



A Celebration of 100 Years

1914 - 2014

The first formally recorded beginnings of women's golf was in 1889 at the Cape Golf Club where they admitted women for the first time, mainly because they were battling to keep the club alive. It would appear that golf was being played at various clubs around the country, and the first recorded photograph of women golfers was taken at Graaff-Reinet in 1897. In 1898 Maritzburg Golf Club admitted women members whilst Durban Club only allowed ladies to join in 1903, and the historian tells us they were "merely tolerated – and were required to give way to male players if so requested"!

The Johannesburg Golf Club (which later became Royal Johannesburg Golf Club) formed their first Ladies Section in 1904. As Peter Sauerma records in an article "The early years were not easy for South African women golfers. The struggle to gain acceptance from their male counterparts was constant and ongoing. The clothes that they had to wear on the golf course were hardly conducive to swinging a golf club. But they were a daunting lot, determined to succeed, and succeed they did". By 1906 the first National Ladies Championship had been played and clubs in the Eastern Cape played a leading role in establishing this championship, with King Williams Town hosting the first event in 1906, Port Elizabeth in 1907, East London in 1908 and Grahamstown in 1909. Kimberley, considered the most central meeting point, played host in 1910 and in 1911 it was held in Cape Town where Mrs Ruby Armstrong won the event for the 3rd time since its inception in 1906. Only in 1912 did the Championship move to Johannesburg and finally to Durban in 1913. In the meantime, the Transvaal Ladies Golf Union was formed (1910) consisting of six clubs; by 1912 they had held their first championship and they became affiliated to the LGU of Great Britain in 1913.

The three founding members of the South African Ladies Golf Union are considered to be Mrs Maud Gibb, Mrs K Jooste and Mrs Grindley Ferris. Mrs Jooste, who started playing golf shortly after the Boer War and was a member of the Johannesburg Golf Club, had been in contact with the Ladies Golf Union in Britain which resulted in her golf club becoming the first club affiliated to the LGU (estimated 1909). Around about that time, a golfer of considerable skill had arrived in Johannesburg. She was Mrs Maud Gibb (nee Titterton) and in addition to her golfing skill, she was a competent administrator and had been coached by the Secretary of the LGU to assist the SA lady golfers in their efforts to form a local LGU. It is to be noted that in 1908 Maud Titterton beat Dorothy Campbell at the 19th hole and won the British Ladies Golf Championship which was played over the Old Course at St Andrews, the first time that the Ladies Championship had been played over the historic links. Mrs Gibb, Mrs Jooste and Mrs Grindley Ferris started working on the idea of establishing a South African LGU and, in our

SALGU Minute Book, beautifully hand-written over 8 pages, the Minutes of the Meeting that took place at Port Elizabeth in the Loubser Hall on Monday, 6th July 1914 at 9.30am are recorded. Present were 14 ladies from across the country, representing 13 clubs and the Transvaal Ladies Golf Union. Mrs J A P (Maud) Gibb, representing Heronmere, was voted into the chair, the Vice-President was Mrs C Stuart (Johannesburg) and the Honorary Secretary, Mrs K Jooste (representing the Transvaal Ladies Golf Union). The delegates all agreed that Lady Buxton would be asked to be the Honorary President. Thus the South African Ladies Golf Union had been formed, only four years after the men had formed their national body. One can only wonder how long these lady golfers took to make the trip to Port Elizabeth, but this occasion was obviously combined with the playing of the South African Championship. And the winner, having successfully defended the title she won in Durban, was none other than Mrs Maud Gibb! In the Rules and Regulations of the South African Ladies Golf Union as adopted in 1914 there is a rule covering the Union's power to reduce the handicap of any member of an affiliated club to scratch. Thereafter followed the words: *Scratch – Mrs J.A.P. Gibb (for life)*.

It appears that these ladies practised good governance right from the start, and a year after the formation of the Union, in August 1915, when the Annual Report & Financial Statement for the year ending 31.12.1914 was read, Mrs Gibb commented on the satisfactory credit balance at the Bank of £7.19.6! Mrs Gibb served as President from 1914 to 1916 and returned to Britain with her husband during World War 1. On her return to South Africa, she soon reclaimed the office of President serving a second term from 1919 to 1923. Thereafter, Mrs Jooste and Mrs Grindley-Ferris appeared to take turns as President with Mrs Jooste serving in 1924 & 1925, Mrs Grindley-Ferris 1925 to 1927; Mrs Jooste 1928 to 1931; and Mrs Grindley-Ferris 1932 & 1933. They also both served as the Honorary Secretary during the years 1914 and 1924. It is interesting to note that this trend continued and Mrs Maud Leeds who was Honorary Secretary from 1930 to 1947 became President from 1948 to 1950. Mrs Maud Gibb was subsequently elected as a "Life Honorary President, as the Union wished to have her name always associated with it" having departed in 1924 to take up residence in Canada where she remained until her husband's death in 1926. She then returned to Scotland until her own death in 1932.

Recorded from the 1921 AGM Minutes: *"It was agreed that the Union be governed by a Council consisting of a President and Vice-Presidents representing the Provinces with affiliated clubs, namely Transvaal (Mrs Harvey & Mrs Jooste); Natal (Mrs Humphries); Eastern Province (Mrs Hirsch) and Western Province (Mrs Fuller) plus one delegate nominated by each affiliated club"*. These provinces took some time to follow the Transvaal example of forming an official union and in the meantime, individual clubs affiliated to the SALGU. Western Province and Natal became affiliated to the SALGU in 1926 and the Eastern Province & Border LGU in 1927. In 1928, the Orange Free State & Basutoland Union were accepted as members. These five provincial unions were the heartbeat of South African women's golf for decades. In 1968, Eastern Province and Border separated and these six unions remained the official unions until 1999.

In 1933, South Africa had the honour of welcoming the first international women's team from Britain who arrived by mail ship in Cape Town and proved to be an inspiration to many young golfers as they demonstrated their skill up and down the country. It is interesting that the first mention of this visit in the SALGU Minutes was in 1928 and that funds would have to be

raised. In 1929, the 1/- Fund (One Shilling Fund) had been put in place which was earmarked for paying the expenses of any visiting teams. From the AGM Minutes 1929: *"There were at least 6,000 women golfers in the Union, and 1/- from each would give an income of £300 a year. More would be necessary to pay for a British Team's visit but this also would be forthcoming when wanted."* With the Union experiencing rapid growth and the standard of golf improving, it was possible for South Africa to send a representative side to Great Britain in 1938. Over the years and particularly in the 1960's & 1970's, numerous international teams visited our shores and SA teams travelled abroad. However, by the late 1970's, South Africa began experiencing the effects of the sporting boycott because of the apartheid policies and the isolation was reflected in our international travel schedule. The cost of sending a team of six to the World Tournament (WATC) in 1972 was R5741. All expenses of visiting international teams were borne by the national federation and a 3-week trip was considered the norm. By this stage the Shilling Fund had become the International Fund and contributions were by way of donations rather than a levy.

During the 1950's, matches between the Provinces were a regular feature on the golfing calendar. The proposal to stage an inter-provincial tournament at a single venue involving all the provinces was welcomed and in 1961 the first Inter-Provincial was held over the Bloemfontein Golf Course. Teams of four players from each of the 5 Provinces took part in foursomes matches with Western Province emerging victorious. Whilst there was some juggling with the format in the 1960's with the introduction of stroke play replacing the foursomes match play, the changed format did not last and 1971 saw a return to foursomes matches. In 1972 singles matches were introduced, and by 1973 8 teams were competing in an A & B Section, which included a Rhodesian team. Fifty plus years on, 16 teams involving 80 golfers continue this tradition – a highlight on the amateur golfing calendar.

The first 72 Hole Teams Championship was played at East London Golf Club in November 1967 with six participating teams: EP & Border; Natal; OFS & N Cape; Transvaal Duikers; Transvaal Steenboks and Western Province. Amongst the interesting names who participated were future SALGU Presidents – Bern Tribelhorn and Alma Truss, and of the 24 players, the majority bore the title Mrs, with only 3 being "Miss". One of them was a 16 year old - Miss Sally Little, who went on to enjoy a successful 30 year career on the LPGA tour winning 15 titles including 2 Majors.

The move from six provincial unions to twelve at the beginning of 1999 gave women's golf in South Africa an enthusiastic boost. After the 1994 elections and the change in government, a number of meetings were held with the NSC (National Sports Council) and by 1998 provincial boundaries and name changes were high on the agenda and clarification had been received with regard to the expected direction of women's golf. Most areas were rising to the challenge and recognised the opportunities the new provincial boundaries would provide for women's golf. Provincial boundaries using the province names for the 9 provinces would be adhered to and regional terminology for the additional groupings within the provinces would be used. Free State & Northern Cape would need to remain together until substantial growth occurred in that region. The time frame for completion was 1 January 1999. It was agreed that there would be no boundaries to restrict the playing of League across provincial lines.

In 2004 the SALGU decided that the time had come to modernise its structures, operations and approach to keep it relevant. From the minutes: “ Similarly the name of our controlling body has been explored, with the suggestion that 'ladies' had both colonial/helpless connotations relative to the work that we do. Womens's Golf South Africa makes a strong statement “. The Constitution of Womens Golf South Africa was formally adopted at a Special General Meeting in Bloemfontein on 26th September 2005.

Finally, with one year to go before celebrating the WGSA centenary, it was agreed that the time had come for the national body to rent office space and have a permanent full-time secretary. The office is currently in Somerset West at The Golf Village. A few years prior to this, with the introduction of live scoring at national tournaments, the secretary's position was split into two, and a part-time tournament administrator was employed for WGSA tournaments.

Many happy returns Womens Golf South Africa!

CYNTHIA RAYNER - PRESIDENT

SOURCES:-

PETER SAUERMAN; COMPLEAT GOLFER NOV 1994 /JAN 1995; TLGU 75TH ANNIVERSARY BROCHURE; SALGU MINUTES



Maud Titterton (later Gibb) on the 1st tee at St Andrews