

GABORONE GOLF CLUB

Situated in the heart of the Gaborone city, only a thrown stone distance away from the Gaborone Sun and the University of Botswana lays the Gaborone Golf Club. This is the very womb where Golf in Botswana directs from.

Before Botswana gained independence in 1966, Golf in Gaborone was played on a nine hole course with eighteen tees, which ran around and across the air strip which was occupied by the BDF Flying Wing. The Golf section of the Gaborone Sports Club in the village controlled the golf course.

For security reasons, the Golf club had to be moved. This was made possible with the help of the Botswana National Sports Council. A lease was then granted by the Gaborone Town Council on the ground where the course is right now. This was in 1967.



GABORONE GOLF CLUBHOUSE

Initially all the “greens” were oiled sand which required smoothing down with a scraper before putting the tees were built of concrete blocks with rubber matting supplied by the Prisons department.

The layout of the course did not differ much from the present one, except the first hole was further to the left and had four very large pine trees across the fairway, about 250m from the tee, which very often made an interesting shot. The third

was shorter than it is now, but had a wicked slope to the “green” and to miss it would mean a disaster.

The firth was also short and completely surrounded by bunkers while the eighth was played off the “pulpit” at the present seventh tee, but towards the present ninth tee.

NOTES ON EVENTS LEADING UP TO AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GABORONE GOLF CLUB

Introduction to the Golf Club which was then part of Gaborone sports club, took place during 1963. A course which straddled the Gabs landing strips, two holes in fact incorporated the strip as part of their fairways. The required giving some attention to incoming planes when playing these holes. Fortunately air traffic was infrequent in those days.

The “on course” club house consisted of a corrugated iron pump house, minus pump, which contained the utensils, crockery etc necessary to serve tea. The water was boiled on a wood fire and tea was taken, with all due ceremony, under an open sided iron roofed shelter and served by the ground attendant/caddy master/collector of “green fees”.

The existence of the course was solely due to the efforts and enthusiasm of its creators and members.

Previously the course was unfenced which resulted in cattle frequently taking their siesta on the browns and leaving the surfaces pat spattered, churned up, and generally unplayable. The solution was a barbed wire fence around each brown with a gate giving entry to the putting area once you had played your obligatory lofted approach shot.



GABORONE GOLF CLUB GOLFERS PREPARING THEMSELVES TO TEE OFF

The holes were lined with discarded engine cylinder sleeves from the Public Worker Dept. scrap yard. The matching piston was drilled to accept a length of metal pipe and a metal disc was fixed to the top end. All was painted including the whole number on the disc and the piston end dropped snugly into the hole.

The provision of a trophy was handled in similar fashion; a suitable log of apiesdoring wood was obtained then turned and polished. The Apiesdoring Cup is now in the possession of the present club. Credit for this goes to the late Gordon Powell and "Swannie" Swanepoel.

The existing No. 8 tees was perched on a rock at the foot of what was known as Hangman's Rock. Apparently in times past, when needed, a scaffold was erected in the seclusion of the large outcrop of rocks and official hangings took place. With the blessing of the new committee we placed a new tee on the highest point if the rocks. This elevated tee on an otherwise featureless course proved very popular to most golfers.

When the present course was built we placed a tee atop a large rock on what was then No. 8 fairway but it never managed to replace the magic of Hangman's rocks. This rock stands today to the rear of No. 7 tee.

Prior to Independence the Gaborone Sports Club was informed by Govt that the Golf Course would have to move to an alternative site. A committee was set up

to establish the new course. At the outset I beg forgiveness if I should miss out anyone who made a contribution. Members who carried out negotiations with Government were:

Lawrie Atkinson
Alf Steven
Gerry Forrest

The incumbent committee involved themselves in various aspects of the establishment and was as follows:

Capt:
Sec: W. Whitham/S.A. McCalgan

The layout of the course was designed by Mr Magielse of the Frankenwald Research Station in South Africa. From these drawings the late Jimmy Russel with theodolite proceeded to give us the fairway centre lines as fast as we were able to clear the cut lines. Also established was distance between green and tee. Thereafter the outer lines were again chopped by hand.

Our negotiating team had obtained for us a sum, I think of some R900.00 to spend on the re-establishment of the course and the use of a bulldozer and grader belonging to the Roads Department.

The rub was that they were only made available to us over weekends. I recall dusty weekends involving among others, Gerry Forrest, John Strong, "Mac" McCalgan, George Lewis, Les Riley. Ann Cooper supplied tea and sandwiches. Mac delivered at least two cases of beer at his own expense.

I have read that this work was carried out by staff of the Department of Agriculture under Syd Youthed-without making too fine a point of it I can say that the Agricultural Dam Building Unit was indeed formed by the late Syd Youthed but only some years later, in fact he was not then a resident of Botswana, a fact which would be well known to members of that time. This in no way minimizes the contribution of Syd Youthed, whose efforts I think exceed those of all others but which took place later, in the early seventies.

Having rough cleared all fairways, established browns, bricked in tees and provided tee-side bench seats which were donated by Messrs Richard who made the mould.

CURRENT AND WISHES OF THE CLUB

The club was started with 39 members in 1963 this grew rapidly to 130 by 1964 and currently the club had 804 members at the end of September 2007.

The wishes of the Gaborone Golf Club are to provide the best possible facilities to its member's at the most reasonable rates and to assist the Botswana Golf Union in growing the sport of golf within Botswana.



Gaborone Golf Club logo