

HALE GOLF CLUB LOSSES IN WWI

It may be helpful to provide some context to losses suffered by HGC in WWI:

- The male membership of HGC stood at around 110, many of whom were too old to fight.
- The Club battled the County War Agricultural Committee to ensure that the course was used for grazing sheep (and playing golf) rather than being ploughed up for crops.
- Shortly after the outbreak of war the Club decided to cancel all competitions other than qualifying rounds and not to publish any results in the newspapers.
- HGC increased the entrance fee of the Winter Bogey competition from 6d to 1/-, half to be given to the local Relief Fund.
- The Club granted the use of the links to the Hale platoon of the Cheshire Volunteer Regiment for drill on Sunday afternoons.
- In 1915 HGC invited 10 or 12 wounded soldiers to tea each Wednesday during the Summer.
- M. Marcille, a member of the club, was awarded the Croix de Guerre by the French military authorities.
- Clarence Megson, the Club's long-serving Secretary, left for France to take up duties on behalf of the YMCA in connection with the troops.
- HGC gave 58 clubs, 75 balls and 10 golf bags to the Civic Service League for the use of wounded soldiers.
- The Club agreed to give Mrs Robinson 10/- per week during the absence of Mr Robinson [Steward/ Greenkeeper] in the army.

The Council Minutes of 5 July 1915 show that "It was unanimously resolved that a Roll of Honour be provided containing the names of members of the club who had enlisted in the Army for the present defence of their King & Country & the Hon. Sec. was instructed to see to the execution of same." Unfortunately there is no trace of this Roll of Honour.

The only formal record of HGC losses in World War I that Rosie Gerrard, to whom I'm very grateful for helping me prepare for this presentation, and I could find was in the Gentlemen's Competitions Book. (We could find nothing about HGC members wounded during the war.) This is what it said:

"From the date of the final for the Captains Cup, the only competition during 1915-16, until the end of the war on Nov 11th 1918, all competitions ceased, many members being away fighting for their Country, four of whom

Kenneth Waterhouse
E G Melland
Stanley L Bridgford
S MacDougall

made the supreme sacrifice

while the sons of four members

J Eaton

Woods
Wood
Esmond O'Hanlon

also gave their lives for their country.

Their names will be engraved for all time on the memory of their friends

May they rest for ever in Peace!"

It has been possible to graft a little flesh to the names on this epitaph using the archive at the Central Reference Library. I'd like to thank Ian Harris, a former archivist, for suggesting that I look at the Hale War Memorial and to Chris O'Donovan (not a member) for explaining the abbreviations inscribed there.

Captain Kenneth Waterhouse 2nd line Battalion of the 5th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers was killed in action at the Somme 1916.

He won the singles knockout final on 3 July 1909 and the 36 hole handicap event at the Summer Meeting 1910. His best handicap was 7.

He lived in Arthog Road and was an original member of the Club. Mrs Waterhouse joined the Club in 1908 and Council resolved on 4 September 1916 "that a letter of sympathy be sent to Mrs Waterhouse and that she be made an honorary member of the Club."

Lieutenant E Guy Melland 8th Cheshire Regiment was killed in action in 1915.

He appears to have played in only one competition, in April 1914. Ironically, another competitor in the field of 12 was Stanley L Bridgford. He is recorded as having a handicap of 16.

He lived in Arthog Road and joined the Club on 7 March 1910. His father, E Melland, Mrs Melland and his sister all joined in 1906, four years earlier than he did.

Captain Stanley L Bridgford Manchester Regiment was killed in the war in April 1918.

He won the singles knockout final on 28 June 1913 and the winter bogey final on 30 March 1914. His best handicap was 2.

He lived in South Downs Road and joined the Club on 4 March 1912. He was the son of Stanley Bridgford who was asked by Council to become the first post-war captain but declined, later becoming an honorary life member. His mother was Mrs T Bridgford, who was Lady Captain throughout the war and also became an honorary life member, both of whom joined the Club in 1906. His sister was Cissie Bridgford who became Lady Captain two years running and later an honorary life member and for whose service as Lady Secretary for nearly 30 years the Bridgford Trophy was given by the Ladies Section.

The Council Minutes of 2 September 1918 record that "the Captain expressed in feeling terms our sympathy with Mr & Mrs Bridgford in the loss of their son Captain S L Bridgford and the Hon Sec was instructed to write to Mr & Mrs Bridgford conveying the sympathy of the Council to them."

Lieutenant Sidney MacDougall 6th Manchester Regiment is recorded in the Membership Book as being 'Killed in the war'.

There is no evidence of him ever having had a handicap or of playing in competitions.

He lived in Arthog Road and joined the Club on 5 June 1905.

Lieutenant S Esmond O'Hanlon Royal Air Force is recorded in the Membership Book as being 'killed in the war' as a result of a flying accident in 1918. He was awarded the Military Cross which is granted in recognition of "exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy..."

Notwithstanding the wording of the Club epitaph, Esmond O'Hanlon was a playing member but there is no evidence of him ever having had a handicap or of playing in competitions.

He lived in Alan Drive joined the Club on 1 March 1915 at the same time as his brother. His father was Sydney O'Hanlon, who served as Hon. Treasurer from the Club's foundation until 1935 and as Captain in 1909. His mother was also an original member of the Club.

The Council Minutes of 4 February 1918 record that "a letter expressing the deep regret of the members present with Mr O'Hanlon on the loss of his son should be written by the Hon. Sec."

There are three J Eatons named on the Hale War Memorial but since two were privates and every other person mentioned in connection with Hale Golf Club was an officer it is fair to assume that **2nd Lieutenant James Willcox Eaton Manchester Regiment** was the son of J Eaton, of Broad Lane, who was an original member of the Club, a founder Council member and a vice-president. James's sister, Miss E Eaton, was a member from 1913 until 1923.

The Council Minutes of 4 September 1916 record that "a resolution of sympathy with Mr Eaton on the loss of his son, killed in action, was moved and passed". Mr Eaton was minuted as being present at this Council Meeting. The AGM Minutes of 31 March 1919 show that Mr Eaton "made a reference to past and future golf speaking of those members who had given their lives for their country..."

W H Woods, of Plane Tree Road, was elected in 1910, at the same time as his wife. His daughter was a member from 1912 until 1921. He was Captain in 1920 and resigned in 1922. His son's name is not recorded on the Hale War Memorial.

A P Wood, of Alan Drive, was elected in 1909. He became Captain in 1922 and an honorary life member. His son, according to the War Memorial, was either:

2nd Lieutenant Geoffrey K P Wood 1st line Battalion of the 2nd Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers or **2nd Lieutenant, Basil Hamilton Wood, East Lancashire divisional Royal Engineers**, who held the Territorial Decoration (awarded to officers with twelve years' service).

At the 1918 AGM, W H S Willcocks, the Captain who served throughout the war and was something of a wordsmith, remarked that "amidst all institutions, many of which were lying submerged by the devastating influences of the war, golf and Hale Golf in particular has risen superior to all the destroying powers of evil."

But, as we have learned, not without terrible cost.

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