



The Sporting Globe' on 24 September  
 ey and Alex Russell that Hattersley  
 lines depict Russell's. While Russell  
 the younger Hattersley.

Russell was elected a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews on 13 August 1951, and held that membership until his death in 1961, a singular honour for an Australian golfer. He was also a member at the Barwon Heads Golf Club, the Beaufort Golf Club and the Gala Golf Club in Lismore, Victoria. Alex was made a Life Member of Royal Melbourne in 1933 for his services to the club and he continued to serve as a member of its Council (committee) from 1929 until 1955. He was also made a Life Member of Yarra Yarra in 1928 for his services in designing the club's new course.

Alex Russell played in the British Amateur Championship on two occasions. The first time was at Royal Lytham & St Annes in 1935, losing his first round match to H. E. Taylor (Royal Mid-Surrey) 5 and 4. On the same trip he played in the Open at Muirfield, at least he was an entrant. It is reported that he played one qualifying round at Muirfield but withdrew, with no reason given. In a later trip to Britain in 1938, Russell played in the British Amateur, this time at Troon, unfortunately drawing Cyril Tolley in the first round. Tolley went out in 32 to Russell's 36, eventually defeating the Australian 5 and 3. Tolley was one of the outstanding British golfers between the two wars, winning the British Amateur twice, semi-finalist once, and quarter finalist three times.

Russell kept playing championship events even though his golf was not at a high enough standard for him to be as competitive as he once was. He played in the 1939 Victorian Amateur at Yarra Yarra and qualified for the match play, winning his first-round match comfortably. In the second round, he came up against "the brilliant Laurie Duffy" who treated him as he had his first-round opponent. "The Sporting Globe" noted that, "the Russell-Duffy match went out half an hour before schedule time after lunch, and when it was suggested that the set time had been advertised, Russell remarked "Who wants to see Laurie beat me 8 and 7?" At the end of the match he cheerfully remarked "I made only one mistake. I missed a 6-footer that would have halved the 29<sup>th</sup> and thus was beaten 9 and 7 instead of the anticipated 8 and 7." Although his golf was waning he most certainly had not lost his sense of humour.

His son Philip only played golf with his father once, other than on their 6-hole course at 'Mawallok', and that was at Royal Melbourne with Ivo Whitton as a third, a daunting experience for a young man. When asked to describe his father's swing, his one-word answer was, "Perfect." He also added that "he swung at the ball, didn't hit it," and that when playing on the short 'Mawallok' course he exhibited "a very, very controlled swing." After suffering his first stroke in 1950, Alex rarely played golf again.

Alex Russell recovers from  
 a bunker (right) in the 1930  
 Australian Open at Metropolitan

### Course Records

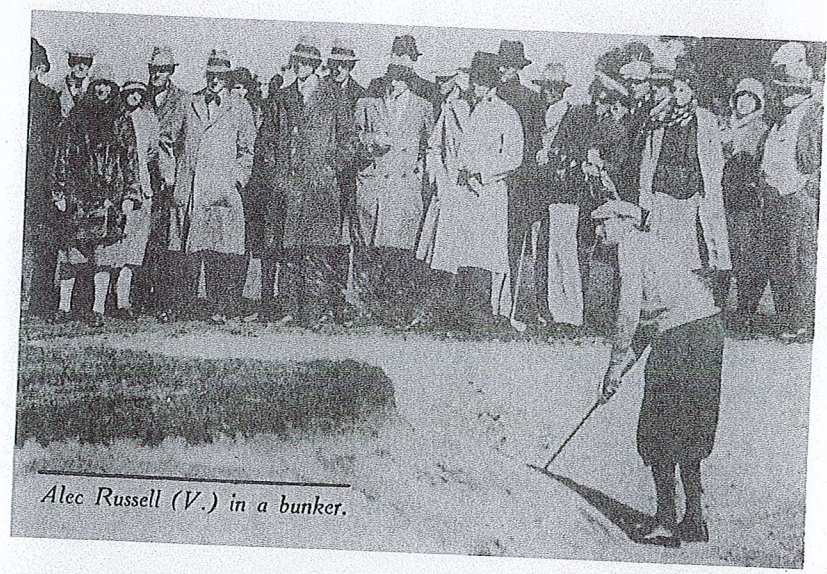
Alex Russell set a new course record for Royal Melbourne's Sandringham links of 68 during the 1924 Australian Open. That record stood for nearly 6 years until shortly before the course was replaced by the new West Course in 1931, when RMGC professional Arthur Le Fevre shot a 66 in March 1930. In that same meeting Russell and his foursomes partner C. H. Fawcett set a new foursomes course record at Sandringham of 71.

At the Victoria Golf Club's Fishermen's Bend course, Russell played in the Open Scratch Medal event held on 26 April 1926, and shot a 69 in the morning round, a new course record. He followed up with 72 in the afternoon, winning the event by a whopping 9 strokes in a field that included Whitton and a number of Victoria's prominent professionals including Reg Jupp and Arthur Le Fevre. Amazingly, Russell also tied for the handicap event even though he was playing off +5. His record score was equalled by A. W. Jackson in 1927, but was never bettered as the club soon moved to its new home at Cheltenham.

Russell also held for a time in 1929 both the 9-hole (36) and 18-hole (76) records at the 9-hole Lismore course of the Gala Golf Club in country Victoria.



Alex Russell, Victorian golfer, who was defeated by H. Hattersley in the first of the national amateur championships last year.  
 Caricature of Russell (above) by Hector Morrison from 1931



Alec Russell (V.) in a bunker.

1930s view over the golf course with the Summerland Golf House building at the left  
Philip Island & District Historical Society

The Summerland links is not part of a registered club, but early steps are to be taken to include it among our registered courses. Then it should immediately become popular with linksmen, and it will certainly add to the

appealing holiday charms of the island. Some of the holes would advantageously fit in on the championship links of the city.

Hole 1 - The opening hole is a straight-ahead drive and pitch of 345 yards, an admirable length for a first hole.

Hole 2 - There follows an iron shot of about 160 yards on level country, and at present without notable feature.

Hole 3 - Of considerable golfing merit is the third, of 480 yards. There is some fine natural bunkering to be carried with the second wood shot.

Hole 4 - The fourth of 270 yards is the first hole in the exceptional country. The drive is made straight ahead to a cleared patch, and a nice short pitch is left to an interesting green. However, the main feature of the hole is the fact that the man who fancies his driving ability may take a risk and shoot straight ahead for the green over high and rugged sand hills. The short cut does not call for tremendous hit, but if it comes off it gives a thrill of course, the short cut means a blind drive.

Hole 5 - Somewhat similar is the position that a player may take from the tee at the 380 yards fifth. He may go safely out to the right to a cleared position, or he may "give it a go" and drive over sand hills to get an easy and shorter shot home if the drive comes off.

Hole 6 - All the advantages of a naturally bunkered piece of country for a one-shotter are found at the 111 yards 6<sup>th</sup>. This hole looks quite an uninteresting proposition by reason of the fact that there is at first glance, just a tee and a nice little green near enough to look simple. But that pitch must get the green or real trouble follows. Sand hills on the left, rugged country on the right, nasty, desperate places at the back, and none too sweet spots short, reveal themselves to those who fail to make the pitch as it should be made.

Hole 7 - Another blind tee shot is encountered at the 430 yards 7<sup>th</sup>, which in some ways is reminiscent of the 8<sup>th</sup> at Royal Melbourne.

Hole 8 - Then comes a good one-shotter of about 160 yards up to a plateau green.

Hole 9 - To my mind the ninth is the most cleverly laid out hole of the present nine. The drive may be sent as far as one can hit along a tongue that gets narrower the further it goes, and the perfectly hit tee shot stops on a plateau which gives an ideal location for the pitch home. A drive off the line gives plenty of natural troubles.

While actual selection of places for holes has been well considered, there has up to date been no serious effort to titivate and generally give point and beauty to the bunkering round the greens. Russell will, doubtless, do this in the competent manner of which he is capable. When that work is done the course will provide a test that will give any amount of trouble to the best, and as much pleasure to all as can reasonably be expected from a course. While the country is rugged and truly seaside, there is remarkably little climbing called for in the round."

### Settling In

In early October 1930, it was announced that the Summerland links would host the Cowes Golf Club's first annual Open Meeting later that month. The entry form contained "an attractive plan of the course at Summerland," and the report noted that "it is not many months since a professional contest was held over this course, and one and all the visiting tutors

expressed themselves as well pleased with the site selected, and with the enterprise in the construction of the links designed by Alex Russell." Sambell put on a special steamer to bring golfers across from Stony Point for the event.

A 1931 report on the attractions of Phillip Island noted that the new golf course at Summerland was "one of the best seaside links in Victoria" and that it was "now in perfect condition." The second annual Open Meeting was again held at Summerland in May 1931 and a report from Jack Dillon in 'The Sporting Globe' suggested that it was a course "that those who have not visited are recommended to try. They will find it a pleasant surprise. Alex Russell laid it out in great golfing country. With the exception of Barwon Heads and Warrnambool, it is as fine a test as will be found outside the metropolitan area."

**THE SUMMERLAND GOLF CLUB**

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS.**

PHILLIP ISLAND

RESIDENTS: Gentlemen - £2/2/0  
Ladies - £1/1/-

VISITORS: Gentlemen - £1/1/-  
Ladies - 10/6

**GREEN FEES.**

One Week - 10/6  
One Day - 2/6  
Half Day - 1/6

Fees must be paid in advance at Summerland House, and the ticket attached to golf bag for inspection by greenskeeper.

THEOBERL & COOPER PTY. LTD.  
PRINTERS - MELB.

**THE SUMMERLAND GOLF CLUB**

PHILLIP ISLAND.

**LOCAL RULES.**

(To be read in conjunction with the RULES OF GOLF.)

- The ball must be played from where it lies, with the exception of balls in grass and three perches of the course marked G. U. L., when it may be lifted and dropped without penalty as provided in the Rules of Golf.
- There is no out of bounds.
- If a ball lie within one club's length of any fence, player may lift same and drop within two club's length, but not nearer the hole, without penalty.
- If a ball lie within one club's length of any drain, pipe, water pipe, top or notice board, and interfere with the stroke, the player may lift the ball and drop within two club's length from the place where it lay, but not nearer the hole, without penalty. A ball dropped in a hazard under such circumstances shall be in the hazard.
- A ball lodged in creek at 8th and 9th hole may be lifted and dropped not nearer the hole—penalty, one stroke.
- A ball lying on a green other than that which the player is approaching, must not be played, but lifted and dropped not nearer the hole played to, and upon the side of the green where the ball lies, without penalty.

**REPLACE DIVOTS.**

It is the duty of every golfer to replace, or see replaced, any portion of turf cut out in the act of playing.

PLAYER *Russell West* SUMMERLAND GOLF CLUB. Stroke *18*

HOLE	Distance Yards	Holes where strokes taken	BOBBY	PLAYER		MARKER		HOLE	Distance Yards	Holes where strokes taken	BOBBY	PLAYER		MARKER	
				Strokes	± Won - Lost O Half	Strokes	± Won - Lost O Half					Strokes	± Won - Lost O Half	Strokes	± Won - Lost O Half
1	336	11	4	5	0	3	0	10	336	13	4	7	0	4	0
2	164	15	3	4	0	3	0	11	164	16	3	6	0	4	0
3	450	1	5	7	0	4	0	12	450	3	5	8	0	6	0
4	251	5	4	6	0	7	0	13	251	6	4	9	0	4	0
5	372	8	5	10	0	7	0	14	372	9	5	7	0	4	0
6	110	17	3	5	0	3	0	15	110	18	3	5	0	4	0
7	444	2	5	7	0	4	0	16	444	4	5	7	0	4	0
8	168	12	3	5	0	4	0	17	168	14	3	5	0	4	0
9	382	7	5	8	0	6	0	18	382	10	5	8	0	4	0
OUT	2677		37	57	0	43	-1					67	0	47	-1
SIGNATURE <i>Address</i>				IN 2677				DEDUCT HCAP							
DATE <i>11/6/37</i>				OUT 2677				NET TOTAL							
				TOTAL 5354											

**REPLACE DIVOTS**

Card of the Summerland Golf Club from 1937



SUMMERLAND SURFING BEACH



Characteristic Russell bunkering on the final green at Ballarat c.1940

*During the early 1930s work continued progressively with tee placements changed and more clearly defined, greens raised and enlarged and new bunkers carefully placed and former ones remodelled.....By 1937 work under the plan had been completed at a cost of almost £1200 and widespread satisfaction was expressed at the final results."*

In October 1930, the club held its annual Open Meeting and Harry Culliton noted in 'The Australasian' that:

*"For one thing the rather "countrified" aspect of the links has disappeared before the excellent bunkering scheme carried out during the year to designs by Alex. Russell. This is not yet complete, but it will proceed in due course. An instance of the improvement made is the short hole known as Clarke's trap. This, although interesting enough, had been a very crude affair, a flat square green placed inside a sort of zareba [a thorn fence surrounding an African village] as foreign to modern golf course architecture as could well be imagined. The appearance of the first and second holes too has been improved beyond recognition."*

"Backspin", writing in 'The Referee' in Sydney on 22 October, commented that:

*"Recent visitors to the Ballarat meeting were greatly impressed with the wonderful improvement in the character of the links, brought about by the bunkering and remodelling scheme carried out by Alex Russell. Obsolete bunkering systems are soundly condemned by city players visiting rural links. It is high time that a number of other clubs undertook the task of replacing such golfing atrocities as wire-netting bunkers."*

Two years later Culliton observed:

*"Alex Russell is to be heartily congratulated upon making an excellent imitation of a silk purse out of something very like a sow's ear, speaking of golf courses from the point of view of the fastidious modern golfer. The course is now an excellent round. The old "potato-pit" bunkers have been swept away and new, symmetrical hazards, well placed and sand filled, have displaced them."*

#### **Barwon Heads Golf Club Barwon Heads, Victoria**

Philip Russell recalled that his father redesigned the 16<sup>th</sup> hole at Barwon Heads, in what year is not known. However, the committee apparently took a dislike to one of the new bunkers that he said was rather bluntly named "Russell's Asshole", and had it filled in. There is a brief mention of Russell in the club's history book as providing "support for Victor East's work at Barwon Heads," but it does not elaborate further. In any event East was involved with George Lowe in laying out the course that first opened in 1922 and while it is possible Russell assisted Lowe at that time, it is considered unlikely. He almost certainly made some contributions to the design of the course in the immediate post-war period when he served on the committee and was both captain and president.

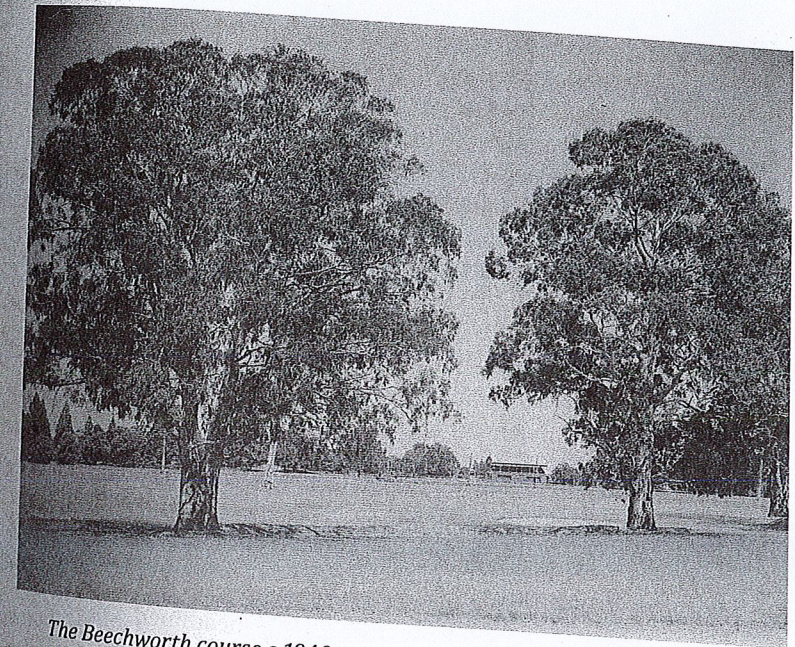
#### **Beaufort Golf Club Beaufort, Victoria**

The club was formed in 1889 with Alex Russell's father Philip Russell one of the founding members, as the Russell property 'Mawallok' was located close to the town. Alex's son Philip Russell stated that his father made some alterations to the course at Beaufort, likely in the mid 1930s after Alex had returned to live at 'Mawallok'. In 1936, the course was described as having "large sand greens" and "heavily bunkered fairways."

#### **Beechworth Golf Club Beechworth, Victoria**

At its annual meeting in April 1928, the Beechworth Golf Club "decided to at once extend the present 12-hole course to an 18-hole course, and Mr Alex Russell, the prominent golfer, will be asked to design the lay-out of the new course." Russell must have been engaged to undertake this work, as a later article in 'The Sporting Globe' on 14 December 1938 discussed the sporting facilities of the town of Beechworth and noted that, "Under the direction of Mr Alex Russell, one of the leading golf architects in Australia, a new 18-hole course was laid out a few years ago at Baarmutha Park." The Beechworth Golf Club's course was

described in 1936 as being laid out on interesting undulating country with sand greens and was well bunkered.



The Beechworth course c.1940

#### **Bendigo Golf Club Bendigo, Victoria**

The club was established in 1901 as the Bendigo Golf and Bowling Club. 'The Riverina Recorder' newspaper on 8 February 1930, in reporting about the new course for the Swan Hill Golf Club that Alex Russell was designing, also commented on some of the other course design projects that Russell was currently involved with, "Mr Russell has recently been engaged in designing plans and lay-out of golf courses for Colac, Ballarat, Bendigo, and the new Royal Melbourne clubs." The 'Weekly Times' of 3 May 1930 reported on the opening of the Bendigo club's season and noted that:

*"The links were in perfect order. The club is rearranging its course under the direction of Mr Alex. Russell, the golf architect, the object being to confine the whole 18 holes to the club's own property. New bunkers have been installed and other improvements made to meet the new scheme, which will be carried out in sections as money becomes available. Improvements carried out in the last two years have cost £1000, of which £700 has been provided out of revenue."*



THREE-YEAR-OLD BULLOCKS IN SUBTERRANEAN CLOVER



THE FRIESIAN STUD AT MAWALLOK



THREE-YEAR-OLD WETHERS MUSTERED FOR DIPPING AT MAWALLOK

*Dick O'Neill (left) managed the 'Mawallok' property for the Russell family for a number of years*

At Osborne House, Philip had had his own polo field, which doubled as a cricket ground. He was a decent golfer but never in the class of his son Alex.

As previously mentioned, Philip had a small zoo at Osborne House, and at 'Mawallok' again he set up a small one of native animals. The local flora and fauna of the area were encouraged and this, enhanced by the lake, meant many bird species found sanctuary at 'Mawallok'. Philip also had his own workshop with a lathe, an interest that Alex certainly inherited from his father.

In 1928, Alex Russell started spending more time at 'Mawallok', coinciding with an absence from Royal Melbourne Golf Club where he had resigned from the two-man committee overseeing construction of the West Course, due to a disagreement with the other member over a matter of principle.

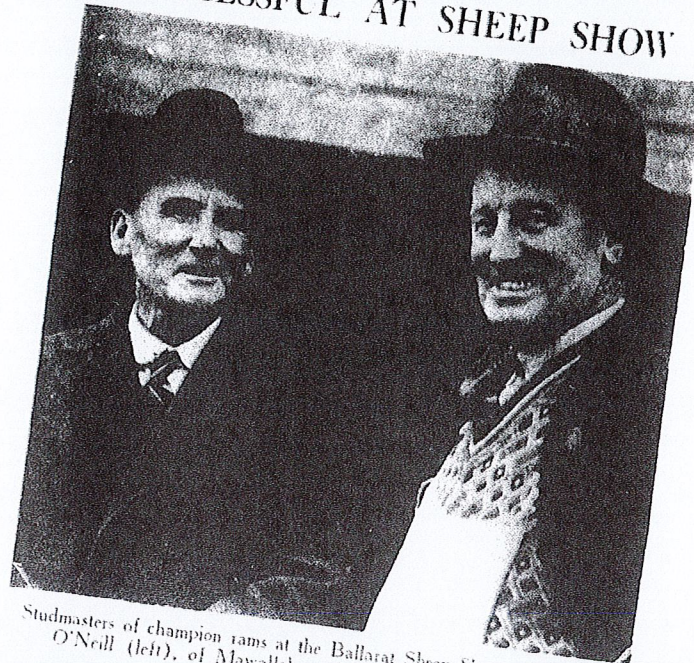
His son Philip noted that, at one time or another, Alex had resigned from virtually every committee that he had served on, "He resigned from Royal Melbourne, he resigned from the Melbourne Club, he resigned from the Barwon Heads Golf Club. Because he disagreed with them. And he was probably right." Here was a man who stood for his principles and what he believed was right. Others likely perceived it as bloody-mindedness, but he was respected for it.

Alex's mother had died in January that year and no doubt Alex wished to help his father Philip who had just lost his wife of 40 years. Alex's increased involvement allowed Philip, with Alex's younger sister Philippa as company, to make a twelve-month long trip to Europe in 1929. In 1932, Alex Russell assumed control of the property following a disagreement with his father. Alex's son Philip recalled that the two had an argument about the readiness of the fire truck which broke down on its way to a fire a few miles from 'Mawallok':

*"Well, then they had a row in 1932, in 1932 they moved. They were staying for Christmas at Mawallok and the fire truck didn't get to the fire. And that is when the change was made. And Big Gran as we called him, came to live in Melbourne, and Dad moved to Mawallok without hardly knowing where the front gate was. Big Gran said to my father, if you know so much about it, then you run it, and walked out."*

On 29 January 1932, 'The Age' noted in its country news section that Dick O'Neill had been appointed to run 'Mawallok', "Mr R. O'Neil, recently manager of Neerin Neerin Estate, is returning to Mawallok Estate as manager. Mr Philip Russell is going to Melbourne to reside, and Mr Alex. Russell will live at Mawallok."

## SUCCESSFUL AT SHEEP SHOW



Studmasters of champion rams at the Ballarat Sheep Show. Messrs. R. O'Neill (left), of Mawallok, and R. Robinson, of Traralgon.

Philip was quite disparaging of his father's interest in farming, and it is clear from this, that in Philip's view, that he and Dick O'Neill as managers were largely responsible for the day-to-day running of 'Mawallok' while Alex was the owner:

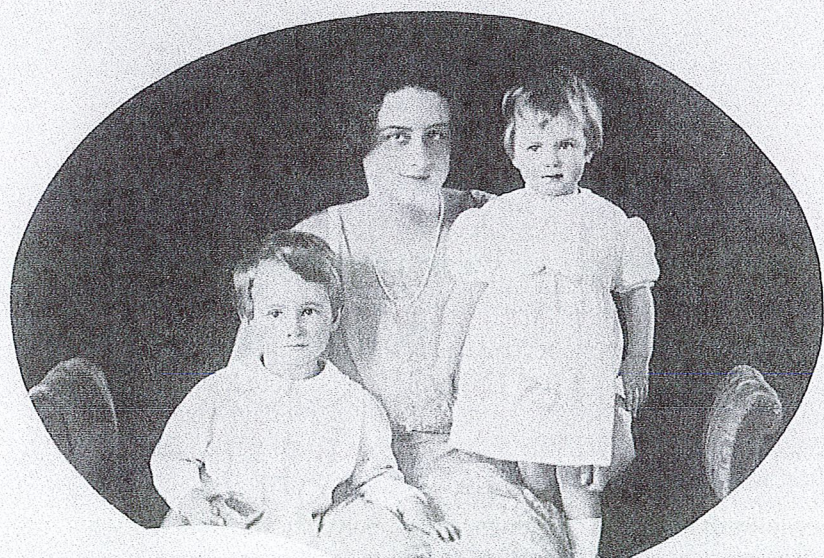
*"I've got another list of what my father was the worst at, and that was farming. And there he was, the owner of a beautiful property....and he didn't know one end of the sheep from another. He wasn't interested. He was the worst rider of a horse you have ever seen. He used to come and watch us do the lamb marking or ask who's the expert classing the sheep? He'd come over and he'd stay 5 minutes while Frank classed another few sheep and we'd class sheep all day, every day for about 4 days to improve our flock."*

*He came back once with a movie camera and showed me making silage and making hay and I'd done a bit of research about this so we didn't make hay during the war, or anything like that but we got going to make it and dad showed us a film about some hay making and that sort of stuff in Scotland. Well it's a bit different from Beaufort but he wanted to be doing the same as they were in Scotland."*

The annual sale of rams at 'Mawallok' extended for a week and became a legendary business and social event in the region. Alex, like his father, had overseen a considerable increase in the carrying capacity of the estate, so that at the end of Alex's tenure it had doubled what it had been when Philip arrived, a

Jess stayed in England after the honeymoon with her younger sister Jean, likely at their parents' home in Farnham Common, while Alex went to Lydd in Kent to complete his training courses and thence back to France on 20 November 1917. Alex's parents, along with his younger sisters Jean and Philippa, accompanied by a nurse for Philippa who was quite sickly, had sailed back to Australia from England in December 1916, prior to the wedding and arrived in Melbourne in January 1917. Once Alex was demobilised following the Armistice, he and Jess stayed in England for a few months until leaving for Australia, arriving back in Melbourne on 20 February 1919 aboard the 'S.S. Orsova.' The 'Riponshire Advocate' on 1 March 1919 reported upon the couple's return and suggested they would stay in Melbourne for a period before visiting 'Mawallok'.

Alex and Jess's first child Philip was born in September 1919 not long after their return from England and 'Table Talk' reported on the arrival in their social pages the week after the birth, writing that *"the stork paid a visit to Major and Mrs Alex Russell last week at South Yarra, and left them a son and heir, and incidentally turned two of our smartest matrons into grandmothers.....There has been great preparation for the advent of this infant, the first grandchild to further link up two of our best known families...."* Soon after the birth of Philip, the couple's first daughter Virginia came along the following year, and after a gap of nearly a decade, their second daughter Robina was born in 1929.



Mrs. Alec Russell is here seen with her two children, Phillip and Virginia. Mrs. Russell, who is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Fairbairn, is the wife of Major Alec Russell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Russell, Mawallok, Beaufort. Major and Mrs. Russell are both keen golfers and are playing their way into the ranks of the first fliers. Photo by Broothorn.

### Jess Lucy Russell (nee Fairbairn)

#### Jess Russell 1895 – 1983

Jess Lucy Fairbairn was born in Clermont, Queensland on 8 April 1895 to Frederick and Rhoda Fairbairn at their Logan Downs property. Fred Fairbairn owned property in the Western District of Victoria and in Geelong, and when Jess was growing up, her family spent time in both Queensland and Victoria.

She was educated at Toorak College in Melbourne and travelled with her family to England prior to World War I. After returning to Australia, she made her debut at a ball in Melbourne given by her parents to celebrate the construction of their newly built Logan House, on Toorak Road at South Yarra, in November 1914. She returned to England shortly after and became a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse before joining the RAF as a driver later in the war.

Jess Russell was an accomplished golfer. She was runner-up three times in the Australian Ladies Amateur Championship (1927, 1930, 1932) but unfortunately fell just short of victory each time. Jess won the Australian Ladies Foursomes Championship twice, in 1926 and 1927, and represented Victoria six times. She was a member of the Australian 'Tasman Cup' Team in 1933, and at Royal Melbourne her name is commemorated by the "Jess Russell Foursomes Championship Cup" presented by Philip Russell in 1983 in memory of his mother.

**In 1927, Jess set a course record of 78 at Barwon Heads, where the Russells were also members, which stood for 22 years.**

In 1930, when she was runner-up to Susie Tolhurst in the Australian Women's Amateur, Alex was also runner-up in the men's national title to Harry Hattersley, and this was the first time that a husband and wife had both made their respective national finals.

Jess was a very social person and society arrangements were important to her. In the immediate post-war years after returning from England as a married woman, Jess and her sister Jean were the prime movers in setting up and running a series of dances known as "Dazzle Balls" for their fancy dress and exotic outfits that were worn. At the 1920 Dazzle Ball Jess wore a costume described as *"Chinese in design, the clinging trousers and bodice being all in one, with jumper of gold tissue embroidered in multi colour. The Pagoda Headdress, also of tissue, dangled with many coloured silk pom-poms."* Alex, who was the treasurer for the 1920 ball, got into the fancy dress spirit too, *"Major Alec Russell was an Arab chief."* Tickets were one guinea (21 shillings) each and any profits after expenses were donated to the Children's Hospital.

1923 photograph in 'The Home' magazine showing Jess Russell with her two young children, Phillip and Virginia



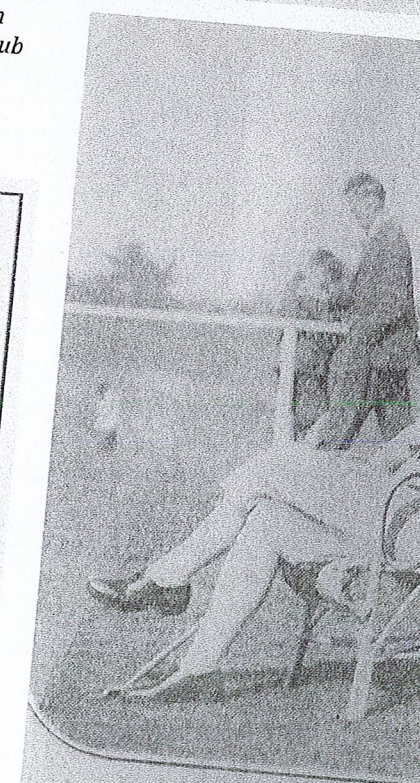
Thrilling Battle in Australian Women's Golf Championship  
One of the closest contests in the history of Australian Women's golf took place last week at Commonwealth when Miss S. Russell met in the 36-hole final of the Championship. Above: Two views of the course, and Miss Tolhurst (inset).

Jess Russell (above and above right) made the final of the Australian Women's Amateur Championship held at the Commonwealth Golf Club in 1930 but lost to Susie Tolhurst. The same year Alex lost the men's final to Harry Hattersley.

The swing of Jess Russell, shown at impact (right), displays a wonderful extension through the ball in this 1925 photograph



Mrs. Alex Russell in action. Note ball leaving the club.



Mr Alex Russell demonstr

A further threat to the course was the ever-increasing Federal Land Tax and Municipal Rates, which would have made the financial burden prohibitive for the club to remain where it was. In October 1951, Russell suggested that the club should, once more, explore the possibility of purchasing land further from the CBD. Then there arose the threat of a railway line from Moorabbin to Ricketts Point passing through the course just near the clubhouse. Thanks to what started as a Private Members Bill in the Victorian Parliament, but was taken over by the Hamer Government after negotiations with the Labor Opposition, the "Cultural and Recreational Lands Act" was passed. This protected clubs from prohibitive rates, or being compulsorily acquired without a specific act of Parliament. While this threat existed, a committee which included Alex Russell had been searching for suitable sites if relocation was needed. Fortunately, it was not.



In 1953, the club undertook discussions with the Frankston Golf Club that was experiencing financial difficulties. Russell inspected the club's 250 acre (100 ha) site which was home to their 9-hole course and pronounced that it was suitable for expansion to 18 holes. Royal Melbourne made an offer to Frankston to purchase their land but it was rejected. That same year Russell was noted as an "important personality" at Royal Melbourne when the club successfully hosted the Australian Open over his East Course.

Alex Russell continued to make minor changes to both the courses until 1955 when he failed to gain re-election to Council. Following this he was rarely seen at Royal Melbourne, preferring to play his golf at Barwon Heads and the country courses in the Western District such as Beaufort and Gala.

### Contribution to the Barwon Heads Golf Club

Alex Russell served on the committee at Barwon Heads for a number of years, was the captain from 1946 to 1949 and president from 1950 to 1952. In his time at Barwon Heads he won the Services Cup in 1937. Although details are sketchy, Russell was involved in some course alterations undertaken through this period. His wife Jess was also a member, first joining in 1926 until resigning her membership in 1976.

### Turf Research

Alex Russell developed a keen interest in golf course turf and its maintenance, doubly important in his twin roles as the chairman of Royal Melbourne's greens committee and as a consulting golf course architect to a number of golf clubs. There are many references within the Royal Melbourne minutes to Russell's activities regarding turf research, including:

24<sup>th</sup> November 1929. *Experimental Plots*

"The action of Mr Russell and Mr Blewett in forming experimental plots on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> was approved." [The numbering of the holes would be the Sandringham holes]

16<sup>th</sup> June 1930. *Annual General Meeting. Annual Report of Council.*

"Members are greatly indebted to Mr Alex Russell for the time and attention he has given in the laying-out of the 'MacKenzie' [West] and 'Cheltenham' [East] courses, beside research work in the direction of improving our fairways and greens." An appreciation of M. A. Morcom follows.

28<sup>th</sup> November 1935. *Correspondence.*

"The Board of Greenkeeper's Research. Received. Appreciation of Mr Russell's action to be recorded."

Alex Russell was also the Royal Melbourne representative on the VGA Greenkeepers' Research Committee and attended a number of meetings through the 1930s, including some with Claude Crockford.



ALEX RUSSELL

At Lake Karrinyup in Western Australia, Russell oversaw trials of a number of turf varieties for both fairways and greens and he also made a suggestion in 1928 about how to put nutrients into the fairway soil by planting "a cover crop of peas, vetch, etc. at the beginning of the wet

season. This crop should be turned in when sufficiently grown and after further manuring couch grass should be ploughed in or planted by hand. This cover crop should put considerable necessary humus into the ground helping to build up a firmer turf and to conserve moisture." In his 1933 report to the club he discussed the use of heavier soil for topdressing the greens "to encourage the fescue at the expense of the couch," and suggested the use of a combination of Sulphate of Ammonia and Sulphate of Iron as fertilizer, instead of straight Sulphate of Ammonia, while "once a year a complete manure containing some lime might be used." Similarly at Riversdale, Russell gave advice on turf establishment and maintenance, and oversaw the test plots.

At 'Mawallok,' in order to increase the carrying capacity of the land, the pasture needed to be improved and Russell researched and selected the best grasses for the pastures. 'The Australasian' featured 'Mawallok' in its 'Famous Pastoral Properties' on 7 December 1940 and noted that "the improvement in pasture by scientific means has been invaluable. About 1,500 acres has been improved with rye grass and clover, and in 1939 500 tons of ensilage, and 500 tons of pressed clover hay were put away."

## Chapter 20

### ALEX RUSSELL THE MAN

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Describing a person's character more than 50 years after their death is difficult. There are now very few people alive today who knew him at all, and only one of these, his daughter Robina, can say she knew him well. Fortunately, his son Philip gave some recorded interviews about his father, including one with the authors prior to his death in 2009, and these give a very personal insight from a son into his father. However, one thing that is beyond dispute is that Alex Russell was a highly intelligent and creative man.

People likely saw Alex Russell in different ways. Some found him aloof, and given his propensity to not tolerate fools gladly, and with his high intelligence, would have found him intimidating as well. Accordingly, they may have chosen not to like him. He was a man who initially withheld his counsel, however, when he did speak, he spoke his mind and was mostly listened to, but he could sometimes appear aggressive when he felt strongly about a point. Russell's son, Philip, said that he could at times be taciturn and pompous, recalling that:

*"Alex Russell was a brilliant athlete: never used his engineering degree: had a very clear brain: modest of his many achievements: underneath he was a shy gentleman: did not find it easy to communicate with everyone, but had many friends."*

He also described his father as being "always right" and that he "was always having a row with someone. Very stubborn if he had a point of view." According to his daughter-in-law Alethea Russell, Alex "and his wife always fought, they loved fighting," to which his son Philip added that "Dad loved fighting the most, Mum always gave in in the end."

Alex was not a good letter-writer, only writing once to his son and that was on the occasion of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. In all the times Alex visited the school for committee meetings of the Old Geelong Grammarians while Philip was a student, he never took the time to say hello to his son when he was there. He did though leave a 36-hole event at **Barwon Heads** one day so that he could go and watch Philip in his school sports day.

His daughter Robina thinks that basically her father was shy, despite his outward confidence. He had a good sense of humour, with quick and witty responses, and the evidence suggests that

it was a rather dry sense of humour. She wrote that "people found him dour but his friends and family knew him to have a very quick wit and sense of humour." Her descriptions of some family incidents indicate a man with significant warmth, while Philip described him as "a very kind man." Robina stressed his absolute belief in fairness, and gave as an example that of a man who was sacked without any explanation from a firm her father was associated with. When Russell heard about this he sought out the man and explained all the reasons for his dismissal to him. To his way of thinking that was only fair. Russell's belief in fairness also surfaces in his golf courses where lesser players and women are shown due consideration.

Robina wrote of her father:

*"Alex Russell was a very able man in many spheres. He had a clear logical brain. He excelled at any sport and was also a good shot. As a father he was old-fashioned in today's world and left our upbringing more to his wife. He had a very funny dry sense of humour and was very kind but had a temper which was better avoided. My early memories of him were accompanying him opening gates as we went around the property and also his expertise of beautifully made bows and arrows which got lost very easily."*

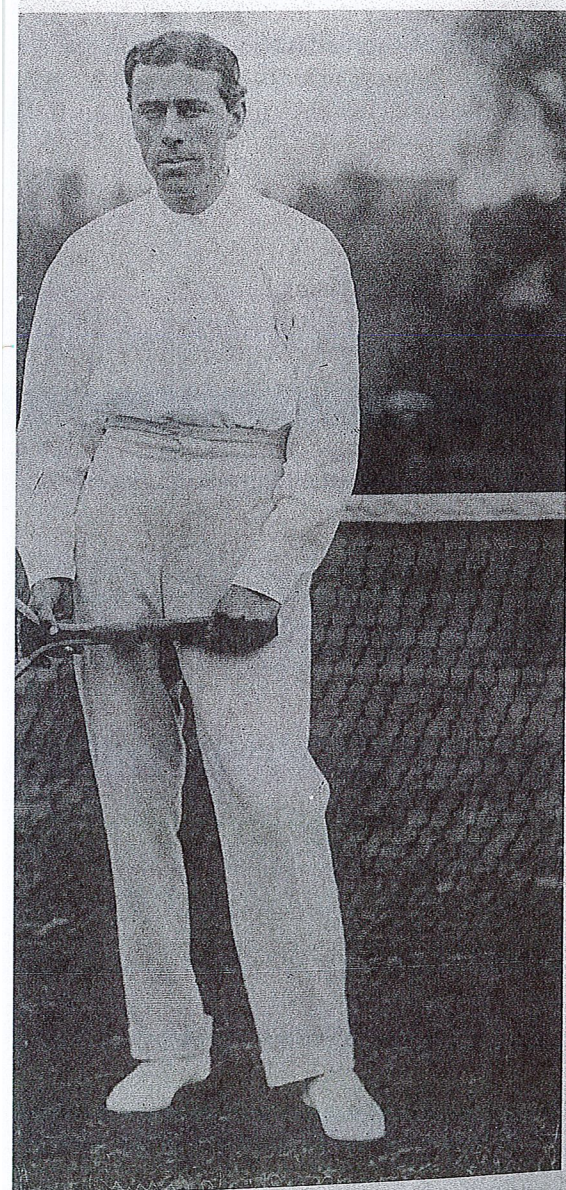
Alex Russell chose his close friends carefully and was very loyal to those he did choose, just as they were to him. He was widely respected for his many gifts including leadership, involving him in a wide variety of committees. He was made a Life Member of Royal Melbourne, Yarra Yarra and Royal Adelaide for his services to these golf clubs and to golf in general, and was a Life Member of the Red Cross Society for his outstanding services to that organisation during World War II. Similarly, when Russell first stood for Council at Royal Melbourne in 1928 following the resignation of the majority of Council members over the clubhouse issue, he polled the most votes of any candidate, and remained a member of Council from 1928 to 1955, a period of 27 years. He became Private or Confidential Secretary to Stanley Bruce for around 12 months when Bruce was Prime Minister of Australia in 1923-24. From the press articles of the time, of which the authors have seen more than 400 where his name is mentioned, he comes through in a very

Alex Russell skiing at Mount Buller in 1932

Tennis played at the Royal Melbourne Tennis Exhibition Street, Melbourne.

ote of "Russell's Versatility" in its 10 August that:

Open Champion of Australia, can do more than w years ago he had the makings of a first-rate n better was his attempt at tennis, and no less han Norman Brookes assures us that had he ith the game Russell might have become one



champion Norman Brookes, twice winner of the Wimbledon, was a keen and talented golfer and a member at Royal Melbourne. Russell well and believed that he could have been one of the best in Australia if he had not chosen golf.

of the finest wielders of the racket in this country. Poor eyesight proved the drawback to both of these games, and it was only when the Open Champion was fitted up with his present well-known pair of "Harold Lloyd's" that he was able to do anything good at golf."

At Cambridge, Russell won a Half Blue for billiards by representing Cambridge against Oxford, and it was reported that after an important round of golf he would often play billiards to unwind and "keep his eye in." Russell played some competitive billiards in Victoria, and in 1927 was reported as playing for the first time in the qualifying rounds of the Victorian Amateur Billiards Championship. The reporter noted of Russell's play that he was doing well in his match "but was far too impatient; many of his opportunities were lost owing to his hard striking," and he eventually lost. Philip recalled that his father won the billiards championship at the Melbourne Club where Alex was a member. A few years earlier Russell donated a "fine rosewood billiard table" to the Barwon Heads Golf Club.

Robina recalls that her father once claimed "the world's longest drive from outside the Melbourne Club three blocks to outside Henry Bucks menswear. It got tracked in the tram line! (at 2am)." Alex was a long-time member of the Melbourne Club, joining on 4 July 1919 and remaining a member until his death in 1961. Club records show that he was a regular participant in billiards tournaments until 1951. His first appearance came in the tournament "Leura June 1924", with a handicap of "75 behind", when he proceeded as far as the Semi-Final. He performed similarly in the following year and by August 1926 his handicap was recorded as "owes 90". In 1930 he reached the Final, playing against the Hon. W.L.R. Clarke. The winner is not named, but Clarke is recorded as "rec. 70, 232"; Russell "250." The first prize trophy for this Handicap Billiards Tournament was valued at £21, the second prize at £7. At the 1931 tournament, Russell's handicap appeared as "owes 100". The results are not regularly recorded thereafter until 1945, when Russell (owes 100, 192) met and lost to R.C.M. Kimpton (250). Russell continued to enter tournaments, not passing beyond the heats, until 1950.

In 1946 the Melbourne Club secretary asked Norman Barrett and Alex Russell to suggest improvements to the billiard rooms. Their reply included suggestions they had received in a report from Walter Lindrum, the Australian billiards champion. The club's history book, "Number 36 Collins Street" by Ronald McNicoll, contains one reference to Russell and his friend Alan Ritchie getting into some trouble with the committee, "More and more members such as A.B. Ritchie and Alex Russell, incurred the Committee's displeasure by buying drinks for non-

resident members or strangers out of permitted hours, thereby endangering the club's licence".

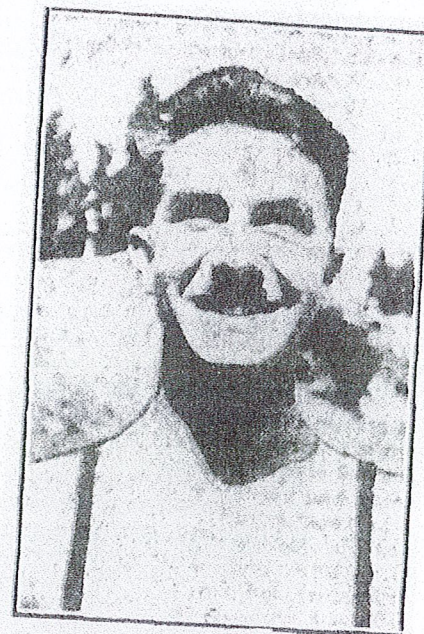
Russell was an enthusiastic skier and noted in his war diary in November 1915, that a snowfall had reminded him that he would have been getting ready to go to St Moritz in eastern Switzerland at that time of the year. His sister Joan had written about a family holiday at St Moritz in 1909, a trip that the young Alex no doubt participated in, and it would appear that he visited St Moritz quite regularly when in England. Alex was also photographed as a young man standing proudly in front of the sign for the Cresta Run, the great toboggan run at St Moritz, with tobogganing one of his favoured winter pursuits there.

He was also an early participant in snow and skiing activities in Australia at Mt Buller in the Victorian Alps. In the late 1920s, Russell, Alan Ritchie and the Austrian, Helmut Koffler, who built the first chalet at Mt Buller in 1929, were involved in establishing the first ski run at Mt Buller, according to Russell's son Philip, who later recalled:

"Helmet Koffler would help with the breakfast wash up then he'd grease up the skis....in those days you had to wax the bottom of your skis to make it slidier, you know. You ran into the shed and picked up your skis and Dad spent some time ... and then Helmet Koffler suddenly gave us half an hour's start and he was at the top of the Buller run, before we were, but we were lousy skiers but Dad was pretty good. I wouldn't say he was a champion but he and Alan Richie, who wouldn't be a champion either, but they built the thing and encouraged a lot of people to go there."

Philip also noted that his father and 'Bo' Fairbairn once went cross-country skiing across Norway during their stay at Cambridge University, while the time Alex spent in Scotland as a boy with the ghillie Bathgate led to a lifelong interest in fishing and shooting.

The Austrian skier Helmut Koffler built the first chalet at Mount Buller and was involved with Alex Russell and Alan Ritchie in establishing the first ski run there



H. KOFLER,