



DAWN OVER THE 16TH GREEN

Unlike some other clubs, Stockport maintained its regular men's Committee meetings throughout the war and the minutes taken were remarkably full. They record the health and activities of the club, and its many contributions to the war effort. More than that, they provide valuable glimpses into daily life during these dark years.

As the war began, the club was in a state of financial uncertainty and in October 1939 the Treasurer again pointed out a major decrease in receipts compared with the same period in 1938. More than half of that was because of the late payment of annual subscriptions. A letter was sent to members notifying those in arrears. In the month following the letter being sent, 26 men and 13 ladies paid up, but 57 subscriptions remained unpaid.

Morale was a matter of national concern and the club intended that its members would play their part in maintaining what they could of their pre-war lives. The Annual Club Dinner and a hot pot supper would go ahead as usual. Initially, it had been decided to cancel the club dance but, when it was learned that seventy people were expected to attend, it was reinstated with tickets at 7/6 for dinner and dance and 3/6 for dancing only. The ladies' proposal for knitting parties was welcomed and a notice put up inviting the purchase of wool. The Captain (*F Knowles*) suggested that the effort should be used for the Work for Women League



August 1940

 RAINING HARD.
 NO POKER! NO BRIDGE! NO SNOOKER!!
 I TRUST THE COMMITTEE
 AT THEIR NEXT MEETING WILL PUT
 IN HAND THE ERECTION
 OF A BILLIARD TABLE IN ONE OF THE
 AVAILABLE ROOMS
 WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

and that they hold a foursome competition with all proceeds going to the wool fund. Blackout material was purchased for the Ladies' Room and the ladies were asked to carry out the work required. No mention was made of blackout for the rest of the clubhouse. The billiard table, which had been apparently left in abeyance, was now a reality. It was a gift, but there was a snag in that it had to be stored for 12 months, or the duration of the war, at a cost of 2/6 a week. In December it was resolved to keep the clubhouse open all day on Christmas Day and to hold an All Prize Day on January 1st, with 1/6 of the 2/6 entry fee going to

charity. The Manchester Alliance held a competition on the course on January 24th 1940 with the club contributing £5 to the prize money. A reduced, but still reasonably full, programme of summer competitions was scheduled for 1940 and an Open Competition for Professionals and Amateurs was suggested for May 1st with the proceeds given to war charities. It resulted in a £10 profit which was paid to the Mayor of Stockport's Anglo-French Ambulance Fund. In April members had asked for a monthly medal. There were 32 entries and it was decided to hold another in May. The ladies, too, reinstated their competitions in 1940 with the proceeds going to Red Cross Funds or the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society.

Despite the gloomy financial predictions the Profit and Loss account for the six months ending December 31st 1939 showed that the bank overdraft had been reduced to £7.2.4 compared with £53.3.5 at the same date in 1938. However by March 1940 the overdraft was now rising seriously. £193.10 was still owed in outstanding subscriptions, but that would hardly defray the overdraft which stood now at £1,258.14.1. An examination of bar takings was ordered. Despite the precarious financial situation, it was decided that members of the club serving in the forces should not be liable for payment of subscriptions during such service and that other members of the forces should have the freedom of the club during the war.

It was only a matter of time before the first letter was received from the Cheshire War Agricultural Executive Committee asking if the club had unused portions of land available for the cultivation of crops or the grazing of animals. A meeting was arranged with a Mr Garner. It was agreed to allow certain portions of the club land not currently used for golf to be ploughed up and sown with oats. The land would then be suitable for potatoes in 1941. If the ploughing were completed by March 31st a Government subsidy of £2 an acre would be available and the cost of ploughing would be £1 an acre. It was decided to offer the land adjoining Torkington Road to a local farmer for this purpose and that he should be allowed to take the government subsidy and profit from the crop. For some reason none of the local farmers wanted to take over the land, so a proposal was made to offer it in the form of allotments at a nominal rent of say 1/- a year. Then in August 1940 the enterprising Steward (*Burd*) and Professional (*Dennis*) proposed ploughing about 15

acres of club land for the production of food and to take any profit and/or subsidy. The Committee agreed to this and allocated areas to the right of

January 1940
 NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:
 MAYOR COMPLIMENTS CLUB ON
 FOOD PRODUCTION SCHEME.

the 1st, right of 3rd, left of 6th, and behind the 11th and 12th holes and 13th tee.

The club considered applying for a petrol ration, but that would have necessitated the provision of a storage tank and the issue of a licence at a cost of 5/- a year. Nevertheless, in May 1940 the club was granted a petrol ration and licence so a store would have to be constructed in an approved place. These were the days leading up to the Battle of Britain and nobody could predict if Hitler would invade or when. Invitation Day was cancelled *'in consequence of the present emergency.'* The club was told that it would be probable that obstructions would have to be placed on fairways to prevent the landing of hostile aircraft. Railings at the front of the clubhouse were removed and others beside the putting green were dug up. But inconvenience to members was to be kept to a minimum if at all possible. Consequently a bell was fixed up for communication between the professional's shop and the bungalow so that attendance could be quickly obtained when the professional was at work on the course. Despite the war a Sub-Committee was convened to consider the provision of better cooking facilities and a bathroom in the professional's house. This house was certainly mooted in 1930 when William Whitworth offered an interest free loan to the club to build it, but the offer was turned down on a 5-4 vote. Clearly, it had been built by the outbreak of war although there is nothing in the records to say exactly when. This had been achieved by converting the professional's shop and caddie shed into living accommodation and the shop etc. moved towards the old stabling unit. The alterations to it were eventually estimated at £232 which was deemed to be too much for the club. Instead they offered the Professional £50 towards making the place more habitable or considering renting a house and allowing him the free use of it. In the end the former option was chosen with the club paying £50 towards the alterations, the rest to be met by subscriptions. It took a long time for the money to be raised and the work could not be sanctioned until May 1941.

In June 1940 Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) asked for the use of the balcony, telephone and smoke room at nights for the men on duty. It was,

of course, granted and the Committee decided to purchase four camp beds and sufficient rugs and blankets to accommodate the men when they were not on patrol. The card room was thought to be better for their purposes, so it was stripped of furniture and carpets. It was noted that the clubhouse might also be required as a temporary refuge for up to 400 people in the event of a major evacuation from Manchester or Salford. The Steward would, under that situation, be required to take all reasonable precautions to protect the bar stock, carpets and other valuable and movable property of the club and members.

An inspection of the course was carried out by the military authorities who reported that obstructions to prevent enemy planes landing would only be necessary across the 12th and 13th fairways, and the work should be put in hand. Several months later Hazel Grove and Bramhall UDC, whose responsibility it was, had still not made a start on erecting the obstructions on the fairways so the club pressed for action.

Television's Captain Mainwaring is brought to mind by one little vignette: it was agreed to allow the LDV to fix a notice on the door of their room marked *'Guard Room. Private.'*

Unfortunately there were many resignations during 1940, which by June had totalled 71, of which 24 were men and 47 ladies. Once again the fluctuating financial fortunes of the club are hard to understand, for the final balance sheet before the 1940 Annual General Meeting revealed a credit to the Profit and Loss Account of £34.14.5. A factor in this must have been the £105 received by the club from Enoch Johnson of Hazel Grove in payment for 120 trees then growing on club land. It was an offer eagerly accepted. By September 1940 the number of lady members had fallen from 126 to 55. Nevertheless they had raised £46.18.9 for various charities during the year. With far fewer active members, men's competitions were now being combined. It also enabled the Committee to relax some of the restrictions on ladies' play and to allow them full use of the course except between 1 and 4pm on Saturdays. In September 1940 it was also arranged to stage a 36-hole golf match, Gordon Good and Harold Harker against Frank Dennis and WE Burd, with all proceeds going to the Mayor of Stockport's Spitfire Fund. It was agreed that the



January 1941

 IT WAS DECIDED TO OFFER THE CLUB'S
 BINOCULARS TO THE GOVERNMENT
 IN RESPONSE TO LORD DERBY'S APPEAL.

ladies should be allowed in the smoke room on the occasion of this match. The proceeds amounted to £91.7.4 while the bar receipts were approximately £30.

Throughout the war years there is frequent reference to the billiard table, which was a welcome gift, but presented problems of storage. At one meeting the table was to be disposed of. The next time it is mentioned it is thought unlikely that it could be disposed of at this time and, as the cost of storage was substantial, it should be stored at the clubhouse. But where? Next the table was loaned to the Hazel Grove and Bramhall section of the Home Guard (*as the LDV had become*) on condition that they move the table and install it in their headquarters and return it in good condition after the war is ended. Then the club had the idea of inspecting the card room to see if the table could be fitted in there. If so, the Company Commander of the Home Guard would have to be approached to arrange the table's return.

However, and this is now October 1941, the Home Guard reported that they were unwilling either to release it or purchase it as they understood that it was theirs for the duration of the war. As it happens, another table had now become available for purchase for £50 in Stalybridge. Another Sub-Committee was set up to see if it could be bought. But, before the club could make a bid, the table in Stalybridge was sold for £75. With a complete reversal the Home Guard then announced that they would, after all, buy the club's table for £20. As luck would have it, there was now a table for sale at £20 in Mount Tabor. With the billiard table at last procured it was realised that the door to the card room would have to be rehung. By February 1942 the saga was almost over. Although the club's table had been sold to the Home Guard for £23.10.0/- the newly acquired table costing £20 required a new cloth (£60). A subscription list had to be opened. By June the table had been installed, but the cost had risen to £70.

A slight help to the club's finances came in October 1940 when Stockport and Hyde Assessment Committee revalued the club and course for rateable value, reducing the rates of the Clubhouse and buildings from £167 to £124 and of the course from £222 to £167. But in December, given the state of the



May 8th 1941

 A GERMAN HEINKEL HE 111 WAS CAUGHT IN THE GLARE OF SEARCHLIGHTS LOCATED IN POYNTON AS IT LUMBERED SLOWLY ACROSS THE SKY, BEFORE BURSTING INTO FLAMES AS IT WAS HIT BY 800 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION FIRED FROM A NIGHT FIGHTER. THE PLANE CRASHED IN A BALL OF FLAMES CLOSE TO THE 6TH FAIRWAY. THE CREW OF FOUR BLED OUT BY PARACHUTE AND WERE CAPTURED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY ON LANDING, ONE HAVING RUN ACROSS THE COURSE TO THE MAIN ROAD IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.

bank account and in order to increase the overdraft, it was decided to ask holders of the 2% debenture stock to agree to a moratorium on capital payments for the duration of the war. In January 1941 it was minuted: *'The members expressed their high appreciation of the way in which the debenture holders agreed to the moratorium.'* By February the overdraft was £248 less than at the same period in 1940. In consequence, the bank was happy to leave discussions in abeyance until September, when Williams Deacons Bank was able to write, noting that, as the club's account was now in credit, it was presumed that the Committee would guarantee any future overdraft. The bank and club agreed to this up to a limit of £1,000, but the club would have to appeal, yet again, to the membership. Happily, the local Income Tax Inspectors agreed to a reduction in the club's tax liability of 25%.

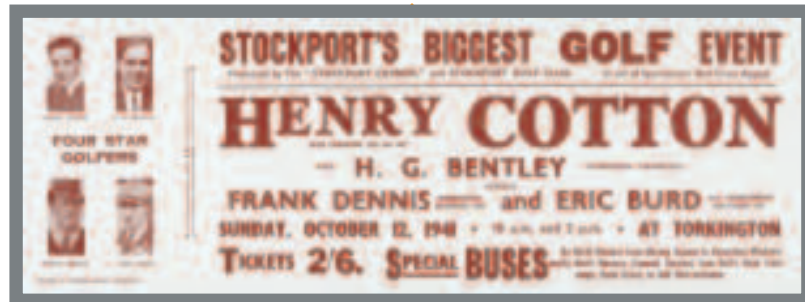
Work on the course was far from easy. As 1940 drew to a close it was announced that no further petrol would be allowed for mowing for the rest of this season and that application must be made next year before the start of the mowing season. Ploughing was to begin on November 1st and the Steward had to be warned to take care not to damage any surface drains. Then in February 1941 a circular was received from the Cheshire War Agricultural Executive Committee suggesting re-examining the possibility of ploughing 10% or 20% of the area of the whole course, and considering the growing of grass on fairways for the grazing of cattle or sheep. As Dennis and Burd were the occupiers of the land, they would be required to plough before February 15th, to produce 25 acres of permanent grass and carry out the operations to provide a crop of oats and potatoes for harvest later in the year. Burd's plan for ploughing 26 acres was agreed by the Committee and they also agreed to lend Dennis and Burd their tractor for this purpose. They were given free use of those 26 acres but had to carry out all farming operations at their own expense. However, they were entitled to claim any subsidies arising and to retain all profits. They were allowed to *'devote such of their time to these operations as might be necessary without interfering with*

their normal duties as servants of the club.' It was also necessary for the club to warn Burd and Dennis that the farming expenses for which they were liable might

include any additional tax levied on the golf club caused by the development of the land. In May 1941 one of the groundstaff resigned. At this point Dennis made the suggestion that he should take over the full financial responsibility for the upkeep of the course. It was a bold idea but the club decided to retain the long-serving Shelmerdine as its own employee. However, Dennis agreed to the rest of the club's proposals. The inventive Burd and Dennis also made the suggestion that exhibition charity matches might be held occasionally on Sundays. Again the club liked the idea, and in due course it led to one of Stockport's great days of golf, but much depended on the availability of Burd and Dennis, particularly the latter. What if either were called up? In July 1941, then, Dennis was advised not to be registered as a farmer, but to register as a Golf Professional and Greenkeeper. He was also told to express a preference for Civil Defence Services. The Chief Constable agreed to accept him as a Special Constable with a view to his being drafted into the Police War Reserve as soon as possible.

In the event, Burd and Dennis played 9 exhibition matches and won 8, raising in the process over £1,000 for various charities.

Social life continued, curtailed somewhat by the war, but not wholly. The Annual Club Dinner in 1940 was arranged for December 20th and younger members organised their own New Year's Eve Dance, which proved to be a financial success. Again, it was decided not to close on Christmas Day and to hold an All Prize Day on January 1st. Yet the reality of war meant that three men were fire watching from the roof five nights a week, with two on the other two nights. The club bought a 35-rungged ladder at a cost of



1/11 per rung to give the fire watchers easier access to the roof. Competitions were reinstated in April 1941, with Captain's and President's Day competitions the highlight. There were also an Invitation Day and Veterans' and

Victory Trophy competitions, although there is no mention of how much of the course was usable. The ladies, with few active players, advised the Committee that no more than twenty were likely to play on Ladies' Day. They would go ahead with it if the gentlemen wished, but they would abide by whatever decision the Committee made, so the event was cancelled. A local rule was introduced that a ball played into ploughed land on the course should be dropped on the course at the nearest point to the place where the ball entered the ploughed land but not nearer the hole - without penalty. A ball played into growing crops should be irrecoverable.

In June 1941 the Air Ministry informed the club that it was contemplating taking over certain farmlands adjoining the club and that it may be necessary to take part of the club's land in the area of the 4th

Henry Cotton on Golf

There was quite a lot of interest locally in the Red Cross Match I played in recently at the Stockport Golf Club, Torkington, near Manchester, and apart from the interest, there was a small amount of feeling in the match, friendly, of course, but it was clear that the sculps of my partner, Harry Bentley and myself, were much sought after by the opposition, who had beaten seven successive pairs in recent charity games. The match was Frank Dennis, the Stockport professional, and Eric Burd, the club secretary, against Bentley and myself, over 36 holes. The fact that we were almost strangers to the course and not in practice was estimated to give a slight advantage to the locals. I had played at the Stockport Golf Club in April, 1937, but remembered very few of the holes when I tried to recall them before the match. However, when I arrived at the club house, the whole picture of the place began to come back and I could remember many of the holes long before we came to play them.

Distance Difficulties
Local knowledge does play a big part in these games, especially where the visitors have no chance to play practice rounds on the course beforehand. What makes things more difficult is to play on a strange course for the first time with a large crowd, and to play every shot to the green from a "horseshoe" of spectators who are often standing so near to the ball that it makes you almost feel you must do a very upright swing to avoid hitting them with your club head. When you play a friendly round as you approach your second shot you can see the ball on the fairway—I hope—from a distance away, so you get a picture of the ball and the green in the distance, and so as you approach you size up the situation. You get a good chance to judge the length of the shot, by seeing it out from the size of near-by objects—trees, bunkers, etc., and so get the perspective of the shot, as it were. Well, what happens on these occasions is you push through the ring

of spectators and there is the ball—there is the green. The ball you saw last on the tee, you saw it fly off and possibly you saw it finish, but you have not seen it since until you "meet it in the horseshoe." It is not easy to get the distance right everytime, because each shot in these circumstances is a problem one; it is like playing a series of short holes of varying length with no lengths marked on the tee-box, and no voice cord to help and with an avenue of spectators to shut out the near-by objects, which might help in judging the distance. If there are spectators behind the green then it is possible to get some help in judging the distance from the size they appear to be. I am bringing this point up because, although judging distance is not the strongest part of my game, I am not exactly a duffer at it, but in a series of these shots it is easy to make a mistake or two, which means often a lost hole.

Cunning Little Shots
My partner and I became one down early on in the match, and it was clear that our opponents, both sound golfers, would not need to be encouraged too much, and so with great difficulty we caught them up and took the lead, a slender "one up" being our reward for a very keen morning's golf. When I played with Harry Bentley last at Peterborough, he played very badly; he had had no golf for weeks, but this time he had worked in two or three rounds, during some leave, just prior to the game, and he played much "Bentleysque" golf, often getting so low down the shaft when playing little shots around the green that his right thumb almost touched the iron head. These little shots were always the strong part of his game, and I could not help but feel that they were still there if only he could get at his golf again. After lunch we forged ahead to become four up at the 10th hole, and when we both had reasonable putts for two's on the 144-yard 11th hole, and they were both well away from the pin, I must say it looked as though the match was all over for the shooting. Dennis was strong and Burd was hole high off the

Exciting Match at Stockport

green, with a difficult push down hill to play. I ruled him out in my mind, but he played a good-looking high pitch shot, which did not impress me much, as it carried the intervening bunker, although after it pitched it began to look better and after it had rolled towards the hole I realised it was going to finish near the pin, then I saw Miss Joan Pemberton, who was the referee, loosen the pin, and before I could even get hold of the situation, the ball was down for a "two" amidst thunderous applause. "My goodness," I murmured, "what a fluke," but now I reason it out, "I've done that a number of times myself, too, and the other claps try for a half, so will I." We both made good cries, but all the same missed and a hole which looked half won was clearly lost—three up only.

An Exciting Match
This was still a good position, but the unexpected win had done them good. They wanted the honour and were off at full steam. Halves followed—that was all we wanted—then we lost the 200-yard, 500-leg, 14th hole, to a four only—two up. There was some excitement now. The locals were about to make history, and what a scramble there was on the next hole. But the story—the big story—did not happen, for with a sequence of three comfortable halves we won by two and one.

This was an exciting match to watch. The golf was good and the crowd had their money's worth; in fact, when, on the 36th green, the captain of the club suggested they had had more than just two-and-sixpenny-worth of excitement, over £22 was showered on the green in odd silver and coppers, money the already quite tired players were charged to collect—a backaching effort at which we all excelled.



The course at Stockport is a good one, with beautiful turf and excellent greens, though the rather grassy mist fairways made it difficult to grip the ball on the club face, and so many shots just mysteriously slid away to our mortification, but I imagine to the satisfaction of the guffers in the crowd, who could declare truthfully they could do as well.

Eric Burd has quite a local reputation, and, despite playing before the biggest crowd of his lifetime, played most confidently. He is one of those shortish, steadily accurate players, whose longest shots are not so very short. He puts well and revels in the short game. Frank Dennis has been one of the leading Northern professionals for a long time, erratic but brilliant, and is a most painstaking but efficient putter, and despite his police duties and his spare-time activities as a farmer—he farms some 29 acres of the course—manages to keep his golf game more than alive and supervise the upkeep of the course as well.

Northern Enthusiasm
Local knowledge does not count so much when the course is soft, as errors of judgment do not prove as costly and slopes before the green do not need studying, so we did not suffer too much from being visitors. "How did you play?" I was asked, when telling of the day's successful effort, for over £400 was collected for the Red Cross Fund. Well, I played pretty well and hit most of my shots off the centre of the face, which is, to say the least of it, satisfactory.

It made me realise once more that you have to go north to get a big crowd and real enthusiasm—nearly 3,000 people followed the play, and as it was a fine, sunny day and with the petrol coupon only worth 50 per cent, this month, it was a wonderful crowd. We spoiled the unbeaten record of Dennis and Burd, but I hope it does not sound too conceited to say this couple will win many more matches at home.

and 5th holes. The Home Guard had vacated the clubhouse in December 1940, but in October 1941 the Home Guard Captain, Captain Bostock, contacted the club requesting that in the case of a national emergency, such as invasion, one floor of the clubhouse would be placed at the disposal of the military. This was agreed to, but it was pointed out that the club had as yet received no payment in respect of heating, lighting etc. for the period the Home Guard had been accommodated on club premises, nor for cleaning the premises after their departure. Captain Bostock also requested that a small room be made available for his use. The 'small, stone, one-roomed building until recently used by Dennis as a professional's shop' (today's Junior Clubroom) was made available. An examination of the deeds and plans of the course had been made, revealing that the club was responsible for fencing on the south side of

the course bounding the 3rd, 4th and 6th holes. Those fences were in a poor state and the club approached Captain Bostock suggesting that if the Home Guard would repair the fencing, the club would not continue to seek compensation for its occupation. However, a rent of £10 per year was requested for the professional's hut. With the horrors of the London Blitz and enemy raids on many other large cities fresh in the mind, it was inevitable that thoughts turned to what might happen if bombs fell on the club or course. It was felt prudent, therefore, to make an inventory of the club's assets in case of loss. They were valued at £2,000 and insured under the Business Scheme for War Damage Insurance.

Burd and Dennis's exhibition matches began on Sunday August 10th, 1941. Soon afterwards, although in no way related, bogey of the course was increased by a stroke to 74, the extra stroke being taken at

the 4th hole which was now rated a bogey 5. Then, another exhibition match was proposed, this time for October 12th. It was to be in aid of the Sportsmen's Fund of the British Red Cross Society and was to take the form of a match featuring Henry Cotton and Harry Bentley against Frank



CLUB ADVERTISEMENT



AUTOGRAPHED PROGRAMME

Dennis and Eric Burd. Members were asked to contribute to the costs of this and the financial success or otherwise was much dependent on Henry Cotton's terms. Car parking and payment for entrance to the clubhouse were to be part of the match fund, plus a contribution from the Stockport Express which had suggested the match in the first place. Ticket sales would not be part of the general fund, going direct to Cotton. Two rounds were to be played, at 10am and 2pm. Miss Joan Pemberton was asked to be the match umpire. Big crowds were expected, (*in fact an estimated 3,000 spectators attended*) so stewarding and car parking, plus extra bus transport were all major parts of the planning, and a request was made to the Ladies' Committee for their assistance with raffle ticket sales and entrance tickets. It was necessary to consult the police, too. 1,000 souvenir programmes were to be printed, an extra six 9-gallon barrels of beer ordered, lunch arranged at 1.00pm for the Captain and his guests, the players, Committee, Ladies' Committee, the Stewards and as many friends as could be accommodated, and a second sitting of lunch had to be arranged for 1.45pm. It required detailed planning, and just as with the visit of the American Ryder Cup

team, the organisation was immaculate. When the players holed out at the 18th, Cotton spoke to the large crowd "*Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your applause. If you would now throw silver coins on to this green you will have the added pleasure of seeing us bend our backs to pick it up.*" £40 was collected! Cotton and Bentley won 2/1 thereby inflicting the only defeat on Burd and Dennis in their Exhibition matches. Receipts of entry fees, collections and donations for the match amounted to £435.7.2, and the whole sum was sent to Henry Cotton for the Sportsmen's Fund for the Red Cross. Expenses amounted to £41.13.0 of which £39.3.0 had been subscribed by members, so the club made up the difference. After the match a letter was sent to Burd and Dennis expressing appreciation of the manner in which they had given their services. However, it was noted that the Committee wished to come to a more definite and satisfactory arrangement with Dennis. As is so often the case, it is easy to detect from the tone of the minutes that the Committee intended to retain a very firm grip on every aspect of the club and, whatever notable efforts Dennis might have been putting in to assist the country as a Police Reservist and the club with his forays into agriculture, the club must still come first.

In truth, by now Dennis was too busy with his other activities to devote the necessary time to farming or the club, and when Burd was ready to get in that year's potato crop Dennis was unavailable. Burd had then to seek the club's permission to enlist the assistance of the ground staff. This was agreed to but an arrangement had to be made thereafter for 10 acres to be cultivated by a local farmer and the rest to remain cultivated by Burd. For whatever reason, it turned out that in 1942 only five acres of potatoes were planted by Burd. A farmer named Shaw had taken over some of the ground, but the remainder of what had been planted the previous year was now allowed to return to grass.



RAFFLE TICKET

1941 had been a tough year, the overall effects of war relentless. The customary arrangements were made for the Annual Dinner and New Year's Eve Dance, but a shortage of prizes meant there could be no All Prize Day at New Year. Nor was there service in the clubhouse on Christmas Day. The New Year's Eve Dance made a useful profit of £48.10.8 and £7.7.5 was contributed to club funds by the Annual Dinner. Whatever the circumstances, the club retained its underlying humanity. In November 1941 a young caddie, named Yates, died of pneumonia. His father (*also a caddie*) was in poor circumstances, and permission was granted for Burd to approach members for assistance with the funeral expenses. Shortages occurred aplenty, but when supplies of drinks for the bar became erratic matters were serious. Only the stepping into the breach by the Proprietor of the company, A and J Colquhoun, saved the club on several occasions. It was proposed that this should not be forgotten by the Committee when the war was over and the supply of drinks returned to normal. It was also agreed that he should have the freedom of the course for himself and a friend at any time, with lunch provided at the club's expense, if required.

To a great extent Stockport had only survived its various financial scares through the generosity of members. It was decided to honour two benefactors in particular, Archibald Edmeston and William Whitworth, early in 1942. The Captain proposed that they should both be made life members. The club was, of course, immensely grateful, but there was a little propaganda mileage in this, too. By calling a meeting of members to thank Edmeston and Whitworth for their acts of generosity and announce the honours conferred on them, their actions would be brought to the attention of others who might in turn follow their example. Edmeston had previously cancelled £420 of debenture stock. Now he cancelled his holdings of £56 debenture stock and £941 mortgage debentures. Whitworth, by buying 4/5 of the debenture stock in 1934, had effectively reduced the interest rate paid from 6% to 2%. A Special General Meeting was called on March 21st 1942 to confer Honorary Life Membership on Messrs Edmeston and Whitworth, and it was addressed by one of the founders of the club, Robert Hyde, Captain in 1908/9 when the club moved from Davenport to Torquington.

As noted earlier, the ladies' section had suffered from a serious drop in numbers from the very onset of war. The minutes of their meetings

during these years make fascinating reading. True, the problems of numbers and of holding competitions are mentioned, but it is clear that the main focus of their meetings was charity fund raising. Nevertheless it was recognised by the Committee that their section needed an injection of life. Quite simply it had too few members and too few events. It was proposed that the Captain should discuss this with the Lady Captain.

Although a programme of competitions for the year was organised in April 1942, travel to the club had become very difficult. Because of the shortage of petrol the manager of the Northwestern Bus Company was approached to see if he could increase the service passing the club. The reply was that a reduction on the service was more likely. At this point the club briefly discussed the possibility of a horse and carriage, but it was not thought feasible.

The farming activities had not been as successful as hoped. Burd reported a loss of £31.14.5 on the previous year's business. Fortunately for him, this sum was reimbursed to him by the club. By June 1942 three farmers were now in charge of agriculture on the course and agreements were drawn up with them. Consequently a local rule had to be imposed, forbidding players or caddies from retrieving lost balls from crops. A rule of a different kind had to be enforced when it was learned that some club members were using the ladies' room on Saturday afternoons, unnecessarily using electric light and heat. These men were duly informed that '*the Ladies' Room is for ladies only, except by invitation of lady members.*' Interestingly when a professional valuation of the club



COTTON PUTTING ON THE 7TH GREEN

was carried out for insurance purposes in October 1942 the ladies' room was valued at £690.14.6, making it the most valuable room in the building, closely followed by the smoke room which came out at £672.10.0. The club as a whole was valued at £4,211.16.6 plus bar stocks of £600.

The Annual General Meeting for 1942 took place on August 6th and, even in wartime, the Captain and 43 members attended. It was noted that there were 214 gentlemen members and 62 ladies, with 40 members serving in the armed forces. A month after the AGM, courtesy of the course was extended to American troops stationed in the area. However, the Annual Dinner that year had to be cancelled, not because of lack of support from members but because the food situation was too precarious. The Steward, Burd, was now empowered to conduct negotiations with local farmers to farm parts of the course in the coming year. By January 1943 the war was hitting hard and Burd had to do without the services of an assistant steward who was dispensed with. To effect further economies the ladies' lounge and men's smoke room were closed and alternative accommodation found in the dining room and billiard room. Fortunately, Dennis was discharged from the Police Reserve on health grounds and re-employed by the club as full-time Greenkeeper at the rate of 1/3 per hour in addition to his £2 weekly retaining fee as Professional.

For some time, Mr Marriott, who owned the house beside the 1st fairway, had been seeking to purchase a plot of land from the club to add to his garden. The club had offered to lease him land but Marriott wished to purchase the land outright. Then, early in 1943, he agreed a deal with the club for 1,300 square yards for the purpose of growing vegetables. This time he accepted a two-year tenancy with a 6-monthly renewal notice thereafter. The club suggested a rent of 2/6 per year. Marriott responded with an offer of £1 per year. Naturally enough, the club accepted the offer.

Burd conducted negotiations with two of the local farmers to cultivate the existing plots, but on January 30th 1943 the Cheshire War Agricultural Committee visited the course and demanded another 10 acres of land to be ploughed up for the growing of corn. A plot occupying the 1st and 2nd holes was identified. Dennis was consulted on how to create an 18 hole course out of what remained of the course. His solution



COTTON PUTTING ON THE 5TH GREEN



COTTON DRIVING ON 4TH TEE



DENNIS DRIVING ON 4TH TEE

BENTLEY, COTTON, MISS JOAN PEMBERTON, BURD, MRS EARNSHAW LADY CAPTAIN IS FRONT LEFT



was that the 1st hole be played from the 1st tee to 17th green and the 2nd hole from near the old 18th tee to the 2nd green, the remaining 16 holes being unaltered.

But the Cheshire War Agricultural Committee had

not finished with their demands and in March they required the grazing of cattle or sheep on golf courses and the Cheshire Union of Golf Courses took up the matter on behalf of the county's clubs collectively. The Union managed to persuade the Cheshire War Agricultural Committee not to have cattle grazing on courses, but the grazing of sheep was to be mandatory, with the clubs themselves having to ensure adequate fencing. The club had to place a notice in the Express and Advertiser inviting tenders for sheep grazing. By July the club had not been able to acquire sufficient netting to begin grazing the sheep and the only offer so far made for use of the grazing was considered inadequate. There was no question of compensation for the provision of fencing at this time. It was thought that an offer of £45 per annum to graze about 70 sheep would be acceptable, and 55 rolls of wire mesh fencing, plus posts, and seven gates 3ft wide would be required for the grazing. The posts which had been erected in fairways to prevent enemy aircraft from landing could now be removed. Progress was slow. Only by late October was the sheep fencing being erected, at which time it was found that the posts supplied were not strong enough. Bureaucracy dictated that the use of stronger posts would need the permission of Timber Control. £142.2.10 had been spent on the fencing by November and the labour was estimated at £23.6.8 so far. At least it was expected that sufficient progress could be made to enable sheep to be on the ground at the end of November and the work completed by Christmas. With the course now seriously disrupted it was agreed that, if necessary, Mr Fiddler, one of the farmers cultivating part of the course, should be permitted to plough up the 1st green if it would assist his operations.

Stiles would need to be erected to cross the fencing in certain places to retrieve balls, but consideration would also have to be given to protecting the crops on the farmer's land on or adjacent to the 3rd, 4th,

5th and 11th fairways. Two tons of coke breeze were purchased to dress the greens and keep the sheep off them. By Christmas 1943 the total cost of the sheep fencing and its erection was £207. An agreement was drawn up with George and Fred Hibbert for the grazing of no more than 114 sheep at £50 per year, with any sheep in excess of 114 to be charged at a rate of 10/- per head. New rules to cope with the unusual circumstances had to be brought into action, and it was decided that a ball lying outside the sheep netting was out of bounds. With sheep digging in the bunkers or creating shelters from the wind in them a local rule was created, that a ball lying in a bunker could be lifted and placed within a foot of its original position in all cases. The sheep could be mischievous, too, and Dennis was instructed to fence the broome spinney to protect it from sheep and to fill tee boxes with sand to prevent the sheep running off with them. In June 1944 seats were removed from the course because sheep kept tipping them over. Whatever the difficulties, golf was still being played and an invitation was sent to Romiley Golf Club for a golf match to be followed by snooker and bridge. Romiley accepted, and offered a return match. It was also decided to reinstate the annual competition in aid of the Infirmary, which raised £250 and was deemed an outstanding success.

In February 1943 a deal was struck with the debenture holders to postpone payment of the annual instalment and also an agreement made that when the time came for repayment to be resumed, the debenture holders would not demand more than one year's instalment per annum. Under different circumstances the club would undoubtedly have been interested in acquiring some or all of Yew Tree Farm, adjoining the 12th fairway, when it came onto the market early in 1943. It was sold for £3,250, but the tenant could not be disturbed until three years after the end of the war, and the land was zoned for 8 houses to the acre. By May, however, the overdraft was rising again, this time up to £704.

There was something of a shock for the ladies when in July 1943 the Ladies Golf Union (LGU) wrote to say that as neither their letter of

THE DECISION TO ALLOW SHEEP TO GRAZE ON THE COURSE IN 1943 RESULTED IN 2 MILES OF NEW FENCING BEING ERRECTED. THE FENCE BEGAN BEHIND THE 13TH TEE AND RAN BEHIND THE 12TH GREEN FOLLOWING THE LINE OF THE PUBLIC PATH TO THE HUT WHICH USED TO STAND AT THE 11TH TEE. FROM THE 11TH TEE THE FENCE WENT BEHIND THE 10TH GREEN, ACROSS THE 9TH FAIRWAY AND THROUGH THE WOODS TO THE 5TH GREEN AND FOLLOWING THE BOUNDARY HEDGE TO THE 4TH TEE. FROM THE 4TH TEE THE FENCE CUT ACROSS THE FAIRWAYS TO THE EDGE OF THE ALLOTMENT LOCATED ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HOUSE BESIDE THE 1ST FAIRWAY THEN UP TO THE IRON THE GATES WHICH MARKED THE ENTRANCE TO THE CLUB. THE FENCE THEN CAME UP THE DRIVE, ROUND THE FRONT OF THE CLUBHOUSE AND THEN BACK UP TO THE 13TH TEE. GATES AND STILES WERE INCORPORATED TO ALLOW FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.

December 31st nor that of April 1st had been acknowledged *'Stockport has been removed from the list of affiliated clubs.'* The ladies replied that they had received no communications from the LGU and requested reinstatement. They were reinstated in September. Meanwhile, the Captain had met with the ladies as a result of which it was decided to hold a competition for ladies once a month on Sunday afternoons, and also, if sufficient ladies would play, to hold a mixed foursome competition with a draw for partners. For administrative purposes the ladies now held a meeting of members twice a year, rather than an AGM annually. Once again, the men's AGM was well attended on August 5th 1943 with the Captain and 42 members turning up. The membership now stood at 212 gentlemen, 52 ladies, and 48 members serving in the forces.

In June 1943, Dennis, the Professional, had been taken off hourly pay, and was now salaried at £4.15.0 per week. Despite the war, members still complained when clubs were not properly cleaned. For some reason no longer apparent, Dennis reverted to a weekly wage of £2 and an hourly rate of 1/3 per hour in August. The following month Dennis's work was called into question, and it was felt that it would be more satisfactory if he were paid a standing total of £4.15.0 per week; so he was salaried again!

Members had been critical of the closing of the dining room on Mondays, which had been implemented because of food shortages. An arrangement was then made whereby if members supplied the food, the staff would cook it for them. Nor was it only food which was hard to come by. The House Committee reported that consumption of whisky was exceeding supply. As a result it was decided to limit the number of bottles of whisky at the bar to nine a week. Unfortunately Burd was no longer to be seen on duty in the clubhouse. In November 1943 the National Service Officer directed him to move into industrial employment. Given Burd's many responsibilities as Assistant Secretary as well as Steward this was a setback, but it was anticipated that his wife would fill any necessary gaps caused by his absence.

Once again in 1944 there was an enthusiasm to hold monthly medal competitions during the summer months. The Captain's and President's Day were combined and another competition in aid of the Infirmary scheduled.

Early in April 1944 there came a suggestion from Mr Whitworth that a repayment of an instalment of the club's debenture stock should be

made on December 31st 1944. The club then had to decide how to cope with this. Should it try to arrange an extra overdraft to achieve this? The answer to the predicament came on April 24th when Bob Heap offered the club a £5,000 loan, free of interest, to help the club out of its financial situation. What the club suggested in response was that he lend £1,810 now to pay the debenture instalment in December but to hold the rest open in case the situation should get worse.

Hardships continued with the club's petrol ration reduced from 20 gallons to 13 gallons for two months from April 1944. Overcrowding of a kind was also a problem – it was noted that there were 200 sheep on the course on May 5th. There were not supposed to be more than 114. It seemed appropriate, then, to raise the sheep grazing rent, reflecting, number of sheep on the course. Another Henry Cotton exhibition match was mooted, and another charity match offered by Bill Shankland another eminent professional, but given the obstacles around the course in the form of sheep, fences and agriculture, the idea was shelved. Although the number of sheep being grazed would not adversely affect the condition of the course, it was felt that it was not good for the sheep, so a limit of 140 was set in August and the farmer informed. Despite assurances from the farmer that he would reduce the sheep to 140 after the autumn market he did not, and the club wrote to the farmer's Solicitor in November warning that it would charge a greatly increased rent for the number in excess of 140. Dennis was by now experiencing great difficulties in maintaining the bunkers with the sheep on the course. In March 1945 a vet was called to examine a dead sheep. It was suffering from an infestation of stomach and lung worms. The vet suggested a treatment but also pointed out that if the sheep had been on the land for some years the ground may be becoming *'sheep sour'* in which case the ground should be kept free of sheep for a considerable period. Shortly afterwards a representative of Bingley Research Station visited the course, finding that the greens were in poor condition, damaged by worms, and the fairways eaten bare by sheep. *'We do not profess to be experts on sheep but even to our eye there appears to be something seriously wrong with the flock. Many are pining and we understand there have been deaths recently. It seems to us that many of the sheep are diseased and there is insufficient grass to maintain them in health and probably the grass is infested with the eggs and larvae of*

various organisms causing sheep diseases. We feel that the land should be rested at any rate for some months and we think this should be represented to the grazier.' There were also suggestions for returning the ploughed areas to grass, but their advice was not to attempt that until 1946. The grazier was informed of these findings and the club's wish to have the sheep removed, but the grazier pointed out that his agreement did not end until December 1st 1945. So, for the club, there would be no respite from the sheep until after the war was over.

In following the chronicle of the sheep other events have been neglected. On May 18th 1944 Burd completed 21 years' continuous service to the club. Golf continued and in 1944 there were home and away matches, once again, with Romiley. New score cards were printed for the ladies in the summer of 1944, but they were wrongly marked with a par of 75 rather than 73. The matter was discussed and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the par of 75 as play was not governed by LGU regulations during war time conditions. An impressive sum of £202 was collected as a result of the Infirmary Competition. When other repair work had been finished Dennis was allowed to experiment with making a double green for the 1st and 17th with two separate pins. He was also given leave of absence and a grant of £5 towards expenses to play in a professionals' competition in Leeds. In August 1944 at the Annual General Meeting it was reported that four members of the club had been killed in active service during the past year. The membership currently stood at 207 men and 60 ladies with 45 members serving in the forces. But even in wartime there were still touches of civilisation: *'The Captain reported that Mr Simon had promised to send his gardener to trim the rose trees on the front of the clubhouse.'* However, it was becoming difficult to get fertiliser or worm killer for the course. As 1944 drew to a close it was decided to appoint an Assistant Steward but to dispense with other house staff as *'a wartime measure'*, and again there was to be no service in the clubhouse on Christmas Day.

In November a representative of the Cheshire War Agricultural Committee had agreed to meet the club to see if they could revert to grass rather than cultivation. It was to no avail and the Agricultural Committee responded in December by directing that 15 acres would have to be ploughed as usual and sown with a cereal crop. In February 1945 Bill Shankland again offered an exhibition match but it was regretfully turned

down because of the state of the course and transport difficulties.

After years of neglect the club-house drains were now in a dreadful state. It had been clear for some time that the end of the war was in sight following a series of capitulations. In April, with some of the pressure off, RAF Handforth proposed a match against the club, which was agreed for a Wednesday in May or June. In Italy the German forces surrendered on May 2nd. The following day a delegation of high-ranking German officers surrendered the German forces in Northern Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands to Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery near Lübeck. Unconditional surrender was then signed at the headquarters of General Dwight Eisenhower in Reims on May 7th. Victory was celebrated on the 8th.

The war over, a Victory Party was planned for July 28th with a mixed foursome competition and ladies and gentlemen having the option of playing with a visitor. There would be prizes (presented by the club), luncheon, tea and dancing with a running buffet in the evening. 120 tickets for the dance were sold quickly, so it was decided to serve a full sit-down meal. There were also plans to reopen the ladies' room and the men's smoke room. But, first, it would be necessary to renew the clubhouse drainage completely. It would take three days, and with no lavatories available, the clubhouse would have to be closed. In the meantime it was thought prudent to raise the clubhouse building contents insurance from £2,420 to £2,920, *'The addition of cover for food poisoning risks to be included, if necessary, at an extra premium.'*

The Annual General Meeting held on August 18th 1945 was the first for six years at which the club could look forward in hope. It was reported by the Honorary Treasurer that for the first time for many years, there was an increase in both ladies' and gentlemen's subscriptions, with the result that there was a gross profit of £297 for the year. 223 gentlemen and 67 ladies made up the membership, including 47 serving in the forces. Sadly, there was another death in action of a member to report. Following the meeting 21 new members were proposed and elected. A notice was sent to members in the forces advising that in case of demobilisation they would be entitled to membership free of charge for the rest of the financial year, namely until June 30th 1946. And, as usual, the Stockport Infirmary Day raised a goodly sum £250.