

I do not know when the Gymkhana Club was originally formed, but it dates back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century when there was a large Garrison here including a British Battalion accommodated in Curepipe and at least (2) two Indian Army Battalions. These were commanded by a British General whose house was what is now known as H.Q. House Vacoas. There were of course, various support and administrative units as well. I do not know whether the Club was entitled Mauritius Military Gymkhana Club as it was when I first came here in 1934.

The original Club was for services officers only, although of course there were a few Honorary Members who had no say in the Management of activities thereof. The Club was mainly used as a polo club and the ground which is now the centre of the Golf Course was the polo ground. At some time, I don't know when, a few short golf holes were constructed round the edge of the Polo Ground. This was the position up to the beginning of 1914, as far as I know. The Garrison was then largely withdrawn and a few civilians of whom my father in law, Mr. Nichols, was one, were asked to form an assistant committee to keep the Club alive with some paying civilians; members with no say so.

After the 1914 – 1918 War the new small Garrison of only about 150 strong with some dozen or so officers could not possibly run the Club at their own expense; so many civilian members were elected, but still had, as before, no power in the running of the Club. Three Civilian Members were asked to sit on the Club Committee to advise the Military on local matters but had no voting power. It was during this period that the polo ground was abandoned as such and much of it taken to enlarge the Golf course and make it into 9 holes. This was the situation in 1934. Shortly after this, I think, in 1935 I was made Golf Member of the Committee. With the assistance of Mr. John Ireland whose idea it was and Major Spottiswoode, an Engineer officer, we made the Golf Course playable in two different directions, not at the same time of course, the original course became "A" course and the second way "B" course. These were changed round about every 3 months and a competition held over 18 holes of each course, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This became known as the "Men's Ireland Cup" and is still the main annual Golf competition to this day.

During the 1939 – 45 War the Garrison was gradually much increased in members and the Club continued to be run by the Military although certain civilians were now elected to the Committee with voting rights and shortly afterwards all members were allowed to vote at General Meetings but the O.C. Troops had a final veto if he considered that any resolution was undesirable from a Military point of view. When the Garrison was withdrawn the lease was taken over by the Navy who had opened a Radio Station here. The Club was then renamed Mauritius Naval and Military Gymkhana Club and was administered as before by the Navy instead of the Military. Golf has always been the main reason for the Club to continue since Polo was abandoned. This continued until the Navy were withdrawn and the Club entirely taken over by Civilians and renamed Mauritius Gymkhana Club, this was in 1973.

In about 1956 – 7 I designed and helped construct 3 new golf holes on the other side of Cocked Hat Wood and these were added to both A & B course to make them a 12 hole course instead of a 9 hole.

I cannot give much details of the Tennis courts and do not know when they were made or when the Squash court was built by the M.F. & H.C. and shared with the Club.

New Club House – I think 1967 – construction of the pool – I think 1970 – 1.

In the old days nearly all tennis was played on private courts, most houses in those days having their own courts. It is comparatively recent, certainly since World War 2, that any hard courts were laid, previously all courts at the Club were grass. Prior to the 1914-18 War the Club was used almost entirely as a Polo and Golf Club house. No meals were served there ordinarily and little entertainment, as the members were almost all service people who had their Messes etc. and did not need outside bar and restaurant facilities except on very rare occasions. They probably had a few snacks to eat with the odd drink, but usually went home or back to their Mess after polo etc. and ate or drank there.

The Club was still, when I arrived in 1934, and old small ex-OR's married quarter and was added to and mucked about with and enlarged piece by piece. Just before World War II plans were made to build a new Club House on the other side of Cocked Hat Wood. The then Governor, Sir Bede Clifford was a keen Golfer and made a small course at Reduit. The first Tee was made on the roof of G.H. (Government House) and if you hit the flag pole you automatically won the first hole. He was very interested in the Club and was keen on my idea to enlarge the course by taking the ground behind the Phoenix Camp Minerals, passing behind the now Squash Court, part of what latterly turned into the Naval flats, and the football ground next to the big cricket field etc., thence joining up with what are now the holes on the other side of the road, built in 1956 – 7. Of course the war put a pause to all these plans.

Of very minor interest, a bowling green was made next to the present Club house, almost where the dining room is now situated, but someone bought the wrong type of bowls and made a proper bowls of the whole affair.

Children were never allowed in the old Club.