

The “Royal” Connaught Golf Club

The History of One of Medicine Hat’s Premiere Golf Courses



"the friendliest place to play"

by William J. Anhorn K.C. ICD.D

William J. Anhorn was born and raised in Medicine Hat, Alberta and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Political Science) from the University of Calgary and a Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Alberta. He returned to his hometown of Medicine Hat in 1976 and practiced law for over 35 years as a senior partner with the law firm of Pritchard and Company. He retired in 2012 and he and his wife Joan Elaine Anhorn (Medlicott), a retired teacher, continue to reside there.

Always having had a keen interest in writing and more recently genealogy, he has researched and written a series of articles on his own family and his extended family (Medlicott/Mclvor) and their history. He is also passionate about history including the history of Medicine Hat and has researched and written several articles in relation to the history of his “hometown”. He currently is a member of the Medicine Hat and District Genealogical Society and the Medicine Hat Historical Society and Past Chairman of the Historical and Heritage Resource Management Committee of the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Company. He has also been a member of the Connaught Golf Club since 1976.

He is a frequent contributor to the Alberta Genealogical Society newsletter, Relatively Speaking. All of his articles all can be found at his personal website or blog at <http://wjanhorn.ca>

Chapter 1- Let The Celebration Begin

A 100th anniversary is a significant milestone and an admirable accomplishment under any circumstances and it is most worthy of great celebration.

In 1922, the Connaught Golf Club at Medicine Hat, Alberta was founded and it will celebrate its one hundredth anniversary this year. As a tribute to its storied past, it is important to recount and document its history in some meaningful and appropriate way.

Although the Connaught Golf Club is not as famous as the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, which was founded in 1745 or as iconic as the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta Georgia, where the famed Masters Golf Tournament¹ has been held every year at the same location since 1934, it nonetheless has its own interesting history which is worth documenting for the sake of posterity.



Many are unaware of the unique history of the Connaught Golf Club and the fact that it has a special connection to “royalty”, in particular, the British Royal family, which may allow it for at least a brief period of time, in this its 100th anniversary year, to be known as the “Royal” Connaught Golf Club.

¹ The **Masters Tournament** (usually referred to as simply the “**The Masters**”) is one of the four major championships in professional golf. Scheduled for the first full week of April, the Masters is the first major tournament of the year for the PGA tour, and unlike any of the other tournaments, it is always held at the same location, every year at the Augusta National Golf Club private course located in Augusta, Georgia in the United States.

The oldest golf club to bear the “Royal” name is The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, founded in 1745 and which was granted Royal status by King William IV in 1834. It was not, however, the first club to receive the title; that honour belongs to Royal Perth Golf Club, founded in 1824, which received the patronage of King William IV a year earlier, in 1833.



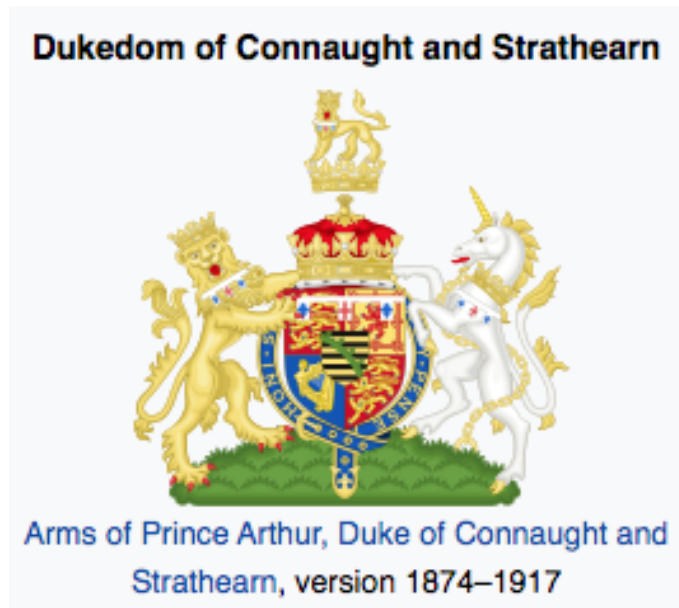
Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews. (Andrew Milligan/PA)

According to Scott MacPherson’s definitive 2013 book, *Golf’s Royal Clubs*, the captain of the Perth Golfing Society, Lord Kinnaird, went on a trip to London to address King William IV, who had recently taken up the game. While there, Kinnaird asked the King if he would become a patron of the Society and if the club could, in turn, call itself the Royal Perth Golfing Society. William agreed, and a “movement” was born.

The first Canadian Golf Course to receive the “Royal” designation² was the Royal Montreal Golf Club, which is the oldest golf course in North America. It was founded in 1873 and was granted the prefix “Royal” by Queen Victoria in 1884

The Connaught Golf Club has a very unique connection to the Royal family and might very well be entitled to receive this “honourable” title for reasons, which hopefully will become self-explanatory.

Let me explain.



² **Royal** Colwood, **Royal** Ottawa, **Royal** Montréal, **Royal** Québec, **Royal** Regina and **Royal** Mayfair are the only golf clubs in Canada with the "Royal" designation.

The Duke of Connaught

Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn (Arthur William Patrick Albert; 1 May 1850 – 16 January 1942)³, was the seventh child and third son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He served as the Governor General of Canada, the tenth since Confederation (1867) and the only member of the British Royal family to do so. In 1910, he was appointed Grand Prior of the Order of St. John and held this position until 1939.

Prince Arthur was educated by private tutors before entering the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich at 16 years old. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the British Army where he served for some 40 years. Prince Arthur had a distinguished military career serving in various parts of the British Empire, which included service in South Africa, Egypt, India, Ireland and even Canada, during the Red River Rebellion of 1870.

In 1900, he was appointed as Commander in Chief of the British Army in Ireland, where he continued his exemplary military career.



³ Arthur was born at Buckingham Palace on May 1st, 1850 the seventh child and third son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha . The prince was baptised by the Archbishop of Canterbury on June 22nd in the palace's private chapel. His godparents were Prince William of Prussia (the later King of Prussia and German Emperor Wilhelm I); his great-uncle's sister-in-law, Princess Bernard of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, (for whom his maternal grandmother Duchess of Kent stood proxy); and Duke of Wellington with whom he shared his birthday and after whom he was named.

He married Princess Louise Margaret of Prussia on March 13, 1879, and together they had three children: Princess Margaret, Prince Arthur and Princess Patricia. During this time, he was appointed by Queen Victoria as a Royal Duke becoming the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, as well as the Earl of Sussex.

This Royal family lived in India for many years prior to his appointment as Governor General of Canada in 1911. He was appointed as Governor General replacing the Earl Grey as viceroy for the Commonwealth and he and his family took up residence in Canada. He occupied this post until the Duke of Devonshire succeeded him in 1916. He acted as the King of England's representative during the first years of World War I and thus held the honorary role of the Canadian Commander-in-Chief, during those turbulent times

After the end of his vice-regal tenure, Arthur returned to the United Kingdom and there, as well as in India, he performed various royal duties, while also again taking on other military roles. Though he retired from public life in 1928, he continued to make his presence known within the British Army well into the Second World War, before his death in 1942.

He was Queen Victoria's last surviving son and according to some sources, he was her favourite. It is also reported that he had developed a great fondness for Canada during his residence there from 1911 to 1916.



His daughter, Princess Patricia also has a close connection to Canada as she lent her name and support to the establishment of a new Canadian army regiment -- Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. (PPCLI) which became part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force that fought overseas in France during WWI. Princess Patricia personally designed the badge and colours for the regiment. ⁴

The Connaught School

As was the tradition in the early 20th century, it was not uncommon for public buildings and in particular, schools in the British Commonwealth, to be named after distinguished members of the Royal family. It is therefore not a surprise that Connaught School located in the southwest hill area of Medicine Hat was named after the Duke of Connaught, the son of Queen Victoria and Governor-General of Canada from 1911 until 1916.



⁴Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was founded by an act of philanthropy by the acceptance of the Canadian government of the offer by Captain Hamilton Gault, a Montreal entrepreneur, to provide \$1000,000 to create and equip a Canadian battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force for overseas service during WWI. The PPCLI continues to this day as an integral component of the Canadian Armed Forces with its regimental headquarters in Edmonton, Alberta together with two military units stationed there. (PPCLI 1 and 3)). Another unit (PPCLI 2) is headquartered in Shilo, Manitoba.

In 1912, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught travelled across Canada by train with the express purpose of opening the first Calgary Exhibition and Stampede held on September 1st, 1912. The trip by rail across Canada was a significant event and enthusiastic crowds greeted the Royal couple everywhere they stopped.

In anticipation of their cross country tour, one of the overnight stops on their return from Calgary was in Medicine Hat. To honour the occasion and to further demonstrate the devotion to the Royal family by the local citizenry, arrangements were made for the Duke and Duchess of Connaught to attend the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of a new school, which was to be named in their honour- The Connaught School.



This event occurred on October 11th, 1912.

The future site of the school was situated far from the downtown core of the City, in the wide open “prairie” and quite a distance from any other development. Construction commenced in 1912 and the school was completed within a year (1913) and continues to the present to be part of the Medicine Hat Public School system.

More importantly, from a historical perspective, the whole area surrounding the school to the south, which was open and vacant land, became known simply as “Connaught”.

The Connaught Golf Club-What’s in a name?

The game of golf became a passionate pastime in the late 1800’s and the early 20th century and the creation and development of golf courses and golf clubs became fashionable as more and more people, both men and women, took up the sport. Many members of the Royal family, many of whom became patrons of the sport throughout many of the Commonwealth countries, including Canada, were largely responsible for promoting the popularity of the game of golf.

With its huge popularity, golf courses in Western Canada quickly were developed and organized typically by a group of ordinary people who were enthusiastic about promoting the game. Medicine Hat was no exception and in 1922, the Connaught Golf Club was established on vacant land not far from the site of Connaught school, where 10 years earlier the Duke and Duchess of Connaught had laid the cornerstone of the school named in their honour.



As one might expect, with the blessing of the Mayor and City Council, vacant land across and to the south of the Connaught school owned by the municipality was dedicated for the development of a semi-private golf course.

As history will tell, the then involvement of the City of Medicine Hat in offering land for the development of a public/semi-private golf course would herald a long standing tradition which continues even to the present.

The Royal families' interest in golf continues today, and although not many are avid golfers they are all known to have participated in the sport from time to time.

Even Prince Harry, who for a period of time was stationed at the British Army Training Unit in Suffield just outside of Medicine Hat is known to have played a few rounds of golf in his time.

With this historical backdrop, the golf club in Medicine Hat received its enduring name-“**Connaught Golf Club**” and one could easily make the argument with this historical vignette and its unique connection to royalty, that “Royal” should be a suitable prefix, at least for the time being, as we celebrate Connaught's 100th anniversary.



Chapter 2: The “Cornerstone” of Golf in Medicine Hat

A hundred years later, Connaught Golf Club continues to be the cornerstone of golf in Medicine Hat as one of the premiere places to play and a pictorial trip down memory lane is necessary to fully capture its rich early history, starting with the laying of the cornerstone of the Connaught school in 1912 by the Duke and Duchess of Connaught.



Prince Arthur, son of Queen Victoria and the Duke of Connaught arriving in Medicine Hat to an enthusiastic crowd October 11th, 1912



Outside of City Hall a Mounted NWMP and Military Honor Guard awaiting the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught



A Large Crowd Gathers on the barren landscape to welcome the Duke and Duchess of Connaught for the laying of the cornerstone of Connaught School Circa 1912



The laying of the cornerstone of the Connaught School by the Duke of Connaught and other dignitaries Circa 1912



The construction begins immediately



And continues with great progress



The Cornerstone then and now....



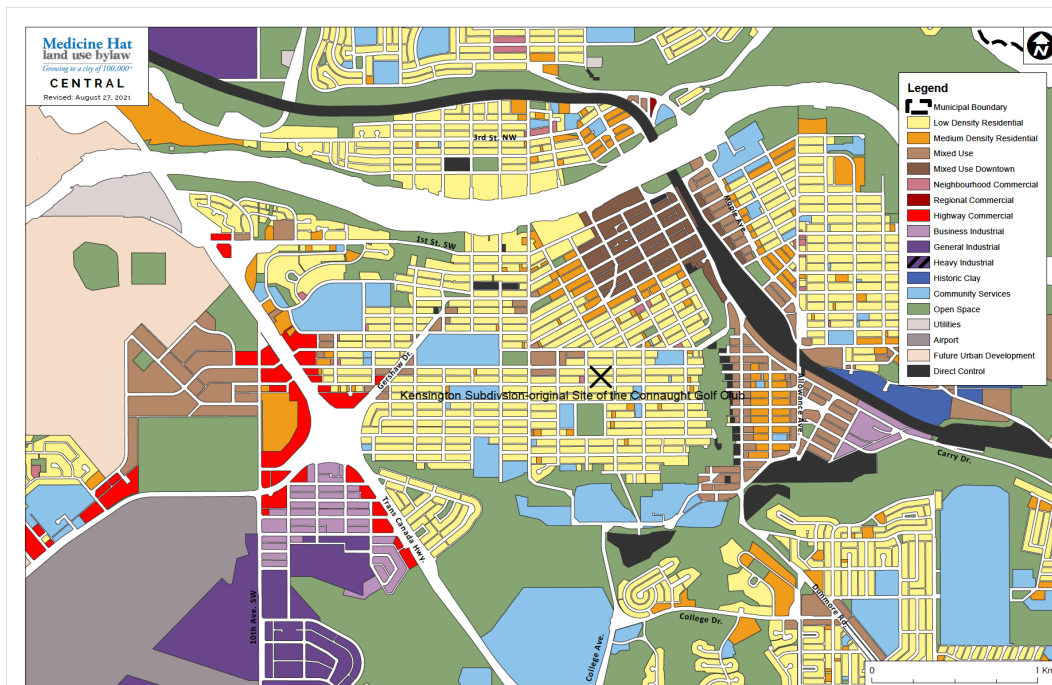
Cornerstone today.





Chapter 3: The Connaught Era 1922-1945-“Kensington”⁵

Except for a few ‘oldtimers’ not many current members of Connaught Golf Club would be aware of the fact that the golf course originally was located some distance from its current location but rather was situated in an area of Medicine Hat, which has since become known as the “Kensington”⁶ subdivision.



⁵ Kensington Palace in London, England is a working Royal residence and has great historical significance as it was the favourite residence of successive English sovereigns until 1760. It was the birthplace and childhood home of Queen Victoria. Today, the Kensington Palace contains the offices of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William and Princess Kate and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Not surprisingly, Kensington became a popular name for many urban areas in Canada and throughout the Commonwealth. For example, the Kensington market in Calgary and the surrounding residential area is known as “Kensington”.

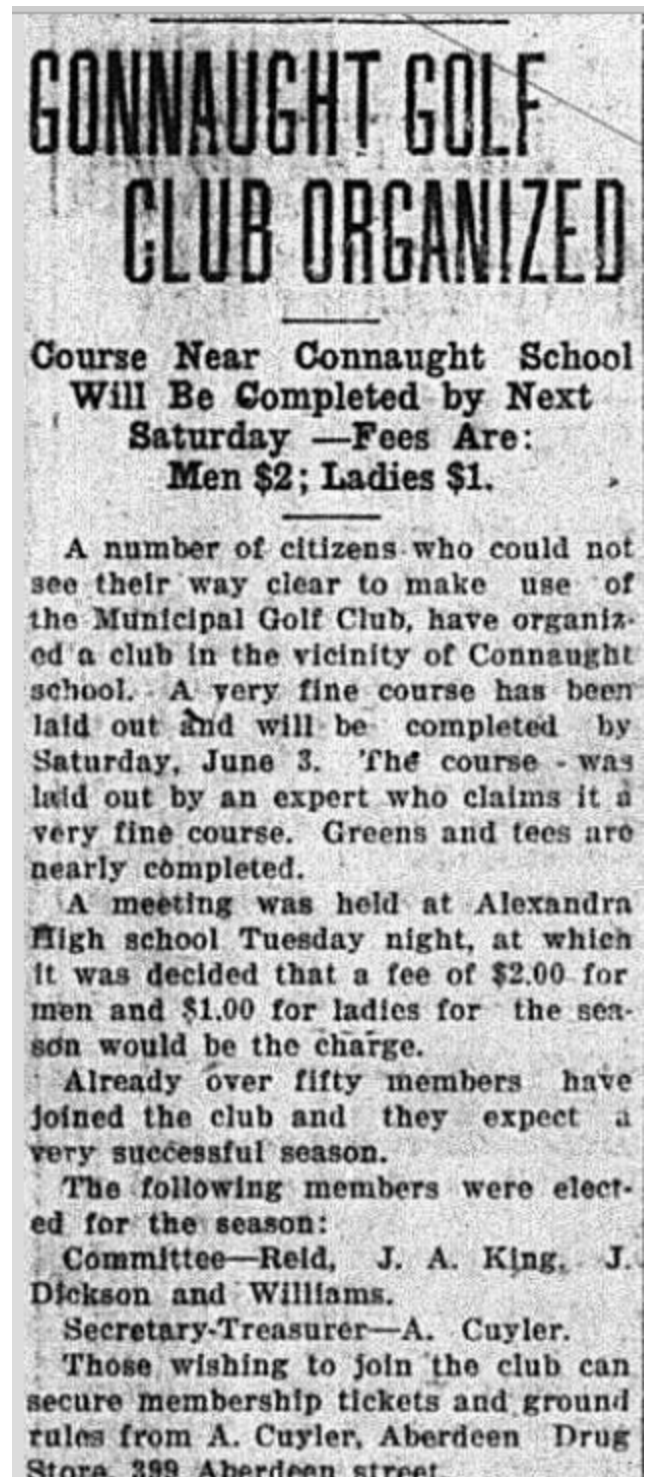
⁶ The City of Medicine Hat Land Use Bylaw map denotes the original location of the Connaught Golf Club (X) established in 1922.

It is here that the “original” Connaught Golf Club was developed and organized by a small group of private citizens, who were intent on further promoting the popular sport in Medicine Hat.

Connaught Golf Club had very humble beginnings as it was originally started shortly after the First World War (1918). Thomas Elder is credited with starting the golf course by “etching” out in the barren prairie landscape a rudimentary short 3 hole course. In 1920, with the help of other local golf enthusiasts, an additional 6 holes were created, making it a 9 hole layout.

But it was in 1922, that a full 18 holes of golf were developed making it an “official” golf course and Connaught Golf Club was born.

Men like Art Finch, Frank Dunham, Bob Thompson and Tom, Frank and Bert Thirlwell were among the early pioneers of Connaught.



CONNAUGHT GOLF CLUB ORGANIZED

Course Near Connaught School Will Be Completed by Next Saturday — Fees Are: Men \$2; Ladies \$1.

A number of citizens who could not see their way clear to make use of the Municipal Golf Club, have organized a club in the vicinity of Connaught school. A very fine course has been laid out and will be completed by Saturday, June 3. The course was laid out by an expert who claims it a very fine course. Greens and tees are nearly completed.

A meeting was held at Alexandra High school Tuesday night, at which it was decided that a fee of \$2.00 for men and \$1.00 for ladies for the season would be the charge.

Already over fifty members have joined the club and they expect a very successful season.

The following members were elected for the season:

Committee—Reid, J. A. King, J. Dickson and Williams.

Secretary-Treasurer—A. Cuyler.

Those wishing to join the club can secure membership tickets and ground rules from A. Cuyler, Aberdeen Drug Store, 399 Aberdeen street.

Medicine Hat News circa 1922

At the same time, a “municipal” golf course, which later became known as the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club was established, with each vying at the same time for membership.

The “original” Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club was established in August 1913 but it was located six miles east of Medicine Hat (Section 19 Range 12 Township 4 W4).

In 1922, as a result of the desire to have a golf course within the city limits, Mayor Walter Huckvale promoted the idea of a municipal golf course and the “muni” course and the Connaught Golf club were both established in that same year.



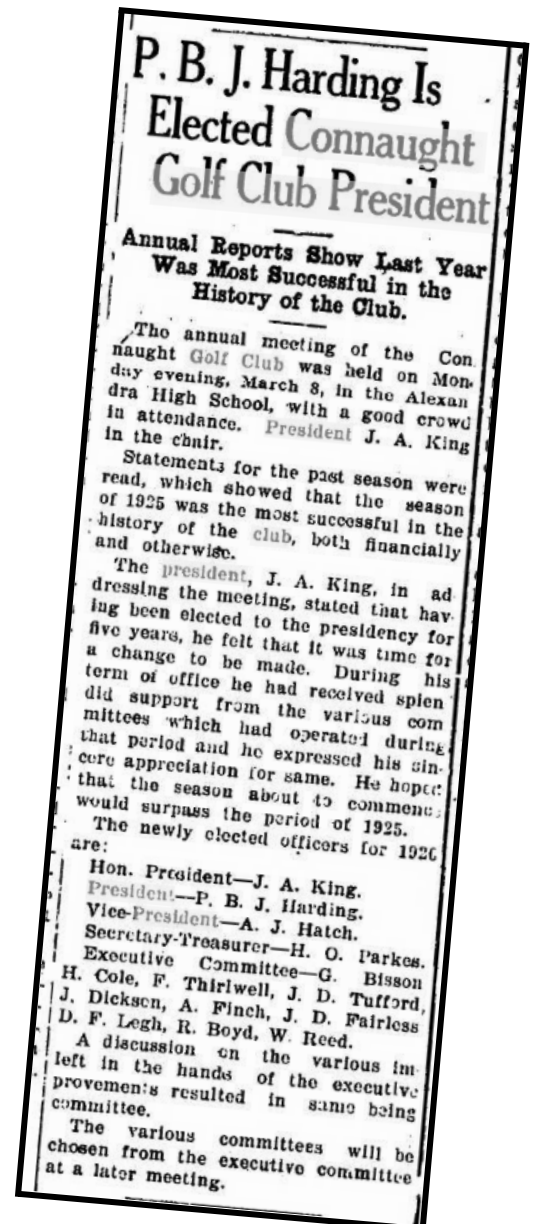
In 1934, the “municipal” course became known as the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club and the course out in the “country” ceased to exist.

The “municipal” course, which apparently had the political and financial support of the City of Medicine Hat was situated on the north side of the South Saskatchewan River with the only access being over Finlay Bridge, adjacent to the area known as Police Point.

For some golf enthusiasts, the idea of a “muni” golf course did not sit well. There were some who suggested that it might follow its predecessor in the “country” which was in their view, in reality, a social club for the “privileged” with many of its members being doctors, lawyers and accountants and other “socialites”. The concern expressed by some was that the new “municipal” course would bring much of the same sense of entitlement.

The desire to build a course on the south side of town, on the other hand, was motivated largely by the need to provide a golf course for the “ordinary” working class golfer.

As a result, Connaught became known then and even now as “the friendliest place to play”!



The development of an affordable and more accessible semi-private golf course on the south side, seemed to be a more desirable route to follow, despite the obvious financial constraints and difficulties which, as compared to the municipal course⁷, continued to plague the Connaught Golf Club throughout its 100 year history.

FIRST STRUGGLE
In 1925, the club suffered it's first internal struggle, one which eventually caused almost half the members to drift away from the Connaught group and form another club which is today the Medicine Hat Golf Club. Art Hatch and Art Finch were two of the foremost enthusiasts of the period who converted and assisted in forming the new group. The cause of the struggle was a proposal by some of the club members to apply to the Alberta government for a beer licence which was granted seven years later.

MUNICIPAL PAIR DEFEND GOLF TROPHY
MACKAY AND MOORE TURN BACK BID OF CONNAUGHTERS
On Sunday Mackay and Moore of the Medicine Hat Golf Club successfully defended for the third time the inter-club foursome challenge trophy in a hard fought tussle with D. Fawcett and J. Moyer, the Connaught Club challengers.
This interesting competition has now been in full swing for several weeks. The qualifying round was played on the Medicine Hat home course and resulted in two medal club teams tying for low medal score: J. A. Mackay-Doc Moore and D. M. Lundie-Geo. Thomsen each having a 72.
This playoff was taken as a challenge game, Mackay and Moore winning after a close battle one up. The winners next met J. Henderson and A. J. Hatch and again were successful in retaining the trophy, this time the score reading 5 up and 4 to play.
INTER-CLUB BATTLE
This brought play up to the first inter-club battle when last Sunday afternoon the holders accepted the challenge of D. Fawcett and J. Moyer of the Connaught Club.

⁷ To be accurate, the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club originally began as a municipal golf course but later became a semi-private golf course much like Connaught, which became "owned" by its members and governed by a Board of Directors elected from among its membership. Both then and now continue to be situated on City owned land under a long-term lease agreement.

The natural rivalry between the two golf clubs was quite evident, even back then and this inter-city rivalry continues even to the present, more than one hundred years later.

History will record that Connaught Golf Club was formally incorporated under the Societies Act (Alberta) in 1941 with a temporary Board of Directors pending a formal organizational meeting with A.Y. "Tommy" Legge serving as President under this new legal entity.

TEMPORARY MEMBERS.

After being properly registered and having paid the prescribed green fees, visitors who are bona-fide golfers shall be entitled temporarily to all the privileges of the course, including full club house facilities.

The scale of green fees shall be established at each annual meeting.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION
A. Y. Legge	8 3rd St. N. W. Med. Hat	City Assessor
E. J. Dooker	420 9th St. " "	Barber
G. P. Legg	15 9th St. " "	Accountant
J. Schreier	414 2nd St. " "	Manager
R. E. Bromley	63-9th St. " "	Welder
F. J. Schreier	384-10th St. " "	Plant Inspector
H. Macdonald	518-10th St. " "	House Miller
J. Henderson	503 10th St. " "	Palmer
A. Thompson	481-7th St. " "	Letter

Tommy Legge

WITNESS:

Form 842-22

PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

CANADA

Certificate of Incorporation

I hereby Certify that THE CONNAUGHT GOLF CLUB

is this day incorporated under The Societies Act, 1924.

Given under my hand and seal of office at Edmonton this third

day of March A. D. 1941.

Registrar of Joint Stock Companies

He later became the first President of the Club under its newly incorporated status, as another chapter in the history of Connaught began.

Notice to Golfers

The undermentioned clubs have mutually agreed that dual membership for both clubs for the year 1949 shall be:

GENTLEMEN	- - -	\$20.00
LADIES	- - - - -	10.00

The said clubs have further agreed that all fees whether or otherwise must be paid to their respective club by Y 15th next.

Golf instruction will be available two days each week at club through the services of Bob Henderson, details of which will be posted in each clubhouse. This instruction will include Junior members as a class for one morning each week.

CONNAUGHT GOLF CLUB,
per Robert Thompson, President.

MEDICINE HAT GOLF CLUB,
per M. H. Stone, President.

Despite the continuing effort to attract members and the “natural” inclination for each membership group and to compare the quality of their respective golf courses, they both have worked together to improve the quality of golf in Medicine Hat.

Each then and now have their own unique features and offer many different challenges to the skilled and not so skilled player.

The MHGCC has a “spectacular” view of the South Saskatchewan River along several of its first few holes and claims as one of its more historical features, as being the original site of the NWMP barracks.



South Saskatchewan River from Near the Site of the Barracks

In the case of Connaught, among many of its unique features back then, was a “rickety” suspension bridge which linked two holes between a “coulee” or ravine, which made for some interesting challenges on a “windy” day.

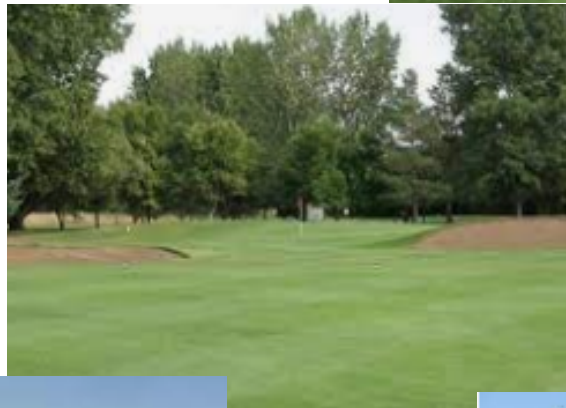
A modern version of the suspension bridge continues to exist today linking the residential area near St. Mary's School and the Kensington subdivision.⁸

By all accounts, it is a much more stable and secure pedestrian walkway than what existed in earlier times.



⁸ In the distance, in the first picture of the “suspension bridge” you can see the clubhouse at Connaught (circa 1950)

The current tree lined fairways and immaculate putting greens at Connaught are a far cry from the earlier days, when Connaught was described as a “*dry, harsh prairie course with only sagebrush and cactus and other natural vegetation, with the proverbial “sand” greens and no trees within miles*”. (circa 1956)



For more photos click on the link below:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/76078024@N07/albums/72157629212986474>

Chapter 4: The Southeastern “Open” Golf Tournament

The intercity rivalry between Connaught and the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club (MHGCC) continues to the present although in more modern times the level of competitiveness has largely subsided with the introduction of a “dual” membership and the development of a collaborative business approach, prompted by a more competitive golf environment.

Friendly “competitive” golf in various forms has always been a significant part of the sport and every golf club carries on the tradition of a “club championship” for its members on an annual basis. The MHGCC and Connaught Golf Club are no exceptions.



In addition, it was common for Golf Clubs to not only promote the sport but to to hallmark their own golf course by hosting an “open” golf tournament with invitations for all accomplished (and not so accomplished) golfers to demonstrate their skill and expertise on the golf links.

Both the MHGCC and Connaught have carried on this tradition.⁹

⁹ The MHGCC has hosted an “open” golf tournament each year on the long weekend in May, which is known as the Victoria Day Tournament and it attracts golfers from throughout the Province as it is the first major event of the golf season in Alberta.

Since 1934, Connaught Golf Club has hosted annually one of the premier “open” golf tournaments in Alberta, which is one of the oldest and most well-known competitions in the Province -The Southeastern Alberta Golf Tournament.

Simply known as the “**Southeastern**”, it continues to be one of the most popular golf tournaments in Western Canada, attracting golfers from Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and the northern United States and beyond.



Frank Mulholland and Vic Joe Carter- Finalists in Southeastern Alberta Golf tournament held at Connaught Golf Club circa-1944



No history of Connaught Golf Club would be complete without an historical “vignette” of this classic tournament.

The Southeastern “Open” Golf Tournament at the Connaught Golf Club held its inaugural tournament on September 1 and 2, 1934 and it has continued to be held annually on the long weekend in September since that date and it has become one of the top golf tournaments in Alberta attracting competitors from Western Canada and beyond.

Among Medicine Hat golfers, it continues to be a highly sought after title and heralded as the “top” prize, emblematic of golf supremacy in the Hat.

Past Champions include Frank Mulholland (1915-1958) who holds the record as having won the tournament 7 times in the first 10 years that the competition was held (1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1939, 1940 and 1944)¹⁰.

Other notable multiple year winners of the Southeastern Alberta Golf Tournament prior to 2000 include: Bob Henderson (1941, 1946 & 1957), Bob MacDonald (1947, 1948, 1950 & 1953), Ray Goddard (1955, 1958 & 1959) Don Morley (1954 & 1956), Orv Smeland (1960, 1961 & 1969) Edgar Adam (1963, 1964 & 1966) Len Brown (1965 & 1967) and Randy Torgerson (1968, 1971, 1973 & 1974 & 1983) Bruce Perrin (1952¹¹, 1978 & 1979) Jimmy Russell (1972 & 1977) Kelly Risling (1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1993, 1996, 1998¹²) Warren Gnam¹³ (1986, 1991 & 1992), Sean McSweeney (1994 & 1995) to name only a few.

¹⁰ He did not compete in the tournament in 1938 and was runner-up in 1941 and 1946.

¹¹ See footnote 21

¹² Risling went on to win twice again in 2000 and 2001. See, footnote 23

¹³ Warren Gnam won again 10 years later in 2011 to join Ryan Vallely (2002 & 2005) and Dale Vallely (2004 & 2005) as multiple winners in the next decade.

These “names” would be familiar to most golf enthusiasts from Medicine Hat and no doubt will bring back many fond memories.



Frank Mulholland putting on the 18th "green" during the final SE Alberta Golf Championship played at the Connaught Golf Course at Medicine Hat. Frank Mulholland went on to win the Muir Rose Bowl Trophy for a seventh time (1944)

The first annual tournament (1934) was won by Frank Mulholland, who was also the City champion that year. He shot a final round (71) and won the event defeating Jack MacKay (74) and Bob Henderson from Calgary (74). Irene Hatch took the First Ladies Championship by defeating her mother Mrs A.J. Hatch.

There was no doubt that there was an interesting conversation round the dinner table at the Hatch residence that evening!

The first hole-in one of the tournament was recorded Mrs. Jack Potter on hole #9, which was appropriately named “Half-way” and it likely was the very first competitive “ace” ever made at the Connaught Golf Club.

President J.P. Whalen and VP G. F. Allan and Secretary-treasurer John Elder celebrated the event by handing out the A.E. Muir Rose Bowl, which became the traditional trophy emblematic of the Championship flight winner. Connaught Captain Roy Jones was credited with promoting the idea of the tournament, which by all accounts was considered a huge success.¹⁴

In 1935, Bud McKillop of Lethbridge was noted as having recorded the lowest competitive round (67) at Connaught, a record which stood for a number of years. The defending champion, Frank Mulholland won, defeating Bob Henderson of Lethbridge.

The Ladies Champion was Miss Maude Parker with Mrs A. J. Hatch as runner up. The tournament was again noted as being very successful with 100 entrees, 76 men and 24 women competing.

In 1936, Frank Mulholland won his 3rd title in a row defeating Bob Henderson again in a playoff on the 19th hole.

The winners for the following years in the 1930's were as follows:

1937- Men's Champion: J Metcalfe/ runner-up L. Lewis

1938- Mens Champion: Frank Mulholland/ runner up Jack Moyer.

¹⁴ Medicine Hat News: Sept 4, 1934

1939- The Medicine Hat News headline in 1939 read, *“Frank Mulholland wins for the 5th time shooting a course record of nine under par”*.

In the 1940’s, despite the advent of the Second World War, the tournament continued to take place with some interesting results as reported by the Medicine Hat News. Fortunately from a historical and archival standpoint, the Medicine Hat News has faithfully covered and reported on the event every year from 1934 to the present. Like many sporting events which occur on an annual basis, the issue from a historical standpoint is not where to start but where to end and how “best” to capture the relevant information which would be of interest.

The headlines and by-lines from the Sports Section of the Medicine Hat News over the years¹⁵ provide an accurate, convenient and interesting historical account of this important part of the history of the Connaught Golf Club and is worth reproducing as a means of documenting this important part of its history.

1940: *“Frank Mulholland wins 6th title in 7 years”. W. Craig of Lethbridge comes in second; Miss Ann Zinkham defeats Mrs F.S. Dunham 5 & 4 to win ladies’ title*

1941: *“Bob Henderson beats Frank Mulholland in 19th hole match play for championship..henderson making a birdie putt for the win” Miss Ann Zinkham repeats with win over Mrs F.S. Dunham for ladies’ title*

¹⁵ The years 1934 to 2012 seem to be an appropriate timeline to document and record and this important chapter in the history of the Connaught Golf Club-The Southeastern “Open” Golf Tournament and the history of the Golf Club itself.

1942: *“Perfect weather attracts 150 golfers to Southeastern L Oates from Abbey Sask wins”; Mrs F.S. Dunham wins after being runner-up in last two SE tournaments*

1943: *“LAC G.R. Rutten beats Flight Lieutenant Tom Hawkey #34 SFTS- 3 and 1 to Capture Southern Alberta title” Mrs Hatch beats Mrs C Wright*

Here is an interesting sidebar.

The champion and runner-up in 1943 were both serving with the British Royal Air Force Flying Training School (#34 SFTS)¹⁶. The champion, G.R. Rutten was a pilot in training while the runner-up, was a commissioned officer, who had already received his “wings”.

Sadly, Flight Lieutenant Thomas Michael Hawkey, who later served with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve was killed in action in Italy on April 23rd, 1945. He was 22 years old.

But let’s “keep calm and carry on”.¹⁷



Original 1939 poster

¹⁶ #34 Service Flying Training School was one of 53 flying schools established across Canada under the Commonwealth Training Plan, a joint venture between the United Kingdom and Canada to train and supply pilots and aircrew for the war effort.

¹⁷ *Keep Calm and Carry On* was a motivational poster produced by the British Government in 1939 in preparation for WWII. The poster was intended to raise the morale of the British public, threatened with widely predicted mass air attacks on major cities by the German Luftwaffe.

1945-Vic Meech¹⁸ from Lethbridge wins the 1945 SE Golf Championship defeating Jack Moody¹⁹ who returned after spending 5 years overseas.

Vic Meech and Vic Jack Moody- Finalists in Southeastern Alberta Golf tournament held at Connaught Golf Club circa-1945



1946-Bob Henderson of Connaught beats Frank Mulholland Calgary Open Champ to win SE on the last hole; 188 entries largest recorded to date

1947-Bob MacDonald “stylish” 15 year-old city Junior champion wins SE with a brilliant 3 and 4 triumph over Al Walton of Calgary

¹⁸ Vic Meech was a young architect from Lethbridge and later he became the grandfather of future SE Women’s Champion Dianne Wilkins

¹⁹ Jack Moody became a local car salesman, an avid golfer and member of the Connaught Golf Club. He was awarded a life membership to Connaught for his valuable support.

1948-16 year old Bobby MacDonald²⁰ wins SE over fellow Connaught golfer Charles “Chuck” Allan (19)

1949- Young Skip Takes S.E.

*“Shooting a terrific 180 foot chip shot out of the brush on the 19th hole, 14 year old Elliott (“Skip”) MacDonald defeated his older brother Bob (17) to capture the 16th annual SE Alberta golf championship and win the A.E. Muir Rose Bowl. His second shot onto the green was within 9 inches of the hole; Bob’s second shot landed 50 feet from the hole and he elected to put from 10 feet off the green, which missed the cup by a half inch. He conceded the hole to his brother, **the youngest winner in the history of the tournament.**”²¹*

1950-Bob MacDonald beats Medicine Hat’s Golf Club Don Morley to win SE; Morley had earlier defeated “Skip” MacDonald last years champ and Connaught pro Bob Henderson to get to the finals

1951-Bob Henderson won the 18th SE for the third time (1941, 1946) since 1941 beating last year’s consolation winner Skip MacDonald

²⁰ MacDonald had won the City championship, Connaught Club championship and Calgary Herald Championship all in the same year.

²¹ E.W.N “Skip” MacDonald went on to law school at the University of Alberta and returned to Medicine Hat and became a distinguished barrister and solicitor and Provincial Court Judge. He was an accomplished golfer and became a well-known member of the community. He was a member of the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club for many years.

1952-Bruce Appleton²² and Ray Goddard both 16 years old duel for SE Crown with Appleton coming out on top

1953-Bob MacDonald wins SE fourth victory '47, '48 and '50 beating 17 year old Ray Goddard

1954-Power Golfer Don Morley wins SE with one up victory over Skip MacDonald...Polly Beaton wins womens on "new Connaught course..."

As a another interesting sidebar, the "new course layout in 1954" featured all of the holes being given a name which included the following:

- #1 Panorama-400 yard par 4
- #2 Bullberry- 328 yard d par 4
- #3 Nobody's Friend-526 yard par 5
- #4 Little Dipper-150 yard par 3
- #5 TeePee Hollow-424 yard par 4
- #6 South Bend-480 par 4
- #7 Gay Deceiver-176 yard par 3
- #8 Hoodoo-322 yard par 4
- #9 Halfway-383 yard par 4
- #10 Try Again-364 yard par 4
- #11 Straightaway-360 yard par 4
- #12 North Bend -558 yard par 5
- #13 The Ravine -138 yard par 3
- #14 Double Dip-470 yard par 5
- #15 Eastward -392 yard par 4

²² Bruce Appleton was born May 12, 1936 to Jean Christina Perrin and George Appleton but he was raised by his grandparents Elias and Ellen Perrin and lived all of his life in Medicine Hat. In his late teens or early 20's, he adopted the surname "Perrin". He became a well-known local athlete competing in curling, basketball and baseball. But his first love was golf, where he became very well-known within the golfing community. He won the Southeastern in 1952 at age 16 and went on to win the event again in 1978 & 1979. Among his many accomplishments, it is reported that he had 13 holes in one!

He passed away on May 19, 2022 at the age of 86.

#16 Real McCoy 402 yard par 4

#17 Oasis -240 yard par 4

#18- Question Mark

1955-Ray Goddard Supreme defeats Bud Gregg in 22nd annual SE...Polly Beaton wins women's title for 3rd consecutive time

1956-Don Morley wins over 17 year old "spunky" Wayne Oates from Drumheller

1957- Tom Flannigan²³-Junior Champ wins Southeastern beating David Close and Medicine Hat Golf Club's Orv Smeland

1958-Ray Goodard wins; defeats junior Tom Flannigan from MH Golf Club; consolation winner Stan Long; Polly Beaton wins women's title

1959-Ray Goddard defends title and wins over Joe Duffy, current pro at Connaught. Goddard was pro at Connaught for 5 years before moving to Calgary; Polly Beaton wins women's title

The Medicine Hat News reported as part of its coverage of the 1959 tournament the following: "The 1959 affair marked the last sand green play at Connaught Golf Club as President George Oliphant announced that the remaining 16 greens would be grassed up in the off-season. A new irrigation system was installed at the club this off season"

1960-19 year old Orv Smeland defeated Reo Bertie from Drumheller in desert-like conditions; the remaining championship flight included Joe Duffy, Stan Long, RonTorgerson,

²³ Tom Flannigan went on to become a Medicine Hat Chartered accountant and prominent member of the local golf community.

Skip MacDonald and Bill MacKinnon, Doreen Millington wins women's

1961-Orv Smeland beats Lyle Flynn²⁴; Polly Beaton returns to win women's title; Edgar Adam wins junior flight

1962-Nick Skinner, son of Dr. Jim Skinner bettered last years Junior champ Edgar Adam and last year's winner Orv Smeland to win title; Doreen Millington outs Polly Beaton to win ladies'

1963-30th Annual SE- Edgar Adam 18 year old former Junior winner wins 1963 SE beats another former Junior champ Tom Flanagan; Stan long consolation winner; Polly Beaton women's title

1964-Edgar Adam wins SE; Runner up Dale Oliphant; Stan Long consolidation winner; Doreen Millington beats Polly Beaton

1965-Len Brown Club Pro at Medicine Hat Golf club wins SE beating Bert Wright (18) of Vancouver; Doreen Millington womens 4th time winner 1960, 62, & 64

1966- Edgar Adams and Jimmy Russell tied after 36 holes; Adams wins in playoff; Third Tom Flannigan; Doreen Phillips wins ladies championship

1967-Len Brown winner over Orv Smeland, both of MHGCC; Doreen Phillips wins Ladies' title

²⁴ Lyle Flynn was a prominent member of the Connaught Golf Club, serving as President and was a local chartered accountant. He served two terms as a City of Medicine Hat Alderman in 1983 and 1986.

1968- 17-year old Randy Torgerson beats MHGCC Pro Len Brown to win Southeastern; Women's title Doreen Phillips beats Polly Beaton

1969-Orv Smeland wins over Len Brown to capture SE title; Katie Wilson Lethbridge over Polly Beaton to win Ladies title

1970-Bruce Perrrin withstands challenge and wins SE championship over Randy Torgerson; Don Morley holds course record 66; Doreen Phillips wins Women's title

1971-Randy Torgerson beats Orv Smeland to win SE; Doreen Phillips wins title in Ladies Championship flight

1972-Local young golf star Jimmy Russel beats favorite Orv Smeland to win title; Women's title goes to Doreen Phillips

1973-Randy Torgerson wins over Jim Russell at Southeastern; Pat Hall won the ladies championship which was held at the MH Golf Club coming off of an Alberta Junior Championship win; Stan Long was third in the Championship flight competing in his 32nd SE tournament

1974-Torgerson wins SE over Barry Sjolie and Jim Russell; Pat Hall beats Polly Beaton in Ladies' final

1975-Dave Tamblyn wins over Glenn Carr to Capture SE title; Marge Sawatsky win Ladies event

1976-Don Graham over Barry Sojolie to win Southeastern tournament; Polly Beaton captures ladies title

1977- Jimmy Russell comes back to the Hat to win SE over runner-up Kelly Risling; Polly Beaton continues domination of the Ladies side of the tournament with another win.

1978-Bruce Perrin of the Medicine Hat Golf Club wins SE over Kelly Risling; Doreen Phillips wins Ladies Championship flight

1979-Bruce Perrin and Randy Torgerson duel it out at Southeastern with Perrin coming out on top; young Bob Knelson comes in third; Joanne Morrison Connaught Ladies champion wins SE Ladies title for the first time

1980- Calgary's Dave Schultz wins over local golfers Orv Smeland and Randy Torgerson to win Southeastern tournament; Vicki Schooley wins Ladies title

1981-Dave Schultz, Kelly Risling and Randy Torgerson compete for SE tournament title; Schultz comes out on top; Up and coming young ladies golfer Kathy Smeland from MHGCC wins the women's title

1982- Young Wayne Mattson beats Dave Schultz and Kelly Risling to win SE event; Ladies championship held at MHGCC won by Joyce Woodruff

1983-50th anniversary of SE Golf Tournament was held with 18 year old Terry Zachary coming from behind to defeat Randy Torgerson; Kelly Risling in third after being runner-up for 7 years in a row and leading going into the final round; Corrine Gnam from Connaught wins ladies at MHGCC

1984-Risling finally ends Southeastern Jinx; Leading in all three rounds beating Gary Stelter followed by Randy Torgerson and Terry Zachary; Corrrine Gnam wins second in a row ladies title

1985-Kelly Risling wins second title over Randy Torgeson and Rory Lukey at Southeastern tournament

1986- Warren Gnam wins Men's championship for first time; Kathy Smeland win Ladies' title

1987-Kelly Risling defeats Warren Gnam in SE tourney; Corrine Gnam Crowned Ladies' Champ

1988-Kelly Risling claims Southeastern Crown over Warren Gnam for second year in a row; Ladies Champion Dianne Wilkins from Connaught

1989-Don Graham takes title Southeastern with win over Kelly Risling; Corey Sadlemyer comes in Third; Brenda Wikjord claims Ladies Championship over last year winner Dianne Wilkins

1990-Graham successfully defends Crown over Terry Zachary; Wilkins back in the winner circle with win over Corrine Gnam in Women's championship flight

1991-Warren Gnam claims title over Risling and new comer Kent Walker; Dianne Wilkins beats Corrine Gnam by 38 strokes to take Ladies SE trophy

1992-Connaught's Warren Gnam nabs title again over Risling;

1993-Risling wins Southeastern; 7th Title in 19 appearances; Todd Schaufele comes in second; Last year's winner Warren Gnam is third

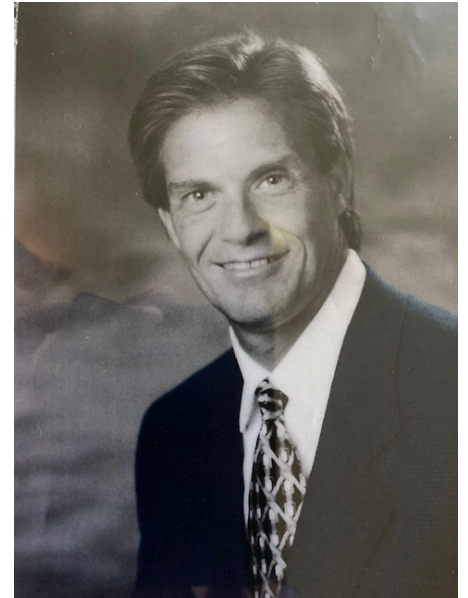
1994-(Sean) McSweeney settles down to take Southeastern by one stroke over Trevor Lind²⁵; Risling takes Third; Corrine Gnam win Women's title over Joanne Morrison

1995-Sean McSweeney leads from start to finish to win Southeastern; Risling finches 3 back; Corrine Gnam up by 10 strokes going into final round, wins

1996-Kelly Risling captures Triple Crown-Victoria Day, City Championship and Alberta Mid-Amateur and Southeastern; Dianne Wilkins wins Ladies' shooting final round 73

1997-Sean McSweeney shines in Southeastern with a win; Kassie Goodfellow takes Ladies' title before heading to the U.S. on a golf scholarship

1998-Kelly Risling²⁶, after disastrous front nine rallies to win title over McSweeney; Kim Mastre on the Alberta Provincial team wins Ladies'



Kelly Risling

²⁵ Not to be confused with Trevor Linden, who played for the Medicine Hat Tigers and then spent 18 years (1988-2008) in the National Hockey League, Trevor Lind was the son of Carl and Terri Lind. Interestingly though, Trevor Linden was a junior golfer at Connaught and worked in the Pro shop prior to his illustrious Junior and NHL hockey career. For another interesting story surrounding Medicine Hat born NHL hockey players, see my article entitled, ["It Must be the Water-A Medicine Hat Hockey Historical Vignette"](#)

²⁶ Kelly Risling was a member of Connaught Golf Club from 1978-1986 before joining the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club. He won the Connaught Club Championship 5 times during that period. After joining the MHGCC, he won 21 Club Championships and 25 Medicine Hat City Championships. He was a member of the Alberta Willingdon Cup team in 1997 and was inducted into the Medicine Hat Hall of Fame in 2019. He won the Southeastern 9 times and was runner-up an "amazing" 18 times during his illustrious amateur golf career.

1999-Bruce MacDonald from Calgary wins Southeastern over Arthur Pendle; Jillian Wyne from Calgary tops Ladies' field

2000-Kelly Risling rolls over Competition to win Southeastern

2001- Risling Battles Wind to SE title; 30 year Connaught member Joanne Morrison captures SE Women's title; Brent Fisher second

2002²⁷-Ryan Vallely shoots course record to win Southeastern Open; Jim Duce falls short by 4 strokes; Jean Rossen wins women's championship flight

2003- Jamie Scott ends up winner with Risling, Vallely(Dale) Graham & Pendle in 4 way tie for 2nd; Clara Patzer takes Women's title.

2004-18 year-old Dale Vallely outlasts Warren Gnam to win Open; Jean Shannon takes Womens' title

2005- Dale Vallely takes Southeastern with a win over brother Ryan; second consecutive win of the Open following wins at the Victoria Day, City Open and Riverview (Redcliff); Patty Horner wins Championship flight for ladies

2006- Swift Current's Brent Wotypka tops Connaught's Roger Larson to win; Kathy Hopfner, (Brent's wife) beats Jean Nitchke to claim Womens' crown

²⁷ Medicine Hat News: Vallely Shoots Record (67) "The previous Connaught record of 68 was held by held by PGA Professional Dave Barr and Canadian Pro Tour Professional Don Graham"

2007-Former U.S. Collegiate player Nathan Allan wins SE title over former winner (2003) Jamie Scott; Jade Polonich fresh off of her first LPGA appearance as an amateur wins Southeastern

2008- Former Canadian tour player Don Graham wins 75th Southeastern with win over last year's winner Nathan Allan; Ladies Champion Pat Hall completes sweep of three local majors including oVictoria Day and City Open

2009-Connaught's Dillon Batsel and Pat Hall take Men's and Women's Southeastern titles respectively;

2010-Up and coming youngster Becky Martin wins first Ladies' Championship; Veteran Ryan Vallely defeats Jim Duce to win Men's Championship Flight

2011-Warren Gnam survives to claim Southeastern title over Roger Larson; Alison Dorren takes Women's event

2012- 59 year old Jim Duce shoots closing round 74 to win first major title; edges runner-up Warren Gnam; Jean Nitchke wins title in Ladies event over Celina Lam from Calgary

The Southeastern Alberta "Open" Golf Tournament continues its tradition of being one of the premiere Golf tournaments in the Province and its storied past is an important part of the history of the Connaught Golf Club.

Chapter 5: The Connaught Era 1945-1954 “The Post War Period”

Under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) during Second World War, the Royal Air Force Service Training School #34 was established at Medicine Hat at the site of the current airport and operated from April 8th, 1941 to November 17th, 1945. The BCATP across Canada was a huge success which saw over 2000 pilots earning their ‘wings’ and making a major contribution to the Allied war effort during World War II.

Many of the young pilots and servicemen of the #34 SFTS were avid golfers and frequented Connaught Golf Club when not in training or on duty, due to its relative close proximity to the airport and the flight training facility. In point of fact, two Allied servicemen - LAC G.R. Rutten and Flight Lieutenant Tom Hawkey, both members of the British Air Force Training School (#34 SFTS) were first and second, at the Southeastern Golf tournament held at Connaught in 1943.

A book by David J Carter entitled, “Prairie Wings” documents this interesting part of the history of Medicine Hat.



Given the relative close proximity of the flight training school to Connaught, one can well imagine Second World War warplanes of every description flying low over the Connaught Golf course during this time, in Top Gun-like “fashion”, scaring the unsuspecting golfers as they readied themselves for a “birdie” putt, much to the amusement of the young pilots.



A

Formation of Harvard²⁸ aircraft flying over Medicine Hat circa 1943-44

In 1945-46, following the Second World War, Connaught Golf Club bought an old surplus building that once housed the “chapel” of the #34 Service Flying Training School.

The “chapel” was moved from the airport to a location nearby present day St. Mary’s School in the southwest area of Medicine Hat.

²⁸ One of the best advanced training aircraft ever built, the Harvard became a mainstay of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The Harvard must be considered one of the outstanding aircraft of the Second World War and the early postwar years. From 1940 to 1955, nearly all American and British Commonwealth pilots received some training on Harvards. Strong yet unforgiving, requiring a delicate touch to keep straight during landing and take-off, it was an ideal training airplane. Canada built more Harvards than any other aircraft, with a total of 3,350 produced.

It was substantially renovated and was officially opened on June 18, 1946 and thereafter, the clubhouse became a "hub" of activity not only for golf events but many other social activities attracting not only avid golfers but the local citizenry alike.

CONNAUGHT CLUB IS FEATURED NIGHT SPOT

A spot which has recently come in to the limelight as one of the city's main dance halls is the Connaught Golf Club in the southern part of town. The club is attractively designed and is of typical eastern night club style, with tables and chairs circling a good-sized dance floor. Refreshments are served and dancing runs until midnight.

The orchestra is under the able baton of Elwood Caldwell with the vocal selections rendered by Lois Mahon. In the main hall the lighting effect is supplied by small table lamps with the outer hall being lighted by ceiling lights.

Everything is installed for the convenience of patrons from air conditioning to a light confectionery stand. All in all the Connaught Golf Club is a perfect place for a Saturday evening of entertainment, with the music good and refreshments better.

The new clubhouse, the former chapel of No. 34 S.F.T.S., was officially opened June 18, 1946. Since its opening, it has proved a popular rendezvous for citizens of the city. The attractive lounge room is finished in blue, green and red leatherette chairs and settees, natural wood tables, and soft lights. Dark wood panelling gives the room a warm, friendly atmosphere. Venetian blinds and heavy drapes complete the furnishings. A large canteen, locker rooms, kitchen facilities, and was rooms complete the interior. A large, airy verandah overlooking the golf links is an ideal spot for warm summer nights. The exterior is now being painted a gleaming white, with a red roof. Spacious grounds are also being prepared. The clubhouse is also a Saturday night rendezvous for local funsters, out for an evening's dancing, to the music of the Modernaires orchestra.

Despite very humble beginnings, Connaught Golf Club and its clubhouse became a popular gathering spot and host of a variety of social events, including meetings, weddings, dances and conventions.



1949 Members of Connaught Golf Club



1950 Kinsmen Convention Held at Connaught Golf Club



Trophy Presentation Southeastern Golf Tournament circa 1950

History will record that the building was later moved (1954-55) from Kensington to its current location. It is situated in the same position today as back in the mid-fifties and although it was placed on a larger elevated foundation to create a two-story structure and has undergone significant alterations and improvements over the years, its “footprint” is essentially the same today as it was back then.²⁹

According to David J. Carter, author and historian, the half hexagonal shape at the south end of the building is in architectural terms is called an “apse” and is a feature most commonly associated with a church or chapel. That portion of the building has since been removed but its existence from a historical perspective is extremely important.



²⁹ The picture depicts the Connaught Golf Club clubhouse circa 1955-57 following its move from Kensington to its current location.

Typically within the vestibule, would be located an altar in the middle of the alcove with a plain brass cross. On the right facing south, would stand a lectern with a King James version of the Bible. On the opposite side would stand a “pulpit” from which the Minister would address the congregation.

At least 50 pilots were killed at the training facility during WWII, and most are buried in a Field of Honour at Hillside Cemetery in Medicine Hat.



A Spitfire flies over Southern Alberta (circa 1943)

There is little doubt that the vast majority of those servicemen of the Royal Air Force Service Training School #34 would have had funeral services conducted in the Chapel, when it was located at the current airport during the Second World War.

As reported, the “apse” of the old Chapel once stood at the south end of the building in relative close proximity to both the first tee box and the 18th green.

It was suggested that many a golfer said a “private prayer” on his way to the first tee box but later was heard mumbling and uttering not too many “holy” phrases in describing their just finished round of golf after coming off the 18th green.

Connaught Golf Club remained in this location until 1953, when the Trans-Canada Highway was built through Medicine Hat. The planned construction of the highway went right through the golf course, splitting it half.

Negotiations took place between the City of Medicine Hat, the Government of Canada and Connaught Golf Club and arrangements were made to ‘trade’³⁰ the golf course property for 480 acres in what was referred to as the “old Hutchison” land, which was some distance to the east, across and on the other side of the area, which later became known as Kin Coulee.

This now (more or less) is the location of the current Connaught Golf Club.

In 1954, through the industry and hard work of its members, the Clubhouse was literally cut in half by a hand saw and hauled in two sections from the Kensington location to the new site, where it was placed upon an elevated foundation with a “walk-out” basement and by first hand accounts “nailed” back together!

³⁰ Anecdotal historical accounts suggest strongly that the Connaught Golf Club was to receive “title” to the land but this apparently did not come to fruition and instead, a long term lease agreement was entered into between Connaught and the City of Medicine Hat.

The golf course itself slowly developed but like its predecessor in Kensington, with a lack of any form of irrigation, it was a dry, harsh prairie course with only sagebrush and cactus and other natural vegetation and the proverbial “sand” greens. By some accounts, there were no trees within miles.

Despite these arid conditions and these humble beginnings, Connaught Golf Club and its golf course and clubhouse thrived and it continued to be a popular venue, not only for golf but also various social activities.

From 1954 to 1959, the course was gradually improved with the planting of trees along its fairways but the lack of an irrigation system or any meaningful supply of water proved challenging.

In 1959, with the development of the St. Mary River Irrigation system (SMIRD) along the then southern border of the City, a permanent supply of water became available and an irrigation system was created for the benefit of the golf course³¹.

With the establishment of a then “state of the art” irrigation system with water being supplied by the SMIRD, the “sand” greens were replaced with “real” grass greens and a new era for Connaught Golf Club began.

This important milestone can best be described with the necessary detail by reference to the July 28th, 1959 article from the Medicine Hat News under the headline, “New Golfing Era Opened”.

³¹ SMIRD continues to supply water and the Golf Club awaits with great anticipation for the spring arrival of water to fill the “pond” between the #10 and #18 fairways which allows for the irrigation of the entire golf course.

NEW GOLFING ERA OPENED

Connaught Club Dreams Finally Realized

By LARRY WOOD
(NEWS Sports Writer)

The initial step has been taken to enable golfers of Medicine Hat and district to do their divot-digging on a layout which will rank with any in the province.

It's taken a long while to come, but the first iron is in the fire at the Connaught Golf Club with the installation of a new sprinkler and irrigation system which will be officially opened Wednesday. The enthusiastic people of the south hill layout aren't planning on stopping here either. They have extensive plans for the future which should gladden the hearts of every golfer in the Gas City.

"This sprinkler system has been in preparation ever since the club was moved to the new location," says George Oliphant, Connaught Club president. The original site of the Connaught layout was in Kensington but city expansion forced the club to move their clubhouse and course in 1954 to the south side of Kin-Coulee, the present location.

"Grass greens, grass fairways and trees are the next goals to shoot for," Oliphant reveals. "We have a tree nursery up there and now that we have the water, we can begin reaping the benefits of it."

The Connaught club has a long and colorful history behind the achievement which will be officially recognized tomorrow.

ELDER STARTED IT
The late Thomas Elder was probably as responsible as anyone for the creation of the Connaught Club. Back in 1918 he laid out some three holes, using old tin cans for cups, which was the first semblance of a golf course in the city. The defunct Golf and Country Club formed about 1918 and situated about 10 miles east of the city, was actually the first recognized layout in these parts. It ceased operations in 1936.

Elder's three-hole course was soon expanded to nine holes when a group of enthusiasts got together, held a meeting, formed a club and laid out a nine-hole setup.

nances were very poor. Jim McCorkle served as president during this time.

In 1930 Jack Fawcett was elected president of the Connaught Club. Golfing like everything else in that period, had hit a depression.

The enthusiasm of a handful of members who held a continued interest in the organization was shown at this time when it was undertaken to make complete alterations of the clubhouse and course. By 1932 the clubhouse had been completely remodelled. In 1933 Jack Whalen came in as president.

A never-ending enthusiasm displayed by Connaught mem-

bers from the start, kept the club in operation through the second war. Joe Lindsay served as president in the late 1940s and supervised what was then an 18-hole course with a membership of more than 300.

In 1954 when city expansion forced the Connaught group to abandon their premises in Kensington, Archie Rutherford was in his term of presidency. Volunteer labor in moving the clubhouse to its present site and starting all over again to condition an 18-hole course south of Kin-Coulee was again attributed to volunteer labor by the club members.

"The members banded to-

gether as one to keep this thing going," Rutherford reveals, saying that in 1954 the club was again on the verge of folding.

IRRIGATION PLANNED

With the new set-up on the present location, the thoughts of the Connaught Golf Club turned to irrigation, grass greens and a golf course to rank with others in the province. Negotiations began with the provincial and federal governments and with southeastern irrigation officials until this year, plans were fulfilled with a one-mile, underground pipe bringing water to a reservoir on the course from an irrigation canal southeast of the club. Last week, water hit the new reservoir for the first time and Wednesday the sprinkler system will be officially put into operation.

The story of the Connaught Golf Club is one of hard-gained but rich profits. The club hosts one big tournament a year, the annual Southeastern Alberta affair which was started in 1931 under the guidance of Roy Jones. The event is played each

year during the September 1st, Labor Day holiday. The first Connaught Club professional was hired in 1950. Bob Henderson took the job until 1954 when the big move took place. Ray Goddard became pro following the transplanting of the club. This year, Joe Duffy has taken over the position of club pro.

"The biggest asset this club has had is the willingness of its members to get out and work," says ex-president and longtime Connaught member Joe Lindsay. Joe has seen lean and green years pass for the Connaught Golf Club and throughout them all, volunteer labor by the club members has kept the sport alive on the layout to the south.

The major achievement, the acquisition of water, has been completed. All that remains to be seen is the steadily changing physical picture at the Connaught as the course reaps the benefits of the water.

Wednesday will be a day of celebration for Connaught club members. Their dreams are coming true at last.

Opening Wednesday

Sprinkler Set-Up Is Forward Step

(Special to The NEWS)

Possibly the biggest single step forward which can be taken by a golf club is the installation of a modern sprinkler irrigation system. In an area such as Medicine Hat, with its low average rainfall, the system is a major consideration in golf course planning.

The Connaught Golf Club is celebrating the opening of its recently completed 18-hole sprinkler system Wednesday. This system is one of the most advanced design and incorporates the latest ideas in fast and efficient irrigation.

The water supply is obtained from the St. Mary's River Development district canal. A 4,000 foot pipe gravity feeds water to the reservoir on the golf course. This reservoir is one of the largest of its type in Western Canada with 15 acre feet or approximately 4,000,000 gallons capacity which provides one week's water supply for the sprinkler system under normal conditions.

The system incorporates the centre fairway method of design. All main lines and fairway lateral lines are buried and wrapped aluminum tubing, laid to grade

and drained at strategic points. A total of 30,000 feet of this tubing was required for the 18-hole Connaught layout.

UNIQUE FEATURE

A unique feature of the system is the provision of 285 coupling valves, placed at planned intervals down the centre of each fairway and around the edges of all greens. These valves, which lie flush with the ground surface, are all that the golfer sees of the underground network of pipes and valves. They supply the full water requirements for the entire course and completely eliminate the need of a hose. Labor costs by the old hose sprinkler method are eliminated. The modern-type sprinkler system can be wholly operated by one man.

The set-up is designed to apply one-and-one-half inches of water over the entire course weekly. The water is delivered by means of a 40-horsepower pump unit which enables 600 gallons to be delivered per minute at 85 pounds pressure throughout the system.

The installation of the sprinkler system was carried out in 30 days by a Calgary firm, Sprinkler Irrigation and Equipment Company.

Chapter 6: The Connaught Era 1960-1976- The “New” Golf Course Layout

Esplanade



From 1960 to 1976, the members of Connaught Golf Club played on this gradually improving facility and enjoyed many social activities in the revitalized "chapel", which had been moved from Kensington to its current location in 1954. The development of a reliable source of water for the irrigation of the fairways and greens in 1959 resulted in the golf course slowly maturing into a pristine park-like setting.

But the next decade in the history of Connaught was not all "wine and roses" as the early and mid-sixties proved challenging from a financial perspective. Membership decline combined with increasing debt load put the Club in serious economic peril and on the verge of collapse. These circumstances were not confined to Connaught as the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club faced a similar fate.

Both Clubs reached out to the City of Medicine Hat for financial assistance and the offer of loan guarantees, debt forgiveness and financial assistance from the City was predicated on a concept which had been for years silently discussed but openly rejected by both the club executives-"amalgamation".

Medicine Hat News Circa 1965

Courses given deadline

City Council Monday night gave a six-month deadline to the two city golf courses to accept an up-to \$25,000 grant.

The grant would be made to the Connaught Golf Club if the Medicine Hat Club evacuated its present site and amalgamated with the other club.

The city wants to use the Medicine Hat grounds as a gravel pit.

Both clubs are believed to be in financial difficulties.

Under the terms of the grant, the city would pay off MHGC 1964 debts and only the members equity with the rest of the \$25,000 going to Connaught.

Council passed the resolution last fall and reaffirmed it in closed session Sept. 20, 1965.

The matter was brought up by Ald. Roy Osborne who said "this matter can't drag on forever."

At the same time Ald. Osborne denied rumors that the city was going to build a third course.

At the same time Willard Lutes' suggestion that copies of the resolution be sent to both club presidents was approved.

The two clubs will hold a joint meeting tonight.

From a political standpoint, amalgamation of the two entities was viewed by many of the council members as the only way of preserving and maintaining a viable golfing presence in the community. Ultimatums came and went and a resilient effort by both Connaught and the MHGCC to maintain their independence and develop a more prudent and innovative business plan allowed each to survive, from what was by some considered a disastrous result.³²

In the final moment, the City of Medicine Hat, although “holding a gun” to the head of both executives was reluctant to pull the trigger and begrudgingly stepped up to the plate.

This debate, although silenced for the time being, continued to be a topic of intense discussion on “coffee row” as both Connaught and to a lesser degree, MHGCC, continued to suffer from the ups and downs of the golf industry during this period.

History will record that without both the political and financial support of the City that the viability of the golf courses would be in serious jeopardy. This scenario continues to play out to this day as both golf courses continue to suffer from the ebb and flow of the demand by the golfing public and the economic uncertainty which prevails among most municipalities, as they

Medicine Hat
News circa 1961

City Reminded Of Old Contract

The Connaught Golf Club reminded city council of a seven-year-old agreement Tuesday night. Apparently the club has no land worries as is the case with the Medicine Hat Golf Club.

A.Y. Spivak, speaking on behalf of the Connaught Club, told council of the agreement which was made in 1954 when the club was moved. Apparently the city made an exchange of property and the golf club has or should have title to most of its land.

Council knew little about the old agreement and instructed city solicitor James G. Kidd QC to meet with Mr. Spivak and bring in a report at the next meeting.

Council is also waiting for a report on the situation involving a lease for the Medicine Hat club. It wants a long term lease as protection for improvement and expansion plans.

³² Most current members of the MHGCC would be aghast at the prospect that at one time amalgamation with Connaught was strongly suggested and that their golf course was proposed as the site of a gravel pit. How things have changed!

endeavour to balance ever-increasing demands for social needs and their own limited economic resources.

The relationship between the City and Connaught Golf Club was not always amicable and negotiations surrounding the “lease” arrangements were always hotly debated back then and the periodic renegotiation for a renewal of the lease agreement continues to be a contentious issue, even today.

Medicine Hat News circa 1969

Connaught Golf Club requests loan from city

Unless the city grants it a \$10,000 loan, the Connaught Golf Club will be forced to disband.

A delegation from the club appeared at Thursday's finance committee meeting to ask the city for the loan in return for first mortgage on the assets of the club and the Connaught Holding Company, which owns 51 per cent of its shares.

The club representatives explained that the financial difficulties arose partly out of a plan to merge with the Moose Lodge. The possibility of a merger held up the sale of shares in the club for more than a year, they said. Tax increases on golf club property have also added to financial problems.

Another major source of financial difficulty was the fact that competition from another golf club in the city prevented the Connaught Golf Club from charging what representatives called “realistic” membership fees.

The 60's might well be described as an interesting and challenging journey for Connaught, a trip consisting of a series of hills and valleys and the occasional “Grand Canyon”. But tenacity and perseverance prevailed and Connaught survived to “fight” another day in the corridors of City Hall, which “battle” continues to this day.

In the early 70's, the demand for residential housing in Medicine Hat improved dramatically, including the desire for residential "view" lots. The commercial development of the South-east sector of Medicine Hat resulted in a concentrated planning towards this part of the City including residential subdivisions.

The idea of residential development along a tree-lined green space such as a golf course attracted attention of the City planners and local City Council, and negotiations took place between the City of Medicine Hat and Connaught Golf Club to "shrink" its golf course footprint.

The negotiations between the City and Connaught Golf Club appeared somewhat one-sided as the City continued to own the golf course property and Connaught was merely a "tenant" albeit pursuant to a long-term lease agreement.

The desire for residential development along the golf course required a significant change in the "footprint" of the course including a corresponding reduction in size of the leasehold interest.

The reduction in the size of the lease land required a course redesign and after some tense discussions between City officials and members of the Executive of the golf course, several of whom were prominent lawyers³³ and accountants, arrangements were made to provide funding for a golf course

³³ The Connaught executive included Barry Deering and L. David Wilkins and Lyle Flynn. Wilkins, who later became a Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta and local chartered accountant, Lyle Flynn and Barry Deering were all avid golfers. Flynn later served two terms as an alderman or council member with the City of Medicine Hat, having been elected in 1983 and 1986. Deering continues to be a member of Connaught. All three joined the golf architect on the inaugural first round on the new course.

architect and soon plans were in place for a new golf course layout.

In addition to providing financial assistance and maintaining its status as a “semi-private” golf course, provisions in the lease agreement required the Club to maintain one open tee time per hour for the benefit of the public at large(non-members) throughout the golf season.

Although much to the chagrin of some members, this provision was considered to be a small price to pay for maintaining its autonomy. On the other side of the proverbial “coin”, the “rent” for the golf course, which had been at one point a specified dollar amount, was the subject of some tense negotiations at times. It was ultimately reduced to a nominal amount provided that Connaught make annual valuable improvements to the land and clubhouse in amounts which varied from year to year depending on the eligibility of Connaught to receive certain government grants. This amount currently stands at an amount of not less than \$30,500.00 per year but the lease and the annual “stipend” paid in the form of annual valuable improvements continues to be a matter of considerable debate.



An golf architect from Ireland, Jeff Howes Golf Design was engaged to design the golf course and soon the “concept” was turned into reality as a full new 18 holes of golf were designed and constructed around what then and now is known as the Connaught residential subdivision.

The new golf course layout or design was completed in 1974 and construction began immediately thereafter and for the 1975 golf season only 9 holes were in play.

In 1976, the full 18 holes of the redesigned golf course were in full operation and the course as it stands today was complete, boasting 66 acres of fairway, suggesting by some that there is no excuse for missing a fairway on the new improved course!

Connaught Golf Club, Canada



Jeff Howes Golf Design completed a MasterPlan for this golf course in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada.

Chapter 7: The Connaught Era-1976-1985 “The Clubhouse”

Not long after the redesign and development of the new Connaught Golf course layout, it became obvious to everyone or anyone connected with the “Club”, that a new clubhouse would be required to complement the new golf course and a committee was established to explore the various options that might be available.



Financing was always a major concern as despite the fact that the golf course was on City-owned land, it wanted to maintain its independence and remain a semi-private golf club, ostensibly owned and governed by its members. As a consequence, the City was reluctant to provide money from the public “purse” and the Golf Club was required to arrange its own financing for any clubhouse construction.

Novel ideas had been created to encourage members and non members alike to contribute towards either the construction of a new clubhouse and/or a revitalization of the “old” facility to bring it up to modern day standards, fitting with the calibre of the golf course that had been developed only a few years earlier.

The innovative creation of Connaught Holdings Ltd, which purportedly held the “assets” of the Club, allowed for the issuance of debentures being made available to the public at large, with a generous and attractive rate of interest. Corporate shares were also issued which became a source of much needed cash flow and which provided for a discount on future annual membership to “shareholders”.

Both schemes proved to be very popular and turned out to be a successful means of securing the necessary financing for the improvement of the golf course and the construction of the much needed clubhouse. Below is a note to the 1980 Financial statement, which reflects the nature of this so-called “indebtedness”.

NOTE (5) The debenture debt consists of the following debentures issued jointly by the Connaught Golf Club and Connaught Holdings Ltd. The Club is to receive the proceeds of these debentures and assume the indebtedness:	
1975 Series--\$50,000, 9% interest payable annually on July 1 of each year, redeemable in annual installments of \$3,500 commencing July 1, 1981	\$ 50,000
1977 Series "A"--\$25,000, 9% interest payable annually on July 1 of each year, redeemable in annual installments of \$1,750 commencing July 1, 1983	<u>14,000</u>
	<u>\$ 64,000.</u>

These types of innovative “money making” ideas continued over the years, with various improvements being funded through the contributions of its members, with no direct financial assistance from the City of Medicine Hat.

In the final moment, with financing in place, the decision was made to engage an architect and contractor and build a “new” clubhouse utilizing the existing structure standing in place and develop a more modern facility with offices and men’s and ladies locker rooms and pro shop in the lower level and a lounge and dining room area in the upper level.

This decision was prompted by “economic” considerations and the debate still continues even with the passage of time about the wisdom of that choice.

This was amplified by the construction of a “brand new” clubhouse in 1978 at the Medicine Hat Golf and Country Club and the “proverbial” comparisons between the two golf courses continued unabated.



The MHGCC clubhouse (pictured above) was completely destroyed by fire on February 20, 1980. By a stroke of good fortune, the “loss” was fully insured, which resulted in the construction of a brand new MHGCC clubhouse overlooking the South Saskatchewan River with a panoramic view of the City, much to the consternation and chagrin at the time of the Connaught members.

The major renovations of the interior of the clubhouse at Connaught took place over an extended period but the plan came to fruition and the clubhouse was officially opened with a ceremony held on June 22nd, 1980. The original upstairs area consisted of a large kitchen facility and a banquet hall which allowed for catering for large groups, while the downstairs contained the proshop and a small lounge area for golfers.

The new plan resulted in a total redesign of the upstairs area into a full dining room and lounge with an adjacent kitchen. The downstairs area was converted into an enlarged proshop, general offices and men and women’s locker area.

Rumour had it that a large circular fireplace was built in the middle of the dining room area, giving it more of an appearance of a “ski chalet” than golf course but this “feature” was quickly eliminated.

Today, a modern and “friendly” environment greets the many patrons of Connaught Golf Club.



Chapter 8: The Connaught Era-1985-2000 “All Hands on Deck”



The Clubhouse renovation in the early eighties was a welcome addition and improved dramatically the overall appearance of the golf club and made the golf course more of an attraction.

Membership increased significantly as the game grew in popularity buoyed largely by the live T.V. broadcasts of the major Professional Golfers Association tournaments. For example, in the early 1980's, ESPN telecasts of the early rounds of major tournaments provided viewers with the new opportunity to watch all four rounds of a major. From its early start in 1979 with one golf event, its ratings grew exponentially with a demand for ever-increasing coverage. ESPN increased the number of live broadcasts of major championships to 30 by 1985, 53 by 1992 and 86 by 1997.

Names like Palmer, Nicklaus, Trevino, Norman and Ballesteros and of course, Tiger Woods all became household names among golf enthusiasts worldwide.

The famed Master's tournament and its idyllic setting became a regular annual broadcast watched by millions of viewers. The British Open and the U.S. Open along with the PGA Championship and the "Masters" became a "must" watch event in many households, at least among the male members.

On a local level, the game continued to attract many new players including juniors and many more women took up the game in earnest and the demand for tee times at the golf courses increased.

The Connaught Golf Club as was the typical tradition had hired from time to time a "club pro" to manage the golf course and pro shop and to provide the ever-needed golf lessons to its members. Names like Bob Henderson, Ray Goodard, Joe Duffy and Darren Cook had all occupied the position. In 1976, a young local golfer was hired by the Connaught as the club professional, and although past pro's had come and gone, this golf prodigy became synonymous with Connaught Golf Club. His name was Glenn Carr.

Born and raised in Medicine Hat and having spent considerable time as an accomplished junior golfer at Connaught, he naturally excelled at the sport and took up golf not only as a game but as an "occupation", becoming a member of the Canadian Professional Golf Association. Few on the Executive, who were prepared to take a "chance" on this young local golfer at the time would have believed that his career and association with the club would continue for over 29 years!

Connaught Golf Club, like many golf courses, has been the site of many charitable golf tournaments and events over the years which have raised thousands of dollars for the community and other specialized needs and at the same time has enhanced the

game of golf. The annual CrimeStoppers and Oilmen's tournaments held at Connaught for example were legendary for a variety of different reasons!

An unusual and special event occurred on Monday June 16th, 1986 at Connaught Golf Club, when an enthusiastic group of members organized an effort to establish a record in the Guinness Book of World Records. 21 year old Terry Zachary³⁴, who worked in the Connaught Pro shop, along with a dedicated group of volunteers attempted to eclipse the record for the most holes of golf played in a 12 hour period. Starting at 8 am, Zachary beat the old mark of 326 holes by playing the par 3 third hole at 5:45 pm, nine hours and 45 minutes after the start of the marathon. Hundreds of spectators lined the fairways of Connaught encouraging the young golfer to continue the effort along the 6500 yard course.



In the 12 hour period from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, he managed to play 21 rounds of golf and an additional 13 holes in 1,676 strokes, an incredible average of 77.05 strokes per round!

³⁴ Terry Zachary, a young local golf phenom, went on to a distinguished career as a golf professional, doctor of chiropractic medicine, inventor and author. For more information go to <http://doczac.com>

More importantly, in addition to establishing a world record, over \$5000 was raised for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Socialization after a round of golf became a regular pastime and the demand for a pleasant atmosphere to enjoy a “beverage” after a round of golf led to increasing “friction” among golf club members. For some, maintaining the golf course and allowing for convenient and “affordable” golf was a priority. Others felt that there was an ever-increasing need in order to be competitive and to continue to attract both new members and the highly sought after green fee players that an enhanced golf club atmosphere was a necessity. And the debate rages on, with pros and cons either way.

As was the tradition at Connaught going back to the early fifties, the members gave freely of their time and energy in helping in many different ways towards the improvement of the clubhouse and the golf course. Many stepped up and often reluctantly volunteered for the “thankless” job of being a member of the Executive or being on one of the many different committees including the grounds committee or the house committee, where there was always ample criticism and never a shortage of ideas as to how “things” could be improved.

Others simply volunteered their time to help clean up the course after a windstorm, or cut or prune trees in the winter months or plant flowers to help improve the ambiance of the golf course. Volunteers assisted with the preparation of the annual Southeastern Golf Tournament and helped with registration and score-keeping in order for it to be its usual well-organized and successful event.³⁵

³⁵ A Special tribute is offered to Marg Derbyshire and Jean Nitsche whose tireless efforts over the years in assisting with the organization of the Southeastern Golf Tournament should not go unnoticed.

If there was a need, a call would be put out and the members typically responded with “all hands on deck”. That commitment to serve continues today.

In early 2000, the exterior of the Clubhouse was in dire need of repair. The original clubhouse that had been moved to a new foundation at the current site had two small outdoor balconies at either end of the building. The stairs to each were made of wood and had become rotted out to such an extent that they had been condemned as a safety hazard. The Executive was forced to make a decision either to remove them entirely or repair them to meet current building code requirements.

Someone came up with the idea of replacing the aging balconies with a concrete deck that would extend across the entire back of the clubhouse to allow for an outdoor patio setting with a panoramic elevated view of the golf course.

A call went out and several unnamed members combined their efforts and connections within the community and arranged to have funds “donated” for the cause and the “deck” was built which added a significant new and attractive dimension to the clubhouse, which continues to be enjoyed by all.

In addition, families like the Bruins and Vallely³⁶ families whose family members figured prominently at the Connaught Golf Club made valuable contributions towards the improvement of the golf course.

³⁶ Garth Valley (1939-2018) was a prominent member of Connaught and a strong supporter. He served as Mayor of the City of Medicine Hat for two terms in 2001 and 2004.

The permanent “snack shack” on the front nine (#3) was constructed and donated by the Bruins family.

The practice facility nearby holes #2 & #10 was built as a result of significant financial contributions by the Vallely family in honor of son, Pat Vallely who passed away far too soon and which today continues to bear his name.

More recently, the permanent washroom facilities near hole #3 was built by contributions by members and corporate sponsors, who not only provided financial support but also provided their own industry and labor.

Chapter 9: The Connaught Era-2000-2013- “The Pond”



The dry desert-like conditions in southeastern Alberta around Medicine Hat has required ingenuity and perseverance when it comes to developing parks and green spaces in residential areas and even more so, within the agricultural community.

The early development of the St. Mary River Irrigations District with a system of canals, dugouts and larger holding ponds or reservoirs improved the overall agricultural potential of Southern Alberta. “Irrigation” of farmlands and residential areas, parks and greens spaces including golf courses became a necessity due to the hot dry summer weather.

For Connaught Golf Club, the “arrival” of the irrigation water from the SMIRD in early May was always greeted with great anticipation and enthusiasm as it meant that the golf course could finally begin watering and improve the quality of the course after a long, often harsh winter and dry early spring.

One of the major limitations in the 70's and 80's was the limited capacity for water storage. Although there was relatively speaking an ample supply of water, the difficulty lied in the fact that Connaught Golf course was at the end of the line of the SMIRD distribution system and without an adequate collection and storage system or "holding pond", the capability to make full usage of the available water was dramatically reduced.

In order to deal with the situation, the Executive of Connaught Golf Club, with much perseverance and courage "engineered" or undertook a significant project with the construction of a large holding pond or reservoir, which tripled the storage capacity. The project was a "watershed" moment in relation to the overall development and future of the golf course.

The construction occurred throughout 2005-2006, and resulted in a considerable amount of "angst" as initial representations and indications that the City would assist in the financing proved to be premature. It did not help that the project was half-way completed when the "powers that be" reneged on an apparent earlier "promise" of financial assistance.

The General Manager of Connaught and the Connaught Golf Club Executive along with the assistance of others, despite some anxious and tense moments, were able to convince City Council of the absolute necessity for the completion of the project and "cooler" heads prevailed and the City stepped up to the plate and provided a much needed loan guarantee to allow the project to be completed and the "outstanding bills" to be paid. Of course, it helped that "a massive hole" had already been dug on City-owned land and there was little opportunity to "turn back the clock" on the project.

The old adage that sometimes it is “easier to ask for forgiveness rather than seek permission” could quite appropriately in retrospect apply to the development of the “pond”!

As an aside, the volume of dirt excavated from the site was significant and its disposal became problematic. Some bright “engineer” came up with the idea of using the excavated dirt to create a berm between the TransCanada Highway and the Golf course along holes #15 and #16. The size and length of the berm gives a clear indication as to the amount of dirt, which was excavated from the site to make way for the deep reservoir.

An overall master plan was designed and developed and despite considerable financial constraints, the Connaught Golf Club Executive despite some “naysayers” was pursued with great fortitude and the initial stages of the master plan became a reality.

In 2011, with the help of the Grassroots Irrigation Landscaping & Irrigation Ltd. a 1200 head Torosmac irrigation system was installed with a combination of trenching and vibratory plows used to minimize the disturbance and improve the quality of the rehabilitation of the golf course. With the new irrigation system and the reservoir or holding pond constructed, which was a much needed overall improvement to the course, thoughts turned to the redesign of the near-by 10th green. As many members would attest, particularly those who would regularly three-putted the severely sloped green, a reconfiguration of this green was a necessary priority.



There were many members over the years who threatened to take a “bull-dozer” or D9 Cat at night and level the putting surface.

Some suggested “tongue in cheek” that a lottery should be held to generate funds for the rebuild with the “winner” having the privilege of driving the D9 Cat.

In retrospect, there would have been no shortage of “takers”!









Connaught Subdivision: Irrigation Installation



Again through perseverance and determination, the 10th fairway and green were developed alongside the large holding pond, making it an extremely attractive and challenging start to the back nine and significant improvement to the overall character of the golf course.

Chapter 10: Connaught Golf Club- “The Final Chapter”

As is the case with many organizations, the success of Connaught Golf Club lies in the industry and hard work of its many employees, advisors, volunteers and members, who freely gave of their time to improve the quality of the golf experience in Medicine Hat. Their dedication, advocacy, leadership and support should be acknowledged as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of Connaught Golf Club.

We far too often take for granted this richness of spirit and the dedication and commitment to “serve” that these patrons of Connaught have demonstrated over the years and continue to demonstrate. We should all be thankful, as we are all benefactors of their perseverance, ingenuity and devotion to the game we have all come to enjoy and the “golf course” many have come to consider as their own.

The value of history of an organization is often underestimated and for some, it is viewed as irrelevant. But to the contrary, documenting the history of an organization allows us to better appreciate the industry and hard work that was often necessary to achieve success and the kind of devotion and commitment that others have made for which many are all now the benefactors.

By embracing history and acknowledging this achievement, others may also be inspired to continue the tradition and be encouraged to participate in the development of its continued future success, so that the next generation of golfers can enjoy the privileges and benefits that so many have all come to enjoy.

As we have demonstrated, Connaught Golf Club has a rich history and a special and unique connection to “royalty”, in particular, the British Royal family, from whom it has received its distinctive name-Connaught Golf Club. This unusual circumstance, for which few can claim ownership, clearly allows it the exclusive privilege, at least a brief period of time, in this its 100th anniversary year, to be known as the “Royal” Connaught Golf Club.

We should all celebrate!

William J. Anhorn K.C. ICD.D

In Memoriam:

Many of the “patrons” of Connaught have been memorialized in some manner or fashion by the dedication of a bench or the planting of a tree on the golf course to recognize their devotion to the “club” that they all shared and had the privilege of playing.

It is fitting in this 100th year, that we pay tribute in some small way to their memory, which for many will bring back some fond memories. Take a moment to “remember” as you play your next round of golf at Connaught and take note of those who have gone before us. For many, it will bring back great memories of good days gone by.....

There is also a special category of “patrons” of Connaught, whose years of membership and service has been honored by awarding each of them a Lifetime Membership. It is also fitting that they be recognized for their valuable contribution.

Connaught Golf Club Lifetime Members

Anderson,	Frank
Anderson	Myrtle
Bauer	Emil
Bray	Ted
Brown	John “Red”
Campbell	Alf
Cantwell	Helen
Carr	Glenn
Crawford	Bob
Crawford	Jean
Dale	Flo
Emery	Gif
Emery	Vera
Ens	John
Flynn	Leone
Friesen	Art³⁷
Graham	Bruce
Graham	Hazel
Grant	George
Grant	Elsie
Hazard	Bill
Hazard	Joyce
Henderson	Larry
Heringer	Doris
Heringer	Roy
Hern	Ben (Sr.)
Hildenbrand	Doris
Hildenbrand	Jack
Jack	Marg
Johnston	Arnold

³⁷ Art Friesen continues to be the longest active lifetime member of the Connaught Golf Club

Kope	Orv
Krein	Marjorie
Kusler	Beatrice
Long	Stan
Mack	Ed
McQuarrie	Robin
Moody	Jack
Noon	Dick
Olsen	Hatti
Pettigrew	Roy
Phillips	Doreen
Phillips	Joe
Pierson	Jack
Pitts	Fred
Pratt	Kathleen
Rayment	Mayzes
Rutherford	Archie
Sailer	Mary
Scharf	Ron
Schaufele	Henry (Hank)
Schector	Tom
Scheuer	Bill
Schneider	Inga
Schneider	Jim
Shaw	Elmer
Shaw	Margaret
Staples	Mickey
Stober	Paul
Toole	Leonard
Wallace	Jim
Wilkins	L. David
Wyatt	Doug (Sr.)
Zdan	Dustin

Past Presidents of Connaught Golf Club

***denotes multiple successive years**

+Election of Officers occurred at the annual meeting held typically in November in each year and the term of Office ran from November of that year to October of the next year as opposed to a calendar year.

1919-1920-	Art Hatch*
1921-1924-	J. A. King*
1925-1927-	P.B.J. Harding*
1927-1928-	A.J. Hatch*
1929-1930-	Jim McCorkle*
1930-1932-	Jack Fawcett*
1933-1934-	Jack Whalen*
1935-1940-	A.T. "Tommy" Legge*
1941-1944-	J.D. "Joe" Lindsay*
1945-1947-	J.P. "Joe" Haverty*
1948-	Robert Thompson
1949-1950-	Joe Lindsay*
1951-1953-	Archie Rutherford*
1954-1959-	George Oliphant*
1960-	Archie Rutherford*
1961-1962-	George Oliphant
1963-	J. Pierson
1964-1965-	K.J. "Bob" Crawford*
1966-1967-	Giff Emery*
1968-	George Daniels
1969-	Jim Wallace
1970-	Harry Zeller
1971-	Dick Gutormson
1972-1973-	L. David Wilkins*
1974-1976-	Barry Deering*
1977-	Reg Bolton

1978-	L. David Wilkins
1979-1980-	Lyle Flynn*
1981-	Frank McBride
1982-1983-	Gary Barnes*
1984-	Bill Spencer
1985-	Jim Heath
1986-	Sandy Umpleby
1987-1988-	L. David Wilkins*
1989-1990-	Ted Fisher*
1991-	Marg Derbyshire
1992-1993-	Eric Murray*
1994-1995-	Lloyd Chambers*
1996-1997-	Brent Dennison
1998-1999-	Tony Smith*
2000-2001-	Harold Exner*
2002-2003-	Brian Laidlaw*
2004-2006-	Jim Standell*
2007-	Brad Lay
2008-2009-	Neil Maser
2010-2011-	Gary Hildenbrand*
2012-2013-	Jim McFarlane*
2014-2015-	Reg Bolton*
2016-2017-	Dean Brandt*
2018-2019	Richard Lepage
2019-2020	Fred Long³⁸
2020-2021	Miles Thorson
2022-	Gary Leis

³⁸ Fred Long stepped down as Chairman during his term for health reasons and the Vice-Chairman, Miles Thorson stepped into the role for the balance of the year. Sadly, Fred passed away on March 16th, 2021. He was the son of lifetime member Stan Long.

