



IN SOME WAYS STOCKPORT WAS BECOMING A VICTIM OF ITS OWN SUCCESS, in that the course was increasingly popular with members and visitors alike. Congestion had become a problem, especially on Saturday afternoons, caused by matches starting at the various different tees around the Clubhouse. Yet another rule regulating play was passed by the committee: *'That on Saturday afternoons (excepting competition days) a two ball match has not the right to pass through a four ball match unless there is a clear hole in front. It was also decided to recommend two ball matches to start at the 10th tee.'* Any loophole discovered in the system was dealt with promptly. For instance, what should happen on Good Friday? That was readily solved: *'conditions applying to Ladies' play on Good Friday should be those pertaining on Sundays.'* The ladies requested the permission of the Committee to use the summer tees at the 3rd, 7th, 10th and 14th holes. The request *'could not be granted but, if it would comply with the conditions of the Ladies Golf Union, a place could be mown the same distance from the pin at the holes named.'* But not all Committee decisions were prescriptive and the ladies' request to hold another invitation day in 1923 was granted.

Unfortunately vandalism had begun to occur at the club and it had to be arranged for a man to police the course every Sunday at a fee of 5/-. Unwelcome visits from non-golfers have been on the club's agenda ever since. However, the course was also beginning to attract parties of visitors which brought substantial revenue to the club in the form of green fees, catering profits and bar takings. All visiting parties had to be approved by the Committee and the records display a ready cross-section of the traditional trades carried out in the region between the wars: Bleachers' Association, Lancashire Dyers' Golfing Society, Manchester Bakers' Golfing Society, Wholesale Clothiers

of Gt Britain, Manchester and District Clothiers, and Manchester Grocers. As mentioned earlier, the Professional was often called upon to perform duties beyond those of playing, teaching, running a shop, maintaining clubs and so on. In February 1922 a letter of appreciation was sent to Bourne mentioning especially the help he had *'so willingly and ungrudgingly given the bar during busy times.'*

During this era the club experienced some difficulty with recruiting and retaining clubhouse staff, despite the presence of a professional Manager whose duties included the management of such staff. Club members gradually became dissatisfied with the catering arrangements, so in June 1922 it was decided to investigate the club's doing its own catering once the extension to the clubhouse had been finished. Dyer, the Steward at the time, was told to provide extra help on busy days especially on Saturdays and Sundays and, at his own expense, to provide an assistant in the kitchen and another in the bar. Dyer was not prepared to engage extra staff, relationships soured, and in February 1923, during the fleeting management of the mercurial Carruthers, Dyer and his wife were given notice to quit.

It was in the same month, February 1923, that WR Bourne sent in his resignation from the club, effective

from March 17th, to take up a new life in the United States. It fell to the Honorary Secretary to write to him to express regret at his departure, appreciation of his 10 years' service to the club and to wish him every success in his new life. An advertisement for a new Professional was placed in the Manchester Guardian, The Times, Yorkshire Post and Golf Illustrated. Early in March interviews for the position were arranged with: Ireland (*Bangor*), Fernie (*Ryton*), Hastings (*Halifax*), Smithson (*Oldham*), Jarman (*Seaham Harbour*), and Sutton (*Rhyl*). The Committee



CHAMPIONS TOGETHER, SIDEBOTTOM AND HARDMAN

watched each candidate play the course and then interviewed him. It was unanimously agreed to appoint Jarman at a retaining fee of 30/- per week, and that if he did not accept that Sutton would be approached.

Fred Jarman was the oldest of five brothers from Kent, all of whom became professional golfers. The second brother, Ted, joined Fred at Stockport as his assistant when he was still in his teens. Both were soon gaining playing success in the club's name but Ted's finest achievements came after he had left Stockport for Prenton (*See later chapter for more information on the Jarman brothers*).



SELECTION OF CLUBS MADE BY FRED JARMAN WHILE HE WAS AT STOCKPORT

Meanwhile discussions had been going on between the newly-formed Cheshire Union of Golf Clubs and its constituent members. At issue was the suggestion that the Captain and Secretary of each member club and certain Union officials should be granted courtesy of the course at any member club. Stockport's view was that this was overgenerous and that courtesy should only be given to the President and Secretary of the Union and the reigning County Champion. Happily, Stockport's hosting of the 1923 Cheshire Championship was a notable success, the Union writing most appreciatively to the club after the event, forging a strong and positive bond between the club and the county which has flourished ever since. The Union's grant of £25 was subsequently divided up between green staff (£15) and house staff (£10). Fittingly, Israel Sidebottom won

the individual championship and WF Ashbrook, WJ Kinsey, SS Potter and Sidebottom took the team prize.

So far, the story of Stockport Golf Club has largely been one of establishment, both of the course and the club. An important part of the club's success was social. Members chose to spend time at the club, not only to play golf, but also to enjoy each other's company. By 1923 the social aspect of the club had become very significant. For instance, during winter, each Wednesday there was a hot pot supper followed by bridge or a smoking concert. A hot pot supper and smoking concert followed Club Day (*October 15th, that year*) and another also followed the 4-ball sides game played on December 15th. Dances were held on the last Thursday of each month between October and February (*excepting December*), and there were two club whist drives as well as the ladies' own whist drives.

Having improved the clubhouse, the Committee then turned its attention to the outbuildings, which had been relatively primitive from the outset. Plans and specifications for rebuilding the outbuildings, to provide accommodation for the professional and caddies, and to create a store room were submitted by Vernon and Smith in the autumn of 1923. Electric light was to be provided in the professional's rooms and water in work rooms. Ted Jarman records, *'the new pro's shop was built in 1924 comprising a showroom/office, workshop with 2 benches and access to the new caddie shed and separate club storage room with separate entrance door.'* Conditions for club servants however were somewhat primitive, even by the standards of the day.

Five years after the end of the war, sheep were still grazing the course and the club was happy to negotiate a renewal of its contract with a local farmer, but an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in December 1923 had implications throughout Cheshire. The club considered its response to the spread of the disease at Committee, but there is no record of what conclusions it may have reached or whether the disease actually affected the neighbouring farms. What was minuted, however, was agreement to allow Cheshire to stage its County Foursomes at the club and the Cheshire Ladies to hold their summer meeting at Stockport. There was also an invitation to the Manchester District Professionals for them to play a match against the Liverpool District Professionals, although this was to be in February when, presumably, few members would notice the absence, albeit briefly, of their professional from his shop for a day. There

was also agreement to the Manchester professionals playing a match against a team of good local amateurs.

With a number of holes on the course running close to the club's boundaries, particularly on the right-hand side where the habitual slicer would prefer there to be no fence or hedge, it was inevitable that golfers would climb fences to retrieve expensive golf balls. In January 1924 a letter was received from solicitors acting for Fidler's Farm, seeking compensation for the loss sustained in consequence of the damage done to crops by trespassers in search of their golf balls. In the following month there was a meeting with the farm's solicitors. The club expressed surprise at the trespass, as the renting of a triangular plot of land to the north-east of the 12th hole apparently rendered it unnecessary for anyone to enter Fidler's land. Then, in August, another letter was received from Fidler's solicitor, this time claiming £100 in damages to his client's crops and offering to sell 2 acres of land to the club for £200. Both suggestions were rejected. By February 1926, with the club in deeper financial trouble, it was decided to terminate the club's lease of the corner plot of land at the 12th hole. But Fidler's solicitor would not accept the club's termination of its lease, requiring 12 months' notice. In addition it was demanded that the piece of land must be restored to a proper state of cultivation or damages would be sought. Trespassing by players and caddies was reported to be continuing. This time no further warning would be given and *'the first and every other person trespassing will be prosecuted.'*

In April the club met with Fidler, offering to terminate the tenancy in September with rent of £5 due and £5 towards compensation, Fidler to be given immediate use of the land. In May, with the General Strike underway, Fidler agreed to the terms, very likely glad to get any kind of settlement to his advantage under the difficult conditions.

There are tantalising entries throughout Stockport's informative minute books. Two from March 1924 stand out: *'That the building of a Dormy House be not proceeded with at present but that tenders be invited for the building of the Dwelling House,'* and *'It was decided to admit to membership without entrance fee Mr Kirkness, Inspector of Taxes, who had been appointed to Stockport in the place of Mr Huxham.'* The dwelling house was that intended for the club manager. It was never built. Neither was the dormy house. It is not recorded whether the admission of Mr Kirkness

to membership without entrance fee brought any tax benefit to the club in the years that followed, but various gentlemen of the same profession have also been members of the club in the years since and have always paid the entrance fee!

By April 5th 1924 the club had run up a deficit of £1,200 largely brought about by the clubhouse extension, repairs to outbuildings and alterations to the club room and bar. At an Extraordinary General Meeting the directors were authorised to borrow a further £3,000 by the issue of additional debenture stock. At another EGM, on April 25th, came the suggestion of the establishment of a sinking fund aimed at full repayment of that debenture stock which would become repayable in 1929. On August 5th a notice was sent to members informing them of a serious increase in membership fees, gentlemen from £6.6.0 to £8.8.0 and ladies from £3.3.0 to £4.4.0. The two guinea increase was necessary to establish the sinking fund for the redemption of debenture stock. It was stipulated that the money would not be used for club purposes but would be invested in securities approved by the Trustees for the Debenture Holders.

Not only was the Committee forced to address financial problems. A report submitted by G & W Yates in July 1924 describes the greens: *'They are all sour in a varying degree – in most cases exceedingly so. Already considerable harm has been caused by want of attention in this respect. No time should be lost to repair the damage done. The presence of coarse grass in patches, the bare patches and the unhealthy appearance of the grass on most of the greens is directly traceable to this same cause.'* The suggested remedy was a course of treatment with sharp river or sea sand and the greens were taken out of play entirely in December.

Once again a comprehensive programme of social events was arranged for the winter, with dances, whist drives, hot pot suppers with bridge, smoking concerts, the club dinner and so on. Charitable functions continued, not least Ladies' Day on July 4th 1925 which, as usual, was a great success, raising £120 for Stockport Infirmary. In consequence, the Infirmary Board named a bed *'The Stockport Golf Club'* and members were invited to see this *'at any time.'* But the ladies were still very much kept in their



IN 1925, MR WILLIAM WHITWORTH PRESENTED THE CLOCK TO THE CLUB



THE CERTIFICATE FROM STOCKPORT INFIRMARY

place and, in answer to a request for the use of the course after 6pm on Saturdays, the Committee resolved, *'That the suggestion could not be entertained.'* The ladies were more successful with a later request for *'unrestricted use of the course on Sundays after 4pm.'* This was granted, with the proviso that it was only until further notice and subject to withdrawal at any time. It was subject to members availing themselves of this privilege, and allowing mixed couples and gentlemen to go through. The ladies also *'decided that the [lady] secretary sends a formal protest against the proposed admission to membership of young children of members, to the Men's Committee.'* This seems slightly surprising given that many of the lady members were wives of gentlemen members and some of them, presumably, the mothers of the children concerned. However, more memberships were required if the deficit was to be reduced and on October 7th 1924 it was decided to admit country members. A Sub-

Committee was set up to consider the details. The following month it was announced that a limited number of Gentlemen Country Members would be elected on payment of an entrance fee and a subscription of 4 guineas per year. They must be resident 10 miles or more from the clubhouse.

Deficits in bar takings had been occurring for some time and monthly stocktaking, carried out by a professional stocktaker, continued to reveal losses. Inevitably, the bar man was discharged and a new system was put in place with the manager taking responsibility for stock, receipts and takings. This was in November 1924, but by the end of July 1925 the club could no longer afford the services of a manager as we have seen.

In August 1925, although it was resolved to hold another programme of winter entertainments as before, consideration was given to reducing green and house staff. It was also decided to reorganise the business controlled by the House Committee. There were to be new tenders for the supply of food and drink, coal, and laundry. There would also be reductions in staff meals, staff washing (*which would be restricted to 12 pieces per week*), vacant staff positions would not be filled, and, in general, more economic practices were to be introduced. By the time of the Annual General Meeting in January 1926 the Honorary Treasurer was hopeful that the economies now in place would result in a healthier balance sheet in the coming year.

In order to maximise sources of revenue, it was agreed to continue admitting new members without an entrance fee, the increase in subscriptions more than compensating for the loss of entrance fees. This had been tried successfully over the past year. The lists of resignations and newly elected members recorded in the club's minutes during the mid-1920s reveal a far greater turnover in membership than previously.

Since the foundation of the club, course maintenance had been undertaken using horse power. By February 1926 it was felt that it was time to modernise. A tractor and Ransomes Quintuple mowing machine would be perfect. Unfortunately the cost of £450 was beyond club means at the time. A member of the Committee (*Archibald Edmeston*) kindly offered to pay for the tractor, leaving £210 to be found for the mower. Its use would save £70 a year and, as the current mowers were not in peak condition, it would pay for itself in three years. In the end Edmeston defrayed the total cost of both machines. It was not the last time his generosity would come to the aid of the club, and this at a time when the

General Strike was in progress throughout the country. The club, therefore, felt it advisable to insure the clubhouse and buildings against fire and damage caused through riots and civil commotion.

In Jarman, Stockport had a professional with the ability to compete seriously in the bigger tournaments of the day. It was customary for Stockport to make some sort of contribution to its Professional's expenses incurred in playing such events. In presenting Jarman with a cheque for £20 towards his expenses, the Honorary Treasurer pointed out that there was no guarantee that he would be paid any expenses the following year, because of the financial state of the club. Jarman was very disturbed by this, but there had to be a clear understanding that there was no implication that it would be continued and this was formally conveyed to Jarman in writing. It was, however, agreed to let him use his old shop in which to give lessons during winter months.

The club might have been impoverished, but there was no diminution in the authority of its Committee. On December 14th 1926 the Lady Secretary wrote suggesting that a fortnight's notice might be given to the Ladies' Committee whenever the Ladies' Room was closed to them. The Committee responded curtly that it *'considered adequate notice was given for the closing of the room in question.'*

When Peter Barrie, the club's first Professional, died in April 1911 he was only 44 years old. His widow, Mary, was aged 76 when she died in December 1926. She was buried in the same grave as her husband and shortly after her funeral a letter was sent from William Johnston, who had been at the official opening of the course on which occasion Barrie had been presented with his testimonial, giving details:

'Dear Robinson, *7th January 1927*

Herewith I send you the testimonial the club gave Barrie after the completion of the construction of the course and which I trust the Committee will accept as being of historical interest to the Club. I also enclose the receipts for the money I paid for Mrs. Barrie's funeral. The old Committee after Barrie's death always assured his widow they would see that she was buried in Barrie's grave. The grave is the club's property and if there are any funds available I think all the older members would appreciate it very much if a simple gritstone head stone were erected.

*Yours faithfully,
William Johnston.'*

The testimonial was accepted and hung in the clubhouse, and the club reimbursed Johnston for Mrs Barrie's funeral expenses. In May 1927 the club arranged for a headstone to be erected on Barrie's grave at a cost of £18.18.4. Unfortunately the headstone is no longer in position but it is still possible to locate the grave (*D573H*) in the churchyard at Norbury Parish Church, alongside the boundary wall to the left of the church, looking from the lych gate entrance from the main A6.

From time to time the question of Sunday caddies was raised. The club's line had always been that caddies would not be allowed on Sundays and that caddies should be at church even if members were not. Even so, a Special General Meeting was held on April 23rd 1927 to discuss their possible provision, but after a full discussion the idea was again rejected, 52 to 22 in a ballot. However, with no caddies to keep an eye on a member's ball, the stealing of golf balls had become a nuisance so it was decided to have a groundsman present on the 7th hole each Sunday, in addition to the one already engaged regularly on the 8th. Unfortunately the supervision of caddies was slack even though a printed code of practice had been drawn up some years earlier. Jarman, the Professional, was warned that unless improvements were made the Committee would make other arrangements. A Special Committee meeting was called on June 28th 1927 to discuss the issue. Jarman explained the difficulties of maintaining a regular supply of good caddies. After further discussion it was decided that a member could book a caddie at any time but not a specific caddie. Jarman was to draw up a list of instructions and regulations which the club would have printed and distributed to the caddies themselves, and the Committee undertook to supply Jarman with a record book for caddies and the players who engaged them. All caddies over 16 years of age should be paid directly by the member. In October 1928 Sunday caddies were again discussed. The Committee felt that the time was now right for their introduction, but that no caddy under the age of 16 should be employed. It would require further delicate consultation.

On November 8th 1927 Jarman had been awarded £20 against his tournament expenses. Shortly after, on January 9th 1928 the Committee wrote to him informing him that they would not be able to contribute towards his tournament expenses in 1928. Relations between the Committee and Jarman at this time were generally sour. On June 5th 1928 they intimated that he was carrying out his duties unsatisfactorily:

absenting himself from duty without advising the Captain or Committee; his shop being closed at times when members were desirous of leaving or obtaining their clubs; the unsatisfactory way in which the caddies carried out their duties, particularly in regard to club cleaning – and the supplying of first class caddy discs to boys who were not experienced. In July, Jarman was interviewed and he undertook to improve matters, but he forgot to turn up at a later meeting and at the same time several members were unable to get their clubs from his shop.

Stockport seems always to have fostered cordial relations with other local clubs, not least through the many friendly (*and more seriously competitive*) matches played between them. A happy outcome of this was the awarding in 1928 of Freedom of the Green to the Captain, Secretary and (*in some cases*) Treasurer of Stockport by Reddish Vale, Hazel Grove, Ringway, Marple, Wilmslow, Bramall Park and Didsbury. Stockport, naturally reciprocated.

The most important issue in the minds of the Committee during 1928 was the fact that the 5½% debenture stock of the club, amounting to £14,640, would have to be repaid on January 1st 1929. Economies would have to be made, and the House Committee recommended converting the professional's old shop into sleeping accommodation for two staff, thus saving on '*sleeping out*' bills. In September 1928 the Honorary Treasurer outlined his proposals for repayment of the debenture stock.

The sum required was £12,000 (net of £2,650 in the sinking fund) and the Treasurer proposed finding £6,000 in '*one sum*' as follows:

- a) Capital sum to be repaid by annual instalments over 15 years
- b) Interest at 6% per annum on outstanding balances
- c) Loan to be a first charge on assets of the club

Alternative methods of paying the annual interest and making the annual repayment of capital, viz:

- A) 1. A capital repayment of £400 per annum so as to redeem the loan in 15 years.
2. Interest to be paid annually on the amount of capital still owing at the end of each year during the period of loan.
- B) An equal payment in each year of such amount as will, at the end of the period of 15 years, have the effect of redeeming the capital sum, and also meet the liability for interest. It is calculated that the amount of the annual payment thus required will be £592.

If that were accepted, a further £6,000 would still need to be found, and the suggestion was that present stockholders should take up this amount in bonds as a second charge on the club's assets or a charge on the financial revenue of the club, earning interest at 6% per annum, the capital sum to be repaid on twelve months' notice at any time.

The advantage of this was that few would be likely to claim repayment, except in the case of the death of a bondholder, and it would be an inducement to present stockholders to retain their financial interest in the club.

In October the Honorary Treasurer's scheme for redemption of the debenture stock was debated and accepted in Sub-Committee and a letter sent to all members. (*See below.*)

By December 1st 1928 applications received already amounted to £4,500 in mortgage loans and £6,135 in 6% bonds. The position was looking promising. On January 15th 1929 it was simply recorded that the redemption had been carried out smoothly. Once again Stockport had managed its debt efficiently.

