Cedar Hill Golf Club

NEWSLETTER

Celebrating with the District of Saanich the 100th Anniversary of the Cedar Hill Golf Course and the 70th Anniversary of the Cedar Hill Golf Club

A view of the 18th Hole and the Clubhouse on a sunny June day in 2007. Photo A. Graber

Believe it or not, Cedar Hill Golf Course, situated on several acres of land in the heart of Victoria, was once a dairy farm owned and operated by the McRae family who had owned the land since the early 1900's. Former Saanich councillor, avid fellow golfer and member of the Cedar Hill Golf Club for many years, **Bob Gillespie**, once told me "the McRae farm supplied milk for the hospital. One year in the 1940's that source of income was severely curtailed. An outbreak of tuberculosis in the McRae dairy herd caused their contract with the hospital to be cancelled and the cows were exterminated.

From cow pasture to an 18 hole golf course, Cedar Hill Golf Course has a storied history.

Article by Aki Graber, 23 year member of the Club, author of *Cedar Hill Golf Club: A Historical Record 1920-2012*

The cows were found the following day, bloated and afloat in King's pond. This was the perfect opportunity for some target shooting by some young lads of the day, including one Bob Gillespie, resulting in the smell of the putrid carcasses wafting down the entire Blenkinsop Valley." Sadly, Bob died in 2012.

In 1921 the McRae's leased some of the land to golfer Harry Eves to build a nine hole golf course. Dates may differ in the early records, but what is clear is that golfers and cows shared the tract. It was pasture land for stock and the golfers had to keep a sharp look-out for cows.

In 1937 the golf course proprietorship was passed on to Harry Young.

Then in 1950 the lease was purchased by the Barnes, a family of golfers, who in 1951 along with 50 fellow golfers, created the Cedar Hill Golf Club. It was incorporated under the Societies Act in 1952 with the ambition to turn Cedar Hill into an 18 hole golf course "joining its more famous brothers - Uplands, Colwood, Victoria and Gorge Vale" as told in a newspaper article of 1952.

Watch for the next article for more about the building of the "back nine"…

King's Pond as it appeared in the 1960's with the CKDA transmission tower in the distance. Photo: 19804-003-056a Saanich Archives.

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The first Cedar Hill Golf Club Clubhouse at 1468 Finlayson Street which remains largely unchanged to this day. Photo: Greg Barnes

This is the second in a series of articles which details some of the story of the Cedar Hill Golf Club and its partnership with the Cedar Hill Golf Course. Cedar Hill Golf Course is in its 101st year of operation. This year, 2022, the Cedar Hill Golf Club celebrates 70 years of partnership with the Cedar Hill Golf Course.

First, I wish to correct an error that occurred in the first article. It mentions that 50 fellow golfers were involved in the creation of the Cedar Hill Golf Club. That should read "30", not a small error in view of the date, 1951, when the Club was formed and considering into what numbers the Club rapidly grew.

From cow pasture to 18 hole golf course…built on the backs of members of the Cedar Hill Golf Club…

Upon the formation of the Cedar Hill Golf Club, plans to expand the course from a 9 hole golf course to an 18 hole track began immediately. A 1952 newspaper article from the Club archives reads "A bright future is earmarked for the expanding nine-hole Cedar Hill golf course, Victoria's youngest organized club." The article continues "…(Lyle) Barnes (the new proprietor of the course) obtained an additional lease on a section of land…" and "with the leasing of the new land, all the work to convert the bush-covered property into a course will be done by members and it is expected to be ready for play in the spring of 1953." So the back nine of the Cedar Hill Golf Course was built by the volunteer labour of the Cedar Hill Golf Club members of the day.

Upon formation of the club, Barnes wasted no time in making improvements. The same article reads "A coffee bar was installed in the basement of a house on the property which serves as the clubhouse and (the Barnes') residence." The McRaes (owners of the property) continued to keep their dairy herds and golfers continued to share the course with the cows. In a 2011 interview with founding member Ron Ferguson, he made the bemused comment that it wasn't uncommon to have to side-step cow pies on making one's way around the course. Greg Barnes, son of proprietor Lyle, helped with the night watering of the greens as a youngster and during his summer holidays worked as a greenskeeper . He remembers how the cows loved the grass, especially from the greens. They would often be seen patiently waiting for the clippings when the greens were being mowed. Greg carved his own place in the Club and course's history becoming an accomplished golfer, becoming Assistant Golf Course Superintendent when the course was sold to Saanich and eventually Golf Course Superintendent.

The members took great pride in what they had accomplished, turning a cow pasture into an 18 hole golf course that eventually became one of the busiest public golf courses in Canada building its membership from a modest 30 in 1951 to 600 members comprised of 400 men, 100 women and 100 juniors all in the span of less than 20 years.

Follow the Barnes and their encounters with the law…and much more…

At twenty years of age, Greg won the Club Championship and is presented the trophies by Head Pro Bill Goldsworthy.
Photo: Greg Barnes