

History of Cardiff Golf Club 1921 – 1939 (pre- World War 11)

1920 – 1925:-

1. **Post World War 1** – New beginnings and new freedoms for UK population. / Golf becoming an established sport in other parts of Britain / paucity of opportunity to play golf in South Wales / The only course in Cardiff was a nine-hole course at Whitchurch.
2. Two enterprising young men had a vision for a new Golf course in North Cardiff to avoid their difficult journey to the Lays Course near Barry which they cycled in order to have a round of golf.
3. This vision of Mr Reuben Pugsley and Mr Trevor Williams was to be the precursor for what was to become Cardiff Golf Club as we know it today. They were not alone in this vision and were joined by other men of vision and determination to create a new Course at its present site.
4. **24th th May 2021** - Following advertising in the Western Mail which was largely funded by Mr Robert Webber, on 24th May a meeting was convened at St Margaret's Church Waterloo Gardens Cardiff for all those interested in the project and willing to support a new golf club and course. The meeting was chaired by the convenor Mr R J Pugsley and attracted the interest of over 500 persons expressing an interest to join a new Golf club and the project became reality. A Mr Trevor Williams was appointed secretary and an initial committee was formed to take the project forward. Before long there was a proposed membership list of 650 names of both sexes.
5. Realistically a site of approximately 100 acres was required within a reasonable distance of Cardiff. Several sites were considered but one site was identified and preferred over the others for financial and other restrictions affecting the land and this was the farm and land known as Ty To Maen Farm which was in the area of land within which is now known as Pentwyn. The areas of Cyncoed and Penylan were still largely farm and agricultural land. When the plans for this new golf course were being made it was originally referred to as Penylan Golf Course but this proposal was ultimately scratched in favour of the name Cardiff Golf Club.
6. The land at Ty To Maen farm was approximately 93 acres and was owned by Mr Ewan G Davies who was a successful Cardiff solicitor and a shrewd businessman and landowner in South Wales and elsewhere. Mr Davies was in favour of and supported the project from the outset. This started his close association with the Club such that he became a founding member, subsequently a Club Captain in 1930 and eventually the President of Cardiff golf Club over an extended period of 19 years from 1960.
7. The Club committee entered into negotiations which resulted in the agreement for the grant of a lease of the farm to the club with the option to renew to provide the club with security of tenure for at least 21 years.

8. Access to the course was through the entrance near the current 14th green which was not ideal. The Committee explored the possibility of a new access across the land lying between Cyncoed Road and the boundary line of Ty To Maen farm which was leased to the Club. This is the strip of land, now known as Sherborne Avenue, and which extended on either side to a width embracing the current Avenue and the houses and gardens on either side making a total area of approximately 10 acres. This strip was in the ownership of another landowner Mr Wyndham Clarke and was still agricultural farm land. The Committee successfully negotiated to purchase the freehold (as opposed to Lease) of the strip of land on reasonable terms. The deal was conditional and put an obligation upon the Club to build a road on the strip of land to link the golf club/course to Cyncoed Road, if called upon to do so by the Vendor. It subsequently transpired that in 1925 this same strip of land was sold by the club to Mr Ewan Davies for proposed development but the sale was still conditional upon the said road being built by the purchaser with a right of way to the Club to provide its main access. (See below).

9. **23rd November 2021** - After having secured the agreement for a lease of the farm to provide a golf course and having agreed to the purchase of the land providing an access way to the Cyncoed Road, a Committee meeting of the original promoters was held on this day to pass a resolution that a Golf Club be formed subject only to the ratification and agreement of the intending members at the first General Meeting of the Club. The circular of the first General Meeting also prescribed an Entrance fee of 3 guineas for gentlemen and ladies but when the meeting was held it was agreed that the gentlemen would pay 4 guineas and the ladies 3 guineas for the first year.

10. At this same first General Meeting it was also agreed that the proposed layout of the golf course would be placed in the hands of Mr Robert Walker who was also appointed as the Clubs first professional and a subcommittee was formed from the main committee to assist in the design of the course. Initially the course would comprise nine holes and because the club were to own the strip of land linking to Cyncoed Road, the first tee was situated on the junction of Sherborne Avenue and Cyncoed Road on the plot now occupied by the Co-Op Supermarket (formerly Yapps Garage and latterly Spa Supermarket). The first hole ran in line with Sherborne Avenue to the 1st green situated near the current 18th green.

11 **6th May 2022** – The Formal opening of the new golf course took place in fine weather and blue skies, presided over by the President Mr Wyndham Clark. Buses were laid on from the Penylan Tram Terminus to transport people to the course for the occasion. The President drove the first ball and the exhibition players namely A H Symonds (Royal Porthcawl) and John Duncan (Glamorganshire) played an exhibition match with the Captain and other committee members over the nine hole course (only nine holes had been completed at this point in time) to an enthusiastic audience. In the evening a complimentary banquet laid on by the President was held in the Park Hotel Cardiff for the Committee, members and guests to celebrate the achievement. The occasion was marked by much press publicity and created much public awareness of the new golf course facility in Cardiff. The Club Professional Robert walker

was in much demand for golf lessons at the new Club as its popularity grew. He was highly regarded as both golf professional and course manager which became evident from the success and popularity of the new club and course. From this date the course became playable to members and guests and the then Secretary Mr Trevor M Williams made arrangements for buses to run to the course on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Over time and under the guidance of Robert Walker the nine hole course gradually became an 18 hole course thanks to the diligent work of Mr Walker and his greens staff. There are press cuttings lauding praises upon the achievements at Cardiff golf Club and the course.

12. **1922** - There were over 60 ladies in attendance at the first general meeting and the Ladies Section was formed from the outset. Help and advice was provided by Mrs Franklin Thomas and Mrs Watts Thomas who were members from the Radyr Golf Club. The first Lady Captain Mrs H G Kemp was unanimously appointed along with other members of the committee of the Ladies Section.

13. **30th December 1922** - The purchase of the access land from Wyndham Clark was completed and the freehold land linking the course to Cyncoed Road became vested in the trustees of the club for a price of £600 and conditional upon the Trustees constructing a road which is now Sherborne Avenue.

14. **1923** - The original Clubhouse was sited in an area at the end of the freehold strip of land acquired by the club from Mr Wyndham Clark where it joined the course boundary and the area was large enough to house a clubhouse and car park. The building was designed by Messrs Wilmott and Smith and was to be adapted to become a pair of semi-detached houses in the event that the new Club was not successful. Fortunately this back-stop was never required. This Clubhouse remained in situ until 1997/98 when the current Clubhouse was built on the same site but immediately in front of the original building.

15. **16th December 1925** - The same strip of freehold land purchased from Mr Wyndham Clark, referred to in paragraph 12 above, was sold by the Club to Mr Ewan Davies for the sum of £507.00 for his planned development. The sale was subject to the same condition that Mr Davies take over the obligation to develop a road and preserved a right of way to the golf club/course over that strip, thereby providing the much needed access to the Club from Cyncoed Road and eventually became Sherborne Avenue. The deed of sale to Mr Davies also excluded the area of land at the end of the strip where the new clubhouse was sited which remained in the freehold ownership of the Club.

16. The original Agreement for a Lease of Ty To Maen farm and buildings (which are those situated adjacent to the current 4th tee), was dated 14/02/1924 followed by the final Lease of the farm and buildings from Mr Davies to the first Trustees of the Club was effectively for a term of 21 years with 7 yearly rent reviews from 25/12/ 1921. The available minutes of Club meetings and correspondence files show that there were various discussions and negotiations between the Club committee and Mr Davies and others to vary the terms of the

lease or to try and acquire small parcels of land around the course with a view to enhancing and increasing the size of the course where it was felt needed but essentially the course did not alter to any significant degree as evidenced by the available title deeds save only as herein mentioned. The Lease was extended for a final time in 1943 and the lease term was due to end on 24/12/1953. The course had not materially changed significantly at the time of this renewed Lease in 1943. However following further negotiations and with the aid of a mortgage the Club purchased the freehold of the land comprising the course and buildings from Mr Ewan Davies on 19/06/1947 for a sum of £18,050.00. This freehold acquisition period is dealt with separately later in this text.

17. The plan marked "A" hereto is a plan of the course circa 1921-25 and prior to the sale of the strip of land referred to in paragraphs 11 and 12 hereto and is shown hatched on the plan. (ie. The strip of land linking Cyncoed Road to the golf course and later comprising Sherborne Avenue and the houses and gardens on either side).*[This is the plan shown on the 75th anniversary brochure headed "The original course layout"]*

18. As stated, the course did not alter to any great extent in the period from the leasehold acquisition of Ty To Maen farm and buildings from December 1921 to the outbreak of war in 1939. The most significant alteration was the sale of the strip of land referred to in paragraphs 11 and 12 hereto which forced the removal of the original first hole in its entirety and brought about a redesign of the course which closely resembles the layout as it is today. The other significant change is the likely transaction referred to in paragraph 18 below. Forced changes occurred due to the war such as removal of all bunkers to prevent identification by enemy bombers and poles inserted in the fairways to prevent hostile landings by gliders and parachutists. Landmines were placed in the ground affording a free drop if they interfered with play, and various holes were cultivated and grazed to provide food stocks. The Clubhouse also became a local Home Guard HQ.

19. **1933** – There is a plan endorsed with the date of 05/08/1933 showing an area of land skirting the west/north west boundary to the course and which then veers right and follows the inside line of Ty Draw Road which now forms the north-west boundary to the course along the current 14th fairway. This is a substantial T-shaped area of land bounded now by the hedge bordering the current practice ground and 17th fairway and then running at right angles down the left side of the 14th fairway. There is no supporting deed to tie into this plan which is endorsed with the words "Copy for Mr Ewan Davies – 5th August 1933". While there is no deed available to evidence the exact nature of the transaction it may be likely there is a missing deed which relates to the purchase of this area of land by the Club presumably from Mr Davies in or about 1933 on terms unknown because the area of land does seem to fall within the course boundaries as we know them today.

20. The plan marked "B" annexed hereto is a plan of the course circa 1945 and is taken from a deed of that year and shows the course and clubhouse at that date. It will show that the course was largely the same as in 1921-25 save for the removal of the said strip of land referred

to above and the additional land referred to in paragraph 18 above.. The course lay-out was changed over the years and plans “A” and “B” show the layout of holes at the said dates. The later plan is not dissimilar to the current course layout but changes did occur after the war such as the lengthening of the 3rd and 6th holes as well as changes to the 15th and 16th holes.

21. **1925 - 1930's** – The correspondence files, minutes, available title deeds and documents and plans for this period are not complete but there is much evidence to show that there were many negotiations and discussions between the Club officers and their legal and property advisers with others such as Mr Ewan Davies concerning the acquisition of other parcels of land upon, but outside, the boundary to the course to add or alter the course layout. These were relatively small areas of land. Mr Davies also owned other lands including the Coed y Gloria farm which was sited adjacent and to the south of Ty To Maen farm. Despite many meetings Mr Davies seemed reluctant to part with further parcels of land although some transactions were completed to the mutual benefit of the parties such as the like acquisition referred to in paragraph 18 above

22. **27th July 1939** - This is one such transaction that can be identified. The Club sold a small piece of land on the east side of the area comprising the clubhouse carpark to Mr Davies in consideration for the release of certain covenants affecting the piece of land and some adjoining land in the Clubs freehold ownership.

23. There are title deeds and documents showing a transaction on **5th November 1969** where the Club acquires plots of land on Gwern Rhuddi Road adjoining the boundary of the course (The boundary running along the current 14th hole) and thereby extending the boundary outwards by a small measure. This and similar transactions fall outside the remit of the period relevant to this text which is 1921 to 1939.

NOTE:-

The above information has been gleaned from the various old and very worn deeds and documents which were made available to me. This bundle contained a large number of plans showing different things such as coloured areas and markings but regrettably most of these loose plans were not dated and did not identify the deed or document to which they related. As such they were of minimal help to me in this task of preparing the pre-WW2 history of the Cardiff GC. Further there were clearly a lot of missing deeds and documents which only added to the difficulties of this task. It is not surprising that deeds and documents are missing because the land became subject to compulsory registration at HM Land Registry years later when a registered title was issued for the parcels of land making up the course and buildings which rendered the old title deeds rather superfluous. The Registered title from HM Land Registry does not serve to paint a clear or detailed history of the Clubs development.

I also obtained from the Clubs solicitors copies of the HMLR title documents to the Club WHICH were helpful and did contain copies of some of the main Deeds of leases, Agreements for leases

and Conveyances or Deeds of Release which were evidence to the Registered titles making up our land and these documents are referred to in the above text. There are a few registered titles which relate to transactions to acquire or release some small parcels of land around the boundary of the course but these post-date WW2 and fall to be dealt with elsewhere.

Finally, the text refers to Plans "A" and "B" for 1921-25 and 1945 respectively. While I have a good idea where these plans will be derived from out of the documents I have, I have not yet put them together and may well need some help to do so. I believe that there should be a third plan showing the course as it is in 2021 (now) so that the plans can be compared by the reader. Our committee chairman has expressed the wish for there to be one plan which could show the whole picture of changes and alterations to the course by use of colours and hatching etc but I fear that the plan for the brochure will be too small to do so. It is limited by page size. This is a matter that can be explored further before going to print.