

## *A Memory of Wanstead Golf Club*

### Foreword by P.Yewman

Some years ago, in the 1980's & 90's, I belonged to a golf society and played many times with a friend Ted Simms. Ted's Father had had a long relationship with Wanstead Golf Club going back to 1908 when it was called Wanstead Park G.C. In 1976 his Father wrote down some memoirs of his time at Wanstead of which a copy was passed onto me and forms the rest of his story unfolded below. I trust you will enjoy his memories as he recollects them and perhaps try to work out the course as it was then (especially the old 11th hole!!)

### Then and Now

"Being first associated with Wanstead G. C. since the year 1908, my memory takes me back to so many changes i.e. the course, golf balls & clubs etc.

I started as a schoolboy caddie in 1908 at the age of 11yrs, the club was then named Wanstead Park G.C. It first opened in 1893, the first professional was named MacPherson, he was followed by H. Eve, this was when I first started to caddie.

A. Pearson then became the Pro' until war was declared in 1914 when he joined 'The Sportsmen's Battalion' and served in France.

Professionals in those days had to be club makers as well as golfers and made all their own wooden clubs with iron heads forged for them to their own pattern. The shafts used to come to him like broom handles so they had to plane them down and do all their own fitting, it was nothing to see them up to their knees in wood shavings, therefore when you saw a club with the Pro's name on it was all their own work.

A set of clubs in those days consisted of 3 woods i.e. Driver, Brassie (2 wood), Baffy (fairway wood); 5 irons i.e. Cleek (2 iron), Mashie (3,4,5 iron) Niblick (7,8,9 iron) and Putter. They were not stainless steel so after each round the caddie had to clean them with emery paper.

As regards balls, I saw the end of the gutty ball and the first rubber core balls which came in around 1906, they were named The Colonel, Challenger and Spalding Black & White. These balls were all 'floaters' their outside was a mould of very small pimples, then Spalding brought out the 'Spalding Dimple' which looked very like the balls of today.

These were very popular and in those days cost one shilling & sixpence to two shillings each. If a member drove a ball into the 'basin' they used to take their clubs and let the caddies remain at the bank side until the balls 'floated in', as the balls were dearer than the caddies fee which at that time was usually seven pence with a two pence tip.

The only entrances to the club were down St. Mary's Avenue then by the church, also a path from Bush Wood to the church known as 'Half Mile Alley.

Where Langley Drive and the estate around it is there was a large field called the 'Andrew Palmers', it extended from St. Mary's Ave to Warren Rd, Redbridge Lane then back to Overton Drive. The caddies used to play golf in this field whilst waiting for a job, it was also used for training the huntsmen and hounds, the kennels were attached to the clubhouse.

For what few motors there were the car park was where the putting green is now, they used to enter through the arch which is now the clubhouse entrance. the old card room was the stable for the horses which were used to pull the mowers & rollers for work on the course, the hounds kennels were where the toilets and small bar were.

Another point of interest was that the caddies had to make a sand tee to tee the ball up for his player, boxes were filled with sand for that purpose and was the origin of the "Tee Box". The sand pit between today's 11th and 12th holes was where sand was dug and riddled for this purpose and for it's use in bunkers.

Two more points regarding caddies come to mind, as previously mentioned the fee was seven pence with a two pence tip, as some members used to give a six pence tip this sometimes used to result in fighting between caddies, this resulting in a special club committee meeting and resolved by the Doctor members who decided it should be two pence, plus the Pro' issued a brass disc whereby the caddie got a lunch or tea as appropriate, for this a hut & kitchen was erected near the present bowling green and a woman employed to cook the meals. There were as many as 50/70 caddies that could be attending and in 1912 when National Insurance came in your first round of the week had four pence stopped for the stamp so you went home with just five pence in your pocket!

I will now attempt to go round the course as it was then, remembering that the field was not purchased at this time, the course consisted of 14 holes, to play 18 holes you took alternative tee shots from the 1st tee and played the first four holes again.

The 1st tee was situated where you go over the path separating the valley of today's 1st hole you then drove down the now 10th fairway to the now 10th green which was the 1st green;

The 2nd tee was the same tee as today's 11th and you would play to the same green as today's 11th which was then the 2nd green;

The 3rd tee you would proceed to the 12th tee as it is today, but the hole differed in as much that the 3rd green was situated at the top of the hill just left of a wooden shelter which now forms part of woodland;

The 4th tee was just below the bank where you come down from today's 13th tee, you drove along today's 14th fairway to the 4th green which was on top of the hill just short of the now tennis courts;

The 5th tee was just below the bank from the now 15th tee, the 5th green was on top of the hill where the swimmers used to undress to have a swim in the basin;

The 6th tee was where the present 16th tee is and had the hazard of the pond and was more of a dog-leg hole to the green round the basin;

The 7th tee was some 30yds on from today's 17th tee and nearer the fencing of Overton Drive, the green was as today's 17th green;

The 8th tee was near the crickets ground's refreshment hut as you go through the path to the 18th tee, the 8th green was in the valley as there was no tennis courts then;

The 9th tee was near the ladies 18th tee today and you drove to today's 18th green which was then the 9th green;

The 10th hole was as today's 6th, so therefore both tee and green were the 10th;

The 11th tee was situated near the park fence some 40 yds forward from today's 7th tee, but you played up to today's 1st green which was then the 11th green, it is interesting to note that this fairway is now all woodland and might help visualising where it was;

The 12th tee was situated near the back fences of the Warren Drive residents, which were not built then, near today's 18th green. You played over the round pond and now 8th fairway to the then 12th green which was by the park fence where you come through the wood on the 7th fairway today;

Still alongside the park fence towards Blakehall Rd was the 13th tee, you played down by the Mulberry tree and the green, which is today's 7th, was then the 13th;

The 14th tee was just in front of today's 8th tee, the hole then was a dog-leg left as you played to the mouth of the valley as the 14th green was in the centre of the valley just before the path where you go over to the present 1st and 18th holes: "

