



A FROSTY 9TH GREEN

(FIFTY SIX)

However far-sighted a golf club Committee may be, there are always new threats to contend with. Back in August 1936 the National Golf Clubs Protection Association warned that the Home Secretary planned to bring in legislation during the next session of parliament treating golf clubs more like public houses, prejudicing 'the essentially domestic character of our clubs.' There were threats nearer at hand, too. In January 1937 the club joined with other property owners in the neighbourhood in objecting to the proposed erection of a residential hotel at Torkington. The application was subsequently turned down. Another proposal that month, however, might have had greater immediate impact on the club. This was a scheme to erect houses on the far side of Torkington Road. Clearly, the club was directly influenced, but it was interested in the price per acre of the land as there might also be building on land adjoining the second tee. Plans showing the proposed building of houses and new roads on neighbouring land were submitted in February. But that was the last heard of this project for some years.

As 1936 drew to a close, the Greens Committee wrote to the Ladies' Committee with a view to making improvements to the course, canvassing their opinions. The ladies replied in detail in a lengthy list which included painting the flag sticks red or black at the bottom so that they might be more easily seen. They also requested that the holes in bunkers be filled in and that the grass around the bunkers be cut. Unfortunately it is not recorded whether any of these were actually carried out.

With the abdication of Edward VIII as King, it was not until 1937 that the Coronation of King George VI took place. At the golf club, plans had obviously been under consideration for Edward's Coronation Day, and these formed the basis of what was eventually arranged for the 1937 Coronation Day, which included the provision of fireworks and special competitions.

In April 1937 an exhibition match was played in which Henry Cotton (Open Champion 1934 and 1937) and Alf Padgham (Open Champion 1936) played with Tom Renouf and Gordon Good Professional at Romiley. It was at this event that Padgham created an unofficial course record of 67. Cotton was paid 40 guineas and Padgham 25 guineas, the committee could not decide a fee for Renouf or Good.

Since the water pipeline crossing the course had first been mooted, the club had entertained the idea of one day laying on water to the greens. The club was again looking to lay on water in the autumn of 1937 and this time went so far as to obtaining suitable schemes and layouts. It was a slow moving process and it was June 1938 before estimates of about £380 were obtained for the materials plus the cost of laying the pipes. As usual, a Sub-committee was established. However, in March 1938 a financial settlement was agreed by Stockport Corporation's assessor for easement and compensation for the laying of their water pipe. A sum of £123 was offered. It would go some way towards the supply of water to the greens. So in July 1938 it was agreed to lay on water to the 8th green as an experiment, but it would require water metering and a water chamber. It was a successful trial, for in June 1939 piping and sprinklers were ordered to lay on water to the 16th and 18th greens,



**GOLF**

**PADGHAM'S UNOFFICIAL RECORD GOES ROUND STOCKPORT COURSE IN 67 AGAINST COTTON**

**Exhibition Match at Torkington**

A. H. Padgham, the open champion, created an unofficial record for the 9th green at Torkington in "Match" meeting for the purpose of the exhibition match with Henry Cotton, the open champion. E. G. Renouf, the Stockport professional, and Gordon Good, the Romiley professional.

Participated in the evening by being invited to play on the 9th green, the match was won by Alf Padgham by 20 and Cotton by 21, the latter being the only hole on the 9th green.

At the 16th hole, Padgham, who was the only one of the day, played a hole in 16, the only hole in the match. He was the first to play a hole in 16, and he kept the lead throughout the match. It was an evening of exciting golf, with an enthusiastic following right to the last green.

The match was ably assisted by the ladies, and the big crowd looked on with interest. The match was a great success, and a big crowd of spectators gathered to watch the match. The match was a success, and a big crowd of spectators gathered to watch the match.

**THE SCORES**

**AFTERNOON**

Padgham	67
Cotton	68
Renouf	69
Good	70

**EVENING**

Padgham	67
Cotton	68
Renouf	69
Good	70

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ALF PADGHAM, TOMMY RENOUF, HENRY COTTON, BILL KINSEY (CAPTAIN)

(FIFTY SEVEN)

water being accessed from the Clubhouse. In August it was decided that if finance could be raised to fund the £380 needed to provide the pipework, stop taps, meters and so on plus the necessary labour of about £120, water should be laid on to all the greens. At the 1939 Annual General Meeting, held on July 26th, the main item to emerge from the meeting was a strong feeling in favour of a billiard table. The customary Sub-Committee was then set up to find a means of providing a billiard room as well as to raise the money to lay on water to all the greens. It was suggested that members take up one or more loan units of £5 each, the repayments to be paid off in annual instalments over a short number of years. As with the house building project, Adolf Hitler's acquisitive ventures in Europe put the watering scheme on hold for a number of years.

In June 1937 the House Committee noted a new trend. During the previous ten months the cost of food purchases had been £695 with sales of £709, a profit of £14, compared with a profit of £118 the previous year. This was put down to the rising cost of food, but analysis was required. Sure enough, the House Committee soon revised its food prices. By February 1938 the Treasurer's reports were showing that their strict financial measures were bringing the overdraft down in comparison with the same period in 1937. Catering, too, was now showing a healthier profit and the services rendered by the Cook and Steward in this respect were earmarked for consideration at a future meeting. With the 1938 Annual General Meeting due, the Committee was pleased to be able to report a surplus of £348 as opposed to just £45 in the previous year. But matters of this kind are rarely as simple as that. As early into the new tax year as September 1938, the Treasurer's summary of receipts and payments for the comparative periods in 1937 and 1938 now revealed a decrease in receipts and an increase in payments in both the house staff and greenkeeping departments. The House and Greens Committees were forced to examine staff wages. The following month both Committees reported that the principal increase in payments had been for temporary staff covering for the illness of staff or their leave of absence.

Unfortunately the discussion of staff costs raised once again the matter of Renouf's employment as Professional. In October 1938, the Committee announced that it was still not happy with Renouf, despite the good qualities to which the Captain referred, and Renouf was to be

asked to resign. It was in mid-November that Renouf was interviewed, apparently along friendly lines. He agreed to resign, relinquishing his duties on December 31st 1938. Advertisements were placed for Professional, Greenkeeper and Professional-Greenkeeper and the Captain and a member of the Greens Committee were asked to interview candidates and make a recommendation to the Committee. But the Greens Committee could not decide which route to take, whether to separate the posts of Professional and Greenkeeper or whether to combine them, so no appointment was made initially, with one of the greenstaff (*who had applied for the job of Greenkeeper*) being made foreman for three months under instructions from the Chairman of the Green, Renouf's assistant, Jock Robertson, was asked to look after the shop, members' clubs, repair of clubs, control of the caddies and so on, also for three months, which would give the Committee time to see if the Greenkeeper was suitable for the job. So it was not until January 1939 that a Sub-Committee was established to appoint a Professional. About a hundred applications for the post were received, but still no appointment was made, with another discussion taking place in March concerning staff costs. Again payments had increased and receipts decreased. The cost of the house staff in particular was again raised, but no action taken in view of the approaching season. Eventually the Sub-Committee was able to offer the post of Professional to Frank E Dennis from Northenden at a wage of £3 per week, to start April 3rd 1939. Perry, a member of the greenstaff, was now referred to as Head Groundsman, so he must have been satisfactory. Hardly had Dennis taken up office, than Northenden approached Stockport asking for assistance in recovering approximately £40, being 3/4 of the fees paid to Dennis by members for services such as club cleaning, repairs and storage. Then, in June, the Professional was seen taking his lunch in the dining room when other members were present. He was immediately told to take his meal



THE BEECH TREE BEGINS TO GROW



was some improvement on the restrictions placed on his predecessors.

With war looking more and more likely, the financial situation looked uncertain. The July balance sheet showed a net surplus of only £55 compared with the £348 in 1938.

The membership was also down, with 245 men as opposed to 261 in the same period in 1938, and 119 ladies as compared with 134. Clearly this would be a serious and growing problem if members were called up to serve their country. At a Special Committee meeting convened to discuss the fall in profits, catering was again identified as the biggest contributor to the cash-flow problems.

At a Ladies' Committee meeting held on 5th July 1939 the question was raised of whether sheltering in thunder and lightning was permitted in competitions. The Honorary Secretary replied that *'sheltering in thunder and lightning when playing a competition or marking cards for handicap purposes was not permitted as this was contrary to R&A and LGU regulations.'* A notice was put up reminding lady members of this harsh regulation.

In August 1939 it was reported that meetings had been held with East Cheshire Regional Planning Committee. These were in order to determine the use of land owned by the golf club. Should it be reserved as a private open space for not less than 20 years, as land subject to a general development order, with 8 houses to the acre, or with some private agreement with the local authority? This, however, would be unlikely to find favour with the Ministry. Once again, this was a matter shortly to be put on hold, although not before it had been decided that club land had been scheduled as *'indeterminate zoning, subject to temporary restrictions against building development.'*

On August 15th 1939 the last Committee meeting took place before the outbreak of war. The Billiards Sub-Committee recommended utilising part of the card room, today's club room, taking in the old bar and some of the corridor, at a cost of about £250, the table being offered

somewhere else or in the dining room at a more convenient time. He was also reminded that he was not allowed elsewhere in the clubhouse without the invitation of a member. At least he was now allowed in the clubhouse, which

as a gift. It was also proposed that, during his year in office, the Captain should be able to introduce guests to the club without payment of a green fee. Additionally it was suggested that each full member of the club paying his subscription before October 31st in each year should be sent three visitor permits available on any day during the current club year except Saturdays, Sundays, Bank Holidays and Competition Days.

Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3rd 1939 after Hitler had refused to abort his invasion of Poland, both Britain and France having guaranteed the territorial integrity of Poland in March of that year. The Ladies' Committee met on September 6th and it was decreed that *'All Competitions, Matches and the Ladies' Annual General Meeting are cancelled until further notice.'* The present officers and Committee would remain in office. An emergency committee of Captain, Vice-Captain and the Honorary Treasurer and Secretary would deal with any matters which arose, thereby doing away with the need for monthly Ladies' Committee meetings. A bridge drive was suggested in aid of food, cigarettes or tobacco for the soldiers. It was also proposed to hold knitting or sewing afternoons at the club, possibly with wool provided by the gentlemen. Club competitions would be reinstated in 1940 with competitions also arranged in aid of Red Cross funds. The ladies planned to support the Shipwrecked Mariners Society and half of the entry fees for ladies' competitions would be allocated to war funds.

The Men's Committee meeting on the following day was equally practical: *'In view of the outbreak of War it was considered advisable to discuss the cutting down of expenses in connection with the course and the clubhouse on the assumption that the income of the Club would be greatly reduced.'* In consequence the Steward (*Burd*) and his wife and family were required to live in the clubhouse for which he had responsibility for catering and cleaning of the premises. Other staff would be disposed of. Almost all the green staff were given fourteen days' notice, one only being retained. Dennis was invited to work on the course and to be in charge of it. At their next meeting the billiard table and laying on of water were *'left in abeyance.'* Dances for the winter were cancelled. Happily, one further member of the green staff was reprieved. Another world war had begun.

