



The Clubhouse



The Clubhouse from the 9th fairway.



The Clubhouse

The First Clubhouse

Macan, when surveying the course, had intimated that the ideal location for a clubhouse would be on an eminence with a commanding view of the course. The Cowichan Golf and Country Club was blessed with just such a site and the course was laid out to take full advantage of it — the first hole started from this elevation and the ninth finished there. That first meeting in April 1947 had assumed that a clubhouse would be an integral part of the Club¹ and ideas were being circulated very early in the proceedings. There is one letter in the files from a private individual who offered to build a clubhouse worth \$10,000 in exchange for a three year concession to sell equipment, food and beverages, at the end of which time the Club would buy the building.² This interesting proposal was not followed up. Another idea was to buy a house and move it to the site. There is a letter³ from Heaney's quoting a price of \$1,500 to make such a move. These early ideas went nowhere because money troubles and overruns on course expenditure meant that anything in the way of a proper clubhouse was out of the question.

Memories of old timers vary, but the majority seem to remember that the first 'clubhouse' was a building, about 12 feet by 14 feet, little more than a shed, built by Ernie Geiss with lumber donated by Clarence Evans. It provided a place to change shoes and inside the door was a box in which visitors were honour bound to put their 50 cent green fee. Later it was raised to 75 cents!

By December 1949 the Colonist reported that Joe Garner was arranging for final plans for a clubhouse after different proposals for the layout of the building

had been considered. But money continued to be a problem and the question 'to be or not to be' was in danger of splitting the early membership. Some members deemed a clubhouse essential if the objective of 200 members was to be achieved. These people quoted Macan who expressed the idea that the more attractive a clubhouse and course were made the more members and visitors would come to play. Others thought that any extra money should be devoted to paying the interest on the debentures. In those days the AGM was held early in the year and in April 1950 the Board invited Mr. Smith, the President of Uplands Golf Club, to be the guest speaker at the AGM to answer questions about the pros and cons of spending money on a clubhouse. His talk was very positive and, amongst other arguments, he pointed out the considerable financial advantages of having a bar. The naysayers were finally convinced that a clubhouse *would* increase the value of their investment. Still there was no action. Board and executive meetings continued to be held in private houses and refreshments at tournaments and interclub matches continued to be provided by lady members. Lack of money remained a huge obstacle but 'where there is a will there is a way.' One particularly hot day Clayton Wright was playing with Jack Stothers.⁴ Exhausted at the end of a very hot and sticky eighteen hole round Jack turned to Clayton and said "What wouldn't I give for a beer just now?" Clayton replied "You give us the lumber

"You give us the lumber and I will find volunteers to build a clubhouse."

1. *Cowichan Leader*, April 24, 1947.

2. Club Archives #25.36 dated October 20, 1948.

3. Club Archives #25.15.

4. The manager of Honeymoon Bay Sawmill.

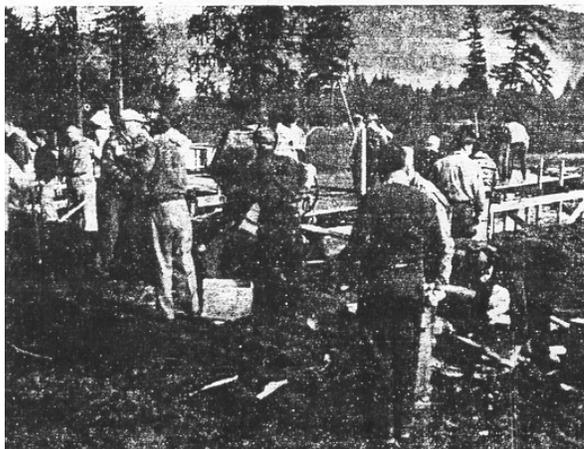
and I will find volunteers to build a clubhouse.” A week or so later Jack rang Clayton and said “I’ve been thinking about what you said...” In this way plans got under way for the building of the first clubhouse.

A committee was formed under the chairmanship of Clayton Wright, other members being Jack Stothers, Gordon Stone, Joe Garner, Bert Gray and Bob MacDonald. For some months every member of the committee worked hard getting promises of material, arranging for volunteers for work bees and drawing up the plans. This last job was left to Shorty Berkey who was a carpenter foreman employed by Joe Garner. Unfortunately an unseasonably early fall of snow in November delayed the building start and it was not until December that the Cowichan Leader could run the front page story⁵ “Work Starts On Golf Clubhouse Building At Cowichan Golf Club.” The article stated that the cribbing had been done under contract and asked for volunteers to pour concrete the following weekend. It went on to list the very generous donations received by the Club from local companies. These are worth detailing. Donations of lumber consisted of 6,500 feet from Hillcrest Lumber Company, 6,500 feet from Western Forest Industries, 4,000 feet from Evans Lumber Company. There were 256 bags of cement from B.C. Cement Company and nails from Eatons. Garner Brothers contracted to do all the hauling for free, trucks were lent by Hudson’s Hardware and Evans Lumber Company and the wiring for the machinery was done by George Hamilton.

The concrete was poured on New Year’s Eve 1950, a day not without drama. One of the volunteers, Ed Mould, always an active worker for the Club, pulled a muscle in his back which incapacitated him for some time and another, according to Joe Garner, was Barney Cox

who collapsed whilst pushing a heavy wheelbarrow. The following week the Cowichan Leader paid full tribute to these intrepid workers.⁶ An article entitled “50 men at work bee for new golf course” tells how the concrete

Golfers Too Busy To Be Photographed



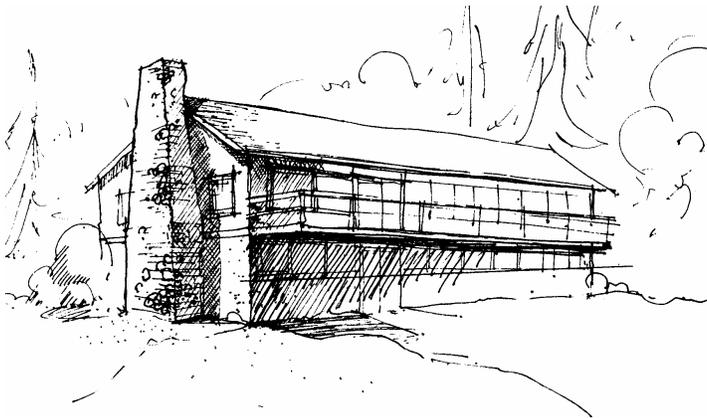
*“Too busy to
be
photographed*

pouring was completed in 4½ hours and describes the work bee as “...one of the finest voluntary community efforts recorded in the district for many years.” A front-page photo (taken by John Creighton) showed these men at work, and even an incomplete list of their names recalls many who were so generous with their time and their expertise. The names of early members like Gordon Whan, Pete Gard, Lowell Baker, Lloyd Leeming, Clarence Evans, Bob Evans, George Syrotuck, Art Irvine, Don Miller, Tom Gillespie, John Lawrence, J.B. Creighton, Clayton Wright, Norman Prest, W. Farquhar and Bert Evans recur again and again in volunteer projects. Providing the professionals to do the framing and main construction work and supervising the whole project was Joe Garner, and, in his absence, George Naylor. There were many more work bees — for example, in 1951, according to the Cowichan Leader of March 8, thirty members worked at sheathing the inner wall. When it came to getting material to finish the inside of the

5. *Cowichan Leader*, December 21, 1950.

6. *Cowichan Leader*, January 4, 1951.

Cowichan Housing gave the use of equipment and some materials, Garners delivered material at half price and loaned machinery, and Bazett and Vickers gave hardware. Some individuals gave money and by July the building was finished and a grand opening could be planned.



An artist's impression derived from two old newspaper photographs which could not be reproduced.

The Cowichan Leader of July 12, 1951, describes the new Clubhouse in these words, "The attractive clubhouse is approximately 45' long and 30' wide. The lower storey has a concrete finish and the upper one of horizontal boarding finished in a chocolate shade. The trim of the windows and the double doors which open from the main lounge to the balcony running the full length of the east side of the club house are coloured cream. An attractive touch to the exterior finish of the building is provided by the impressive chimney stack on the south side, which will carry smoke away from the wide, brick fireplace of the main lounge. The walls of the lounge are finished with a novel compressed plywood panelling and for the floor there is a covering of neat linoleum tiles. The slope of the ground allows the main entrance to give direct access to this room, which is the largest in the building. [The] remainder of the upper storey is given over to living quarters, consisting of a toilet, two bedrooms, and a kitchen. A 'dumb waiter' connects with the bar below ... Close to the entrance, and at one side of the lounge is a broad flight of stairs The steps lead to the lower lounge and to double doors below the balcony which open out on the course. On this floor

are the locker rooms, each with their own showers. The ladies' lockers are at the south end and the men's at the north. The bar, a small office, and the fuel storage room, all at the north end, complete the accommodation."

The Ladies Section of the Club raised money by bake sales and rummage sales to buy drapes and they organized a committee that solicited donations of chairs to furnish the locker rooms and lounges.

Two hundred people attended the official opening by General Pearkes M.P. on Saturday, July 14. It was an evening affair starting at 6 p.m. with an exhibition match played over 9 holes by four pros — Joe Pryke of Gorge Vale, who shot a 34, was joined by Dave Crane from Newlands, Freddie Burns of Colwood and Benny Colk from Langara. Colk and Crane had, of course, played in the exhibition match that opened the course in 1949. They were much impressed with the improvements. At 9 p.m. President of the Club, Joe Garner, introduced General Pearkes who performed the opening ceremonies. Dancing followed, with refreshments provided by lady members organised by their Captain, Miss Aileen Powel. At midnight Mrs. Benny Colk drew the names of the winners of a lottery. The first prize of a lifetime membership was won by J.Flynn of Westholme, the second prize, a \$50.00 debenture, was won by Dr.O.Qualley.

Building this first Clubhouse would not have been remotely possible without the time given by volunteers, the materials given by generous companies and the machinery lent by local companies. However to complete it some cash was needed and it was raised in several ways. Five members, W.Hudson, P.Lomax, W.Bird, B.Gray, and J.Garner all bought 10 year memberships, thus bringing in \$1,500.00. Bradshaw Harrison made an outright donation, a sale of debentures raised a further \$3,500, and the remaining shortfall was covered by a loan endorsed by

7. Cowichan Leader, July 12, 1951.