention San Lorenzo, I could not comment as I have not played the course, but I am informed you have to stay at the hotel to play it. Beside the good courses, there are many eating and drinking establishment in the marina area. Flights to Faro the local airport are frequent and inexpensive, however like the Costa del Sol, Vilamoura is beginning to price themselves out of the market, and other areas such as Belek, in Turkey, are taking over. Belek will be mentioned later.

A return visit and a new destination were made in 2000. The return visit to my English favourite Woodhall Spa, and the new

venue, the Greek island Corfu. Yes believe it or not, there is a golf course on Corfu. Situated in the North of the island, it has an adjoining hotel, which seems to be very popular with Germans. The golf course is nothing special. However it has a super layout, and if more finance was put into the course with maintenance and updating it would be very good. The hotel was comfortable, and with full board with wine included at the evening meal became good value. The beach is some way below the hotel, and is reached by a venicular, which is a small one carriage train on rails.

One warning if you ever visit. The German visitors have this constant desire to book their poolside chair with their towel, even though there is a sign saying do not do this, additionally, every morning whilst they are at breakfast, the pool manager picks up the towels and put them in a bin. Will they never learn? Additionally, because the evening meal commences at 6 pm, and there are only a few outside tables, they will occupy every outdoor table from 4 pm onwards reading their books, thus making their claim.

The hotel had a good programme of nightly entertainment, and altogether it was a very enjoyable trip. The standard of golf was high, I managed an average of 35 points over the 4 rounds, but only managed 11th place.

2001 saw visits to 3 new destinations, The Gloria Golf Resort in Belek, Turkey. Kilkenny in Ireland, and another island visit to Corsica, and Sardinia. All of these deserve mention.

Belek is probably becoming the number one holiday golf destination. We stayed at the Gloria Golf Resort, full board with inside and outside dining. The course is always in wonderful condition, and quite difficult, I believe they now have 2 course. There are also a number of other course in the area, and since I played there I believe some 5 more have been added, it certainly needs to be on any holiday golfers list of destinations. Apart from the golf course, Gloria has probably one of the largest swimming pools I have ever seen. It seems to be made up of several circular pools joined to make one big pool. In the middle is what looks like a large rock, down which there are a number of water slides, however if you walk to the other side of the rock, you will see it is a

stage and dressing rooms for the evening entertainment, most evening there is some type of group playing or other entertainment. They also have a group playing nightly inside the hotel. The poolside has numerous sun loungers.

Joining the hotel grounds to the neighbouring beach is a bridge over a river. Walking over this you will see a small sea airplane, if you are brave enough, or some would say stupid enough, you can purchase a flight in this. Once over the bridge you are met with a glorious beach, warm water and many drinking and eating facilities. It really is a superb resort. If you have time, visit Antalya, which is nearby. A lovely town with many interesting shops etc.

I have to mention our evening meal. Our group of 8 had made a really good move on the first night. We asked one of the waiters to reserve our table for us and to look after us as our wine waiter, along with this we gave him a very nice initial tip. Arriving on the first night, we found our table situated nicely as an outside table, and not in the middle of the dining area. alongside was the said waiter. I must say he looked after us so well for the whole week, and was accordingly rewarded. Gloria had a secondary hotel on the same site. If you wished to eat there instead, you could book and take the train ride to the hotel. The train was similar to those in most fair grounds, but fun. We decided to have a change for one night, and informed our waiter. Surprise, surprise when we arrived at the alternative venue, who was there to meet us, our Gloria waiter, and the same service. We really did well that week especially with the wine.

I know I said I would not bore you with visits, but Kilkenny deserve a mention, here we played Kilkenny, Mount Juliett, Mount Wolsley and what I considered to be the best of them, Carlow.

Carlow seems to have been designed by the terrain. It seems, that they have used exactly what was there and designed a course around it, it is truly a fabulous natural course, and the people so friendly.

The town of Kilkenny is very friendly with many bars and eating places. At that time it was the stag night and hen night

venue of Ireland. There was one big bar in the main street that seemed to host these evenings. One evening I was in the bar and told that there were 5 stag nights and 4 hen night going on, and by looking at the customers, I can believe it. I really enjoyed Killkenny, and its residents even though having recently joined the euro, it was somewhat expensive.

Corsica. The hotel accommodation was nothing special, and the town was very small, but enjoyable. It was the course that stood out. It is called Sperone, from the small but comfortable clubhouse, you proceed to play 8 holes which seem to be an inner circle of the course, these are typical parkland, however from the 9th, you move into a completely different course. The 10th par four is slightly down hill. Short of and to the left of the green is a very large rock, which is invariably on your line. The green is small, and only a few yards past the green the rock face fall some 50 or so yards to the sea, don't be long here.

The 11th is a par 3 over a casm in the rockface, take too many steps of the tee and down you will go, underclub and that is where your ball will end up. The next few holes run alongside the cliff tops of the island, with the nude bathing beach below, and then a turn to the right and you are back in the parkland area for the last 2 holes, a difficult and very picturesque course.

I mentioned Sardinia, we did not play any of the competition there, however we did visit travelling by ferry and minibus to play Pevro, their only course, enjoyable and worth the visit.

In 2001, I commenced making regular winters visit to Spain. I stayed at Benalmadena, half way between Malaga and Fuengarola for between 2 and 3 months. During my first visit I was invited by a colleague of mine to play golf at La Cala, where he owned a house. During the visit we played both the North and the South courses. Both course were very good but also very difficult.

To my surprise I looked at the 2002 Greencard brochure, only to see that a competition was being held at La Cala in February. I had previously decided that I would not play Greencard golf in 2002 because of my financial situation. It now seemed stupid to miss La Cala, when I was already living

only 20 kilometres away, and had played and knew both courses, so I entered and played, however my knowledge led to nothing, I played mediocre and gained no tour points. The financial situation did not improve so that was my only event in 2002.

If 2002 was a year of little competition with Greencard, 2003 was the complete opposite. I cannot say why, but during that year I played in 5 events The Gloria in Turkey, Ireland, Hawkstone Park, Caramate, near Milan, Italy and my 65th birthday present to myself Dubai.

Both Hawkstone and Gloria have been mentioned earlier. I had never played in Italy, so looked forward to the visit, however I was somewhat disappointed, the accommodation was not up to normal standard, and the course were only of mediocre standard, the wet weather had not helped, and in fact it was so wet on one course that a player slipped and broke his leg. Added to the course condition, the travel from the hotel to the venues was just too far. I suppose the only good memory was the days trip on Lake Como. I did not realize how big the lake is, and it is surrounded by beautiful landscape and fabulous houses

If Italy was not so good, Ireland and Dubai however were the complete opposite.

In Ireland we stayed in Sligo. The local course there is Rosses Point, playing the front nine with the wind behind, I thought this is easy, gaining 20 stableford points, however when we turned back into the wind, I was to understand links golf making only 9 points on the back 9. A wonderful links course and I hope I play there again sometime. We played 2 other wonderful links course during the trip, Enniscrone, and Donegal at Murvagh. A great trip with good company, good golf and good eating.

The final trip of the year was Dubai, this would be the end of a very busy year, not only had I played in 4 events but I had just returned from a holiday to Thailand.

Dubai has some wonderful course, and for the competition we played The Dubai Creek, Emirates Majlis and Wadi, we also had a fun day at Abu Dhabi, the course with the roof of a spread winged bird of prey. On the free day, I had the pleasure of playing the new Montgomery course another part of the

Emirates complex. This is a course that will host a European Tour event in the future, well designed, lots of water, and the feature hole the 13th par 3 designed in the shape of the UAE. It is the biggest single green in the world.

Because of its shape, there are teeing boxes 360 degrees around this Hole enabling the staff to put the pin anywhere on the green and still maintain the holes length. Oh! It is guarded by 5 small lakes and several bunkers. The 18th is no pushover either, measuring 656 yards from the back tees, you have to play over water to the fairway, then lay up over water, and finally over more water to the green. Even from the men's forward tees it is 559 yards long.

As luck would have it, our final night dinner and prize giving was on the 23rd of October, my 65th birthday. We had a wonderful evening, and I still have the menu signed by all the players with lovely remarks, plus the birthday card they gave me.

2004 was a quiet year for me, I was preparing to sell up in UK and move to Thailand to live with the new lady in my life. I did however manage to play at Hawkstone Park. This event was the same weekend as the Dupree Cup.

The Dupree Cup is a competition played annually at Rowlands Castle Golf Club. From the Thursday medal the top 8 nett scores go forward to the match play knock out played on Friday, quarter and semi finals, and Saturday 36 hole final. I had played in this competition for some 15 years with no success, so was not too concerned about having entered what could be 2 events, Hawkstone and Dupree Cup, during the same period of time. As fate would have it, I finished 3rd at Rowlands Castle, and of course qualified for the quarter finals, as I had paid all my dues for Hawkstone Park, I had to turn down the opportunity of playing for the Dupree Cup. Such is life.

In September of that year I moved to Thailand, where I still live. Greencard have an annual pilgrimage to Thailand, so I have managed to play in 2 of their events, in Phuket, playing at Blue Canyon of Tiger Woods fame, and in Hua Hin were I now live

Chapter 13.

Laleham Golf Club

Joining Laleham Golf Club (LGC) was a completely new experience for me. Unfortunately I had failed to investigate the club, or the requirements of the position prior to my application, and my appointment was made very quickly. Consequently I had to learn and respond to the requirements very quickly. I had however been given some very important advice prior to my employment by someone who had become a good friend, Richard Doyle-Davidson, the chief executive and Secretary of Wentworth Golf Club, who I had met many times with John O'Leary and Gerry Coley. He said to me, Mike, I cannot tell you how to run your golf club, all clubs are different, but what I will tell you, is "that running a golf club is like owning a prestigious car, If you do not know how it works, then do not touch it until you do. When you do know how it works, then only change those parts that need replacing."

LGC was a private members club situated on the banks of the river Thames in the village of Laleham near the town of Chertsey, in Surrey. For those who know Thorpe Park, instead of turning in to the park at the roundabout, take the opposite turn and transit the narrow road to the club.

The club and course had a very complicated owner/lease relationship, in that the landlord was one Lord Lucan. At one time he was the Chairman of the club, and had granted a 25 year lease at a fairly low rent, on a hand shake. As all will know he disappeared and has never been found to this day. Consequently the Lucan estate was put into the hands of Savilles and Coutes Bank for administration purposes, and a Limited Company (Laleham Golf Club Limited) formed to hold the lease. The club had some 800 members in all categories, and was very much the poorer relation to its neighbours, Wentworth, Sunningdale, and Foxhills. Nevertheless it was a progressive club with an extensive fixture list and held many members and open competition, especially on bank holiday Mondays. The course was a typical 18 whole park land course, built in an area containing much underground gravel, and with a very high water table level, it was fairly

short and contained within a smallish area compared to some courses. The practice facilities were minimal. The club house was old and mainly wood, and contained the Secretaries office, a meeting room upstairs above the office, changing rooms, lounge and bar; kitchen, the steward's accommodation, and a fairly modern brick build dining room extension.

The office staff was me, plus 2 ladies, one my assistant and the other the typist. The bar was managed by the club steward and his wife did the cleaning. Catering was concessioned out. The green staff consisted of Head green keeper plus 5.

My assistant unfortunately was not very co-operative, apparently this was the second time she had been overlooked for the Sec/Manager job, and she made it quite obvious that my appointment did not please her, and this showed with her failure to communicate or co-operate. Her responsibilities included the club finances. These were computerised. Unfortunately my experience of computers was very limited, and even after a number of request for her to produce what I called an idiots guide for certain operations, she failed to produce them, so I had to rely on the typist who was very good on computers to assist me until such time as I was competent. The situation was one that I complained about many times, but the committee did nothing about. This was probably because she had been there a long time, and living with her, in her house was a committee member. This situation became worse later when that member became Chairman of Finance, and later Vice Captain. For sure any decent committee would never have allowed this.

Golf clubs are normally managed in two ways. In my opinion, one is correct, the other is not. LGC had a committee containing 13 members, Captain, Vice Captain and 11 others, these include 2 trustees who were part of LGC Ltd. There were a number of sub committees e.g. greens, finance, house, competitions, handicap, etc. This resulted in at least one meeting every week, followed by 2 in the final week of each month when the General meeting was held. These meeting were all held in the evenings, and in most cases did not finish until 11 pm or later. Additionally everything that was discussed at the sub committee meeting was then re discussed at the general meeting.

Instead of just accepting the recommendation of that sub committee chairman.

It is my opinion and agreed by many colleagues' that this is not the way to manage a golf club. It denies continuity, has no long term aims, too much time is wasted, there are too many people and too many sub committees, plus the staff have a new boss every year.

The alternative is for the club to have a Management Committee, consisting of say 5 people, who are elected for 5 years. This committee elects its own Chairman, and would be responsible for overall management of the club. Additional to this, would be the Captains committee, whose responsibility would be golf and social. The Captain would represent his committee at General meetings, and the Management Committee would be responsible for all long term planning. This system eliminates all the negatives from the Captain committee we had at LGC.

I knew that I would never be able to convince the club to change from what was historically their system. I therefore set about convincing the Captain that there were too many sub committees and to streamline, we needed to eliminate some. The first two that were discussed were finance and greens.

Finance. We spent much time producing a computer read out for each finance meeting. During the first meeting I attended, I was asked to explain the sheet. It was obvious even after explanation that the members did not understand, and so for the next meeting I produced a sheet giving 4 columns. Department, Budget figure, Spent, Remains, made simple they understood.

This led to me convincing the Captain that as all the finance was done by the secretarial staff there was no need for a finance committee, all that was required was to produce the budget expenditure sheet for the general meeting, and any finance requirements could be agreed or disagreed at the general meeting. This was done, although we did retain a Finance Chairman who reported to General Committee.

Greens. I noticed at the green sub committee meeting there was no head green keeper in attendance. I found this unbelievable, we

employed a professional to look after the greens but he had no input to the committee. When I questioned why, the only reply I had, was he has never been included. Again I spoke with the Captain; I expressed my disapproval of not including the head green keeper, and further suggested that as most of the greens committee members respectfully had no green keeping experience, why were they making decisions. I further convinced him there was no need for a greens committee, We should have a chairman to report back to general, and any needs, requirements, recommendation etc, should be discussed informally by the chairman, the head green keeper and me. This was agreed, so the finance and greens committees both disappeared.

I had one other committee problem. Having produced the minutes, on a number of occasions they were questioned, "I did not say that" consequently with the Captains approval, all meeting were recorded on tape, and the tapes kept for 2 months.

It always seemed to me that LGC tried to keep the annual members fees to a minimum. I always saw it as a working mans golf club. The consequence of this, and to create income, was that they had to allow a great number of societies to use the course during the week. Society days were Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, and we often had 2 societies per day. Yes it was good income for the club, but created many problems, especially for members who wanted to use their course. A large number of the members worked shifts, and therefore wanted to play golf during the daytime. With 2 large societies it meant that both tees were booked am and pm, so the course was not free for members until around 4 pm. If there were 2 small societies we managed to tee them off 1 tee, this meant the 10th was free for members until such time as the societies commenced their back 9. As you can imagine all this became very confusing for everyone.

To eliminate this confusion I designed an information board at the entrance to the club, situated on the grass near the 18th green, and the professionals shop. Basically it was a white board with many hooks. The top area was designed to display who were the day's visitors and this was displayed on the board saying "welcome to today's visitors XXXXXXXXX"

The left hand side of the display gave details of teeing off times allocation from the first tee, for societies and members, and the right hand side gave teeing off times allocation for 10th tee. At the bottom were 18 hooks indicating holes 1 to 18, and if temporary greens were in use that hole number would be showing. This board information could be seen from the professionals shop, and a copy was kept in the secretary's office, so if a member phoned for information it was readily available. This improved the problem considerably.

One of the many problems I observed was the amount of cash that was in circulation within the club. We kept a large petty cash float, which was audited by me or my assistant daily. Every item of income or expenditure was entered into a book, and the book balanced against the petty cash daily. Our insurance for the safe put a limit on the amount of cash that could be held in the safe, so any surplus needed to be banked daily. We also held cash and cheques in individual boxes in the safe; these were the entry fees for forthcoming competitions. Added to this we also had 2 gambling machines in the lounge which produced income in terms of 1 pound coins, plus the bar take was all cash. All of this resulted in a daily trip to our local bank, either to bank the surplus, or to withdraw cash for wages, again very time consuming. It was quite obvious that there was a need to streamline this part of the operation. However this would prove difficult. The 1 pound coins were always required to top up the tubes in the machines as they emptied, and the staff was all paid in cash, which was their desire. Yes we could have, and did eventually bank the competition entry fees, but because the clubs policy of returning all entry fees to the winners in terms of prizes, these could not be banked until the competition was completed. So as you can imagine much thought was required to implement any upgrade to the present system.

One change that I introduced, did however aid the cash problem, not just in the amount being held, but in extra income for the club. Most club golfers today will have a swipe card to pay for their beer in the bar, or their food in catering. What I introduced must have been the forerunner of that system. Firstly my thoughts were that if we used vouchers instead of cash, then there would be less cash floating around. This idea came from a European club in Karachi, Pakistan; I

visited back in the late 50's. Secondly I did not see why visitors (societies) should be able to purchase alcohol in the club bar at the same price as the members, after all the members paid an annual subscription. I therefore introduced, with the committee approval, a system where all the prices were increased by 25%. Members however were able to purchase books of vouchers to the value of 25 pounds for 20 pounds. These books contained combination of 5 and 1 pound vouchers plus a few 50p vouchers. The bar steward was issued with voucher books totaling 400 pounds, he sold these to members, and when he was down to 100 pounds worth left, he purchased another 300 pounds worth from me. The result was that members retained the original price, visitors paid the extra, and instead of the daily bar envelope containing all cash, it contained some cash and vouchers. The overall result was less cash daily and that in the first year, the gross income over the bar was an extra 10,000 pounds. Yes, I know the question, what happened to the used vouchers? Simple, when me or my assistant entered the bar take into the files every morning, all the vouchers had the bottom corner cut off, and were retained in an envelope.

Enough of the complexities of administration. As I said the course was contained in a relatively small area of land. The teeing areas were small, as were some of the greens, but in general it was in good condition. The water for the greens sprinklers came from an underground well. The club had licenses for a number of wells but used only one. The water from underground was stored in a large tank from where it was distributed through an automated system to each individual green. The fairways and tees had no automated watering. It was felt that we needed to enlarge all of the teeing areas, at that time, the societies teed off alongside and not off the tees. A proposal was put to the committee to do this on a rolling basis, enlarging 4 tees annually, it was also recommended that sprinkler would be added to the new tees, but operated manually and not through the greens system.

Because of the water table previously mentioned, and that at times in winter the greens got very wet, it was also agreed that the club should have permanent temporary greens. These were fairly small and cut from the fairway short of the green. They were also subject to the

same maintenance as the real greens so that their surfaces for putting were good.

Having got these changes underway, our head green keeper was head hunted by our neighbours Ashford Manor. Needless to say he was offered a larger salary; we did not match the offer, so off he went. Advertising his position resulted in a poor response, and much against my desire the committee appointed the deputy. I have my suspicions that the appointment related around salary rather than quality, and I was never impressed by his professional or management performance. He was a non golfer, and knew nothing about the game, consequently every Friday I had to visit every green to put a yellow or red spot on it so that the holes could be cut for the weekends competitions. This appointment also led to me being far more involved with the course. It seemed that I was now course manager as well as secretary/manager, overseeing the tee extensions and many other course requirements including the replacement of the 16th green, a programme of tree transplanting, and the creation of a pond on the 9th.

Every Monday morning the new head green keeper met me at 11 am with the Cushman (a golf club multi use vehicle) when we would tour the course. I would record all that needed to be done prior the coming weekend on my pocket recorder, on return to the office I would give this tape to the typist, who would type it up, and it would be in his hand by close of day.

From playing the course. Listening to member and in my new found responsibility, I noticed that the bunkers were not what they should be. Nothing to do with position or shaped, purely the sand. Every golfer I know when he leaves the bunker, rakes it towards the outside, it is natural. To remedy this the green staff were instructed that the first job every morning was to go to the furthest part of the course, and rake every bunker inwards, thus distributing the sand evenly within the bunker. Their instruction, members rake out, so staff rake in.

16th Green.

The 16th green had a big problem, the green itself was shaped like a saucer, and the centre was often a small lake. Now I can understand the centre of the saucer holding water, but not to the extent we

observed. Investigation revealed that the centre was full of thatch. Now for those who do not know what thatch is, I can explain it as a thatch roof on a cottage, that thatch does not let water through, and similarly the thatch under the turf does the same job. It is normally caused by the grass roots trying to find water. The roots will normally go down, but if no water is found they will turn round and go up, twisting with other roots and eventually causing thatch. It was decided that we should bring a golf course construction company to investigate the problem. Their findings were that not just the centre but the whole green was subject to thatch, and that the green needed to be completely rebuilt, along with new drainage. They gave us an estimate of 35,000 pounds. The committee discussed this and asked me if our own staff could do this, my reply was I was not sure, but I am sure they would love to be able to, however I was not sure about the head green keeper managing the rebuild. Because it was now October, and winter maintenance was much less than the rest of the year, the committee decided that our own staff should do the rebuild under my direction. We already had the temporary green, so work commenced. First we removed all the turf, and used it on the new tee we were constructing. Then we removed the thatch. We then dug out trenches to a depth of 3 feet, and herring boned into those trenches to a depth of 2 feet, lined the trenches with taram and filled them with small stones, finally wrapping the taram around the stone. These trenches were then run out to a nearby stream. Next we build the green up with a mixture of 70% sand 30% soil to surface level, constructed new bunkers, and then laid new turf. In all it took some 2 months to complete, and at a cost of 9000 pounds for materials. It turned out to be one of the best greens on the course, and was a course operation I will not forget in a hurry. It is not often that green staff has such an opportunity.

Another course operation that I remember because of its complexities was the tree transplanting. We had an area on the course near the 5th with many medium and a few large willow trees. None of these came into play, so it was decided that to tighten up some holes we should transplant these in specific areas. This required the hiring of a specialist vehicle, a large truck, with a six bladed digger. Now this truck was quite heavy. So as not to disturb the course too much we

needed to carry out this operation in a dry period. We only had the vehicle for 2 days so had to complete the transplant in that time. First the vehicle went to the transplant area, operated its six blade digger to extract an area of ground some 6 feet deep, and six feet wide in the shape of wedge. The six blades entered the earth opened each 6 feet apart, they then dug down to 6 feet where the blades came together as one large blade. The machine then lifted the wedge of earth from the ground, one hole ready for a tree. Next it was back to the trees, deposit the wedge of earth for later use, extract one tree in a similar manner, tip it with the earth and roots attached to a laying down position, transport it to the hole just dug, and drop it into the hole along with associated pipes for watering the tree. Completed, dig another hole, deposit the earth into the hole left by the tree that was removed, and repeat the operation until all trees were transplanted. How wonderful to arrive the next day and see a hole completely transposed. Where did those trees come from???

There are times in life when one sometimes has to use their initiative. The 6th hole was a par 3, played over a fairly large willow tree growing on the side of a ditch halfway between the tee and green. Now this tree was very important to the hole. During a lightening storm, a large branch of the tree had been struck, and the trunk was split. I contacted a tree specialist, who told me that in the not too distant future the tree would die. However a replacement for this tree was not in the current transplant programme. I just happened to have 1 large willow remaining, so I decided to have it transplanted additional to those planned, on the opposite bank to the damaged tree. I was sitting in my office a day later, when the then Captain stormed in looking rather angry, asking me why I had not carried out the committees instruction. I replied I have. He then questioned the tree on the 6th, and I explained. He did not seem too happy, and left. However at the next general meeting he did congratulate me on my observations and actions.

The 9th hole was a par 3 of some 180 yards. Just short of the green was a waste area containing a few trees and bushes. It was my imagination that saw this being a large pond. So I put together a

report suggesting how this area could be improved with such a water hazard.

Nothing happened then, but some years later when I played there I noticed my suggestion had been taken up.

LGC was quite a social club, with a number of functions, among them the monthly Saturday dining night. Burns night was a specialty. We had 2 prize giving night a year accompanied by cheese and wine. Every bank holiday Monday was an open scramble competition accompanied at night by BBQ and dance, and of course the Christmas bring and win competition. These are but a few.

I well recall the Christmas Bring and Win. Each member playing donated a prize, and the players received a prize in order of finishing in the competition. Previously, because some prizes were wrapped and were not what was thought up to standard, the committee made a rule that all prizes should be unwrapped. On this day an old friend Eric Payne handed me his prize, it was a white china plate with gold trim. I said "come on Eric you know the rules", to which he replied "you know me Mike" after they were all on the course playing I had a good look at the plate, there had to be something about it, and I soon discovered what.

On completion of the competition, I called out the players in the order of finishing, and each selected their prize. We came to the last person, and all that was left was the china plate, when the Captain presented the plate to him, I asked the player to turn the plate over and read what was on the back. Quite happily he took the microphone and said "2 ticket to Phantom of the Opera starring Michael Crawford and Sarah Brightman."

One of my Captains was David Brash, a true Scot, and the leader of the Burns night. Always a great night and supported by some 200 members and their wives.

The bank holiday Monday scrambles were quite an event, always supported by many non members who were regulars to this event, and always enjoyed, especially the BBQ and disco in the evening.

One in particular remains long in my memory. I decide that I was going to complete a golf marathon on that day commencing at 6 am and completing at approx 8 pm, and in aid of Children In Need. I managed to get individual sponsorship from many members. The sponsorship was 10p per hole played to a maximum of 10 pounds. I played 18 holes with a partner who would not put out but tend the flag on the green, and I had a caddy for each round. All other players were made aware and asked to call me straight through. I commenced my first round at 6 am and completed it at 7.40 am After breakfast round 2 commenced followed by round 3 and dinner. Altogether I completed 6 rounds, 108 holes the last hole being played at nearly 8 pm and in the process raising well over 1000 pounds for the charity, which I presented to Terry Wogan at the BBC studios in Sheppard's Bush.

It would seem that I enjoyed LGC, however that is not so. I had a few good years with some very nice Captains, and in another place I would have enjoyed it, but as time went on the aggravation in the office, with my assistant and her boyfriend who was now Vice Captain, plus the current Captain, who just had to run everything, I became quite disillusioned. However that was not to last long. The period of time for Lord Lucan to be pronounced dead or missing indefinitely had passed, and the limited company had been in consultation with the Lucan trust because the lease was about to run out, the result was a massive increase in rent. I arrived at work one morning to be met by the Captain with a letter telling me that although they were very satisfied with my work, and they were pleased with everything I had put into the club, they could not afford me anymore because of the rent increases and that I was to be made redundant. Personally I believe most of this was down to the Vice Captain and his girlfriend. But I did ask the Captain more than once, probably 3 times, "do you know what you are doing"? His reply "yes, but we cannot help it." You see during my diploma course at the PNL we studied commercial law, which says you do not make a person redundant, you make the position redundant. They had not made the position redundant, and I immediately contacted the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to take up my case. Instead of taking the case to court, the golf club offered me an out of court settlement, which I

refused demanding double, they eventually settled out of court for somewhere near 8 months salary.

By this time I was re employed, but no longer was I working some 60 to 80 hours a week, including weekends. My visits to the job centre, revealed positions available with the Army in Aldershot in administration. I visited their civilian employment office, took away a work application form, and submitted it with my CV. The following day I received a telephone call telling me that my application had been viewed, but they had another position, that was more suitable to my experience, and would I like to consider it. The salary was twice that of the Admin post, I would be working alone, as a Community Organiser for the married families in North Aldershot, operating out of the Connaught Community Centre, and that the position was Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm daily, plus overtime occasionally. I was interviewed the following day and commence work the following week. This was to be my last employment. As a Community Organiser, I was a civil servant, and the age for retirement in the Civil Service was 60, and so some 5 years later I retired.

Chapter 14

ILAM, Golf Club Secretaries and Hindhead Golf Club

Shortly after I joined Arun Leisure Centre, I was asked if I would like to be involved with the regional administration of the Association of Recreation Managers (ARM). Each region throughout UK had a regional committee, and these were responsible to the association committee. The main responsibility of the association committee was the organization of the annual conference and annual seminar. These were held in different areas, so it became their task to assist. Part of these conferences and seminars was a golf competition. After attending two, I was unimpressed with the golf organization. There seemed to be no control over checking handicaps or who was eligible to play, the courses were not up to standard opting for the free local municipal course rather than a quality venue, and little socialising afterwards. Consequently, along with others at the Blackpool conference of 1984, I arranged a meeting where the only item on the agenda was the formation of the ARM Golf Society. The meeting was well attended and the outcome was communicated to the association committee, the society was agreed and formed. From then it became their responsibility to organise the future golf competitions. The founder committee consisted of Ron Bright as Captain, Geoff Geering, I as Secretary, and Howard Peters. Eventually a North/South divide appeared, and the membership of the society became mainly Midlands and Southern area personal. During the next few years, extra golf was organized and the ARM team did very well in National Society Golf Competition, being sponsored by ARM.

Some years later an amalgamation of all the organizations involved at local government level for the administration of sport and leisure was agreed, and with the exception of the Institute of Baths and Recreation (IBRM) became the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM). This resulted in a big change in the institute structure, with the formation of a headquarters, and the appointment of a director and associated staff, some would say it became a quango. It was soon evident that this new structure had no interest in the golf

society, they cancelled our sponsorship, organised their own golf at annual meetings, and completely ignored us. Consequently we went our own way, retaining the name ILAM Golf Society resulting in the organization of our own annual programme changing to 5 meeting a year, Spring, Summer, National Championships, Autumn, and Christmas, and not in anyway concerned with Conferences or Seminars We were fortunate that with amalgamation, the Parks and Recreation had donated their trophy, a Scottish Quaffe which became the National trophy, and members presented trophies for the remaining meetings. Competitions were arranged a various venues across the South of England and some in the Midlands, with the exception of the autumn meeting which was always held at that little gem of a course called "The Rolls of Monmouth." We were introduced to this course, just 30 miles down the road from St. Pierre and Celtic Manor on the Monmouth to Abergavenny road, by our then secretary Ken Price. Ken then transformed this event to become the ILAM Masters, complete with green blazer, and played over 36 holes. Unfortunately later Ken, who was a low handicap players had a heart attack while driving his car on his way to compete in the British Amateur Open, and eventually died from the injuries. In recognition, the event was renamed the Ken Price Masters, and is still to this day. I am the very proud owner of 2 Green Masters jackets. I continued playing with ILAM Golf Society until 2002 when on retiring to move to Thailand I was made President of the society. The society still thrives and long may it do so.

When I became a golf club secretary, I was fortunate to be able to play in many association of Golf Club Secretaries (AGS) competitions, on some of the best courses in the South of England. These competition were well contested with many good golfers. Many were associated with regional meeting, the meeting in the morning and the golf in the afternoon, other were annual events, most were sponsored by companies involved with golf and they were most enjoyable days. One of the sponsors was Parkers, who supplied course equipment; the photographs show the presentation of the Parker trophy to me at Walton Heath, Surrey, used in 1981 for the Ryder Cup.



One of the more prestigious events was the annual knock out, played for the Golfer of Black heath Trophy, Picture below.



I was fortunate enough, or perhaps I played well enough, match play is my favorite form of golf, to win this competition twice, the finals being played at Sunning dale Golf Club over the New Course, and West Hill,

one of the famous "W" courses of Surrey, West Hill, Worpleston and Woking.

Every year the association held a guest day. The venue for this was usually one of the more well known clubs. Most members invited their Captains. I decided one year that I would invite my old Greencard pal Malcolm Buchanan. He lived in Preston, it was a long drive to where I lived, but I managed to convince him it would be worthwhile.

From the time he arrived he kept asking me where we were playing and what type of day would it be. I continually failed to tell him. The following morning we left at 8 am, and not knowing the area Malcolm had no clue where we were going. The expression on his face as we drove through the gates to Sunningdale had to be seen. After introductions and full English breakfast with Bucks Fizz, we played the Old Course, followed by a beautiful 3 course meal and presentation. A day I am sure he remembered. Sadly Malcolm is no longer with us; he died from a massive heart attack, alone in his house while watching football on TV.

When I joined Sandown Golf Centre, I moved house to Farnham in Surrey to be nearer to my employment. This meant a change in golf club. I had played Hindhead GC a few times and applied for membership there. I was told that I could have 5 day membership immediately, but for full membership, there was a long waiting list. This suited me fine, I worked Saturdays and Sundays, so 5 day was good. The only problem with Hindhead in those days was they had limited practice areas, however I solved this problem by using Farnham GC practice area, as seen in the 'Practice Chapter'. I remained a 5 day member, playing in their competitions for a number of years. Mickie Brown the then Secretary/Manager offered me full membership many times, but I advised him that I could not play weekends and would only be denying someone else full membership. However he did inform me that whenever I wanted to become a full member the committee had approved such. I eventually took up full membership in 1993 when I left LGC, and enjoyed those weekends playing in just about every competition I could. It was during this time that I was introduced to mixed golf. Hindhead had a very good ladies section, and played a lot of mixed golf, in particular the winter mixed

league. I decided I would like to be involved in this, and managed to persuade one of the ladies Jane Jones to partner me. The first time we played was a disaster. After she informed me I had no idea of how to play mixed golf, which I am sure she was correct. She asked me to play with her one evening, and she would show me. It seemed that the secret to playing mixed golf, especially at Hindhead which had much thick heather, is to leave your female partner on the fairway. Our evening game consisted of playing our own ball, and switching balls for each shot. I soon learned the secret, staying in play and not hitting 3 woods deep into the heather from where ladies do not have the strength to play. The message, change clubs and leave me on the fairway. It obviously worked because we did well in the league, and the partnership also worked, because we remained as partners for some 10 years, during which time we won every trophy for mixed competitions, some more than once. I enjoyed playing mixed with Jane so much, and eventually presented trophies to the club for the winter mixed winners. They can be seen in the trophy cabinet, statues of a man and a lady golfer, in bronze, wearing the old fashioned tweed clothing.

At aged 60, another bonus came in to my life. I was able to join the veterans section. Not only did they have their own competitions, but they had a match fixture list like no other, commencing at Wentworth, and including St Georges Hill, the already mentioned 3 "W's" The Berkshire, Hankley Common, Farnham, Goodwood, North Hants and so on altogether 21 home and 20 away matches per year, and most of them for as little as 10 pounds inclusive of lunch. I also had success in their competition including again the match play, winning the Veterans Putter. Added to this was the open competition held by every club in the area for Veterans only.

Hindhead vets were known as "The Stags", each club had their own name, Wentworth were "Last of the Summer Wine" West Hill were the "ZigZagger", I cant remember them all but they were all such fun.

Chapter 15.

Thailand

I first visited Thailand in 2002. I decided that I would like to try an alternative to Spain, which I had now visited for 5 winters. I only visited for 3 weeks so as to get a feel for the place, and it did not interfere with my Spain trip as I visited in September. I liked Thailand very much, the climate was nice and I was assured it was almost the same all year round except for the rainy season. The people, especially the ladies were pleasant and I just had a good feeling about the country. I knew this part of the world quite well from my days in the Royal Navy, but I had never been to Thailand before. I enjoyed my 3 weeks immensely. During the visit I had met a Thai lady, and we corresponded by e mail on my return to UK. My winter routine did not change, it was back to Spain for January to April, however I decided that I needed to return to Thailand too much e mailing and not enough personal contact. So I visited again for 3 weeks in April. This time I stayed in Nonthaburi an area of Bangkok, which is where my new Thai friend lived. I enjoyed myself again. Consequently I arranged another visit for May, this time for 6 weeks. During that time me and my new Thai lady decided to stay together, and took a 2 week holiday to Hua Hin, a coastal resort some 200 kilometers from Bangkok, and the summer home of the King. It was during this holiday that we met a property developer, who owned the hotel we were staying at, and asked us if we would like to view some properties. The outcome of this was that we both liked Hua Hin, we liked one of the properties he showed us, not far from the beach, and we decided to put a deposit on it, which of course concluded that I was going to move to Thailand. From here I returned to UK, put my apartment on the market, and within a few months I had sold and was on my way back to Thailand to start a new life, with my new lady, in a new house.

Having moved to Hua Hin, my next need was to find somewhere to play golf and people to play with. I was introduced to Hua Hin Golf Society (HHGS), and applied for membership which was approved. Now I needed to get a membership to one of the golf clubs. Memberships in Thailand are very different from UK. The owners issue

all the memberships at one time normally when the club first opens, and for a specific number of years. If you purchase one it is normally from a person who is selling his, and the purchase price depends on how many years are left. There is also a transfer fee that the owners take, and who pays that is decided between the purchaser and buyer. I managed to purchase through a third party a membership with 19 years left, and so I became a member of Lake View.

As a member you can play whenever you like, but you must book in advance. There are other costs. You must have a caddy, for which you pay a fee, if you want a golf cart you can purchase 18 holes or 9 holes, up to you, and on completion of the round there is a tip for the caddy, this depends on their performance, or whether they are your regular caddy etc. Addition to these fees there is an annual maintenance cost.

Membership to HHGS and Lake View done it was time to try and perform. Golf in Thailand is somewhat different from UK, the greens are normally much faster and more tricky, and for me the ball does not seem to go so far, why I do not know, but it has been suggested that the humidity is the reason, along with watered fairways and consequently no run. My first competition was the annual match play. In the first round I was drawn against a player of similar handicap. I played out of my skin on the day, and completed the front 9 in level par gross and was 8 up at the turn. I went on to win 8 and 7, and was informed on completion that my opponent was the Chairman of the club. Being a new member I did not know that, but it made no difference to me a match is a match, and you play to win.

HHGS was a peculiar society. They had some 200 members, but most of them were only in Hua Hin from December to March, having moved from Scandinavia, and other cold countries to Thailand for the winter. They also allowed non member visitors to play, and there seem to be no check on returning members handicaps or that of visitors, and this showed in the results. In fact, as a professional golf club administrator there were a number of irregularities I questioned, but with no answers. Eventually along with other members this led to the forming of Butterfly Rock Golf Club (BRGC). A breakaway from HHGS.

Paul Frampton and Steve Ross asked me if I would join them in creating a new club, they wanted my professional assistance, and I agreed to join them. We commenced the formation in March 2006. It was decided that the club would be formed on the lines of a tradition UK golf club, that it would be called a golf club so as not to be confuse with HHGS (Society), that we would operate on different days from HHGS so as not create any conflict, and that there would be a restriction on membership in terms of numbers, that members should be resident, and that visitors could play but only as members guests. A local golfer offered us his bar as a home, so the club became known as Butterfly Rock Golf Club.

The initial 30 membership were by invitation and these were all taken up, if you ever visit what used to be Butterfly Rock but is now The Play Lounge in Soi 80 you will see the initial founder members board in the upstairs room. I became founder Captain and Handicap Secretary, having set up the handicap system on computer and using the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) system. I held that position until standing down in 2008. Paul was a very able Secretary, and sadly Steve died unexpectedly in April 2007.

BRGC held its first competition on 3^d May 2006 and has been operating in the town ever since. The club house has now moved to The Limelight Bar on Soi Salekam, and membership is near 100. We have an array of trophies all displayed at The Limelight, along with the honours boards, the club has gone from strength to strength and is now a respected organisation within Hua Hin, and possibly better known than HHGS.

Golf Course it has been my pleasure to play

Courses in the UK

Ashford Manor	Cams Hill
Army Aldershot	Corhampton
Alice Springs	Chipping Norton
Alresford	Clevedon
Aldenham	Cuddington
Atherstone	Camberley Heath
Berkshire Red	Chipstead
Berkshire Blue	Croham Hurst
Bowood G&CC	Chobham
Bowood GC	Crowborough Beacon
Betchworth park	Chichester
Bramley	Cowdray park
Banstead Down	Chippenham
Bognor Regis	Celtic Manor Roman Rd
Belfry Brabazon	Celtic manor Wentwood hills
Belfry Derby	Douglas (IOM)
Broome Park	Dorking
Broome manor	Denham
Basingstoke	Dunwood Manor
Barton on Sea	Droitwich
Broadstone	Drayton Park
Bristol & Clifton	Effingham
Broadway	East Horton
Burhill	Earlestone Sands
Blackmoor	Evesham
Bramshot	East Herts
Botley park	Ealing
Blackpool Stanley Park	East Berkshire
Beston Fields	East Sussex 1 & 2
Burnham & Berrow	Edgebaston
Copthorne	Fulwell
Crews Hill	Frilford Heath
Carthegena	Farnham
Chipping Sodbury	Foxhills Chertsey

Foxhills Longcross
Gleneagles Kings
Gleneagles Queens
Goodwood
Guildford
Gatton Manor
Gerrards Cross
Goring & Streatley
Gosport (Stokes bay)
Great Salterns
Hawkstone Park
Hawkstone Windmill
Hadden Hill
Henley
Harpendon
Harpendon Common
Hartsbourne
Hockley
Hankley Common
Hayling Island
Hartley Whitney
Hampstead
Home Park
Hendon
Highgate
Holsworthy
Hindhead
Hollingbury
Hill Barn
Ham Manor
High Posts
Ifield
John O'Gaunt
Kingswood
Laleham
Lingfield Park
Littlehampton
Leckford
Lomg Ashton
Lilley Brook

Lee on Solent
Liphook
Leeds Castle
Moor Park Upper
Moor Park Lower
Meyrick Park
Maidenhead
Middlesbrough
Monmouthshire
Muckhart
Moortown
Malborough
Milford
Malden
Meon Valley
New Zealand
North Downs
North Wiltshire
North Hampshire
North Middlesex
Oak Park
Ogbourne Down
Pyecombe
Puttenham
Pinner Hill
Petersfield Old
Petersfield New
Portsmouth (Crookham)
Portsmouth (Great Salterns)
Porters park
Queens park
Richmond Park
Royal Bishopshire
Rosemount
Rolls of Monmouth
RAC Epsom
Reigate Heath
Rowlands Castle
Royal Winchester
Roehampton

Royal Mid Surrey inner
Royal Mid Surrey outer
Sandy Lodge
Saunton Sands East
Saunton Sands West
South Herts
Stoke Park
Southwick Park
Sonning
Southwood
Stoneham
Sandown and Shanklin
Southport & Ainsdale
Southport Mun
Stanton on the Wold
Southfield
Shillinglee
St Pierre old
St Pierre new
St Georges Hill
St Andrews Old
St Andrews New
Scarborough South Cliff
Salisbury
Sunningdale Old
Sunningdale New
Silvermere
Shirly Park
Sandown Park
Tyrells Wood
Tilgate Forest
Temple
Tewksburt park
The Shropshire a,b & c
The Worcestershire
The Dyke
The Wiltshire
Tadmarton Heath
Telford
Whitewebbs

Wyke Green
West Middlesex
West Herts
West Kent
Woburn Dukes
Woburn Duchess
Waterlooville
Woodhall Hogkiss
Woodhall Bracken
Windlesham
West Hill
Woodcote Park
West Surrey
Wentworth East
Wentworth West
Wentworth Edinburgh
West Byfleet
Worpleston
Woking
Worthing Upper
Worthing Lower
Walsall
West Berkshire
Weybrooke Park
Wragg Barn

Golf Course it has been my pleasure to play outside UK

USA

Meadow Woods
Beamont Lakes
Overoaks
Eastwood
Poincianna
Robert Cupp Palmetto Hall
Arthur Hills Palmetto Hall
Fazio Palmetto Dunes
Trent Jones Palmetto Dunes
Old Carolina
Indigo Run
Great Bear
Hilton Head National
Old South
Bloodypoint Defuskey Is
Melrose Defuskey Is

Ireland

Carlow
Kilkenny
Mount Juliett
Mount Wolsley
Ross point Sligo
Eniscrone
Muragh Donegal

France

Hardelot Pins
Hardelot Dunes
Bel Dunnes
La Bulle
La Bretesch

Portugal

Troire
Aeora 1
Aeora 2
Quinta de Peru
Villamora Old
Vila Sol
Pinal
Quinta de Lago
Rio Formosa
Palmares
Park de Floresta

Spain

Paradore Malaga
Panoramica
Costa Darado
Bonmont Terranova
La Manga North
La Manga South
La Manga West
Mijas Los Lagos
Mijas Los Olives
Anoretta
Alurin
La Cala North
La Cala South
Miraflores
Guadalhorce
Lauro
Monte Castillo

Italy

Carimate
Le Robinie
Villmesta
Monticello

Greece

Corfu

Corsica

Speronne

Sardinia

Pevro

Turkey

Gloria
Nobolis
Nationale
Tat

UAE

Emerates Wadi
Emerates Majalis
Emerates Montgomery
Dubai Creek
Abu Dhabi

Thailand

Chou Chean
Green valley
Khao Kheow
Burapha
Laem Chabang
Palm Hills
Lake View
Springfield
Dhanarat
Black Mountain
Khraen Krachan
Sawang
Royal Ratchaburi
Panoransi
Dragon hills
Blue Canyon - Lakes
Blue Canyon Main
Royal Chang Mai