

VALE DOUG CLARK

For many a year, if you happened to be on the golf course late on a Friday afternoon, you would have been likely to see a solitary figure strolling the fairways. It would be nice to imagine that the bag over his shoulder was canvas and the small number of clubs hickory-shafted but that is romanticising it. The figure was Doug Clark and he was finishing the working week in the way he liked best: alone with his own thoughts and on the golf course.

Doug made many contributions to the club but he should always be remembered primarily as a golfer. He had a single figure handicap for most of his career and went close to breaking his age. He was one of those enviably boring characters who believed the fairways were there for a purpose. He wasn't long off the tee but he was straight. If he wasn't on the green in regulation it didn't matter. His chipping was immaculate. No breaking of the wrists, scooping the ball or looking up before the shot was even played. Just a gentle swing at a well controlled pace. When he needed to putt, then, like the man himself, it was true and straight.

This meant that no matter what the event he was always in contention. If you wanted to win you always had to make sure Doug wasn't lurking waiting to pounce. A simple example to illustrate. Doug loved his golf trips. Once at Victoria, despite a heavy cold that should have sent him home, he won. The stakes? The responsibility of organising the trip next year. Well, perhaps bragging rights as well. The point is though that he wasn't going to let a little thing like an unwelcome cold stop him.

In 2002 the club awarded him a life membership. It is not hard to understand why.

For 22 consecutive years he was the club's treasurer. Few of us can understand the allure for some people of figures; there is rarely a rush to fill this job on any committee. But for all of this time Doug kept the books balanced and steered us through some tricky times. It was the era of the purchase of the 200 acres on Fairway Drive and the subsequent development of this for the new nine-hole course. Doug was intimately involved in all of this. The financial commitment was large but the success of the project meant the Club could look securely to the future.

As if this wasn't enough, Doug then served a term as president, a job that inevitably brings with it tensions. Not surprisingly, Doug provided the calm leadership needed.

In more recent years Doug, with wife, Sylvia, lived in a retirement village at Rosebud. He continued to play golf although he was limited because of a heart condition. His attitude was revealing. He would only play if he could be challenged. The course that is part of the village did exactly that. To the end he was a passionate golfer.

Finally, Doug was a man of integrity. There are not too many who have a kind word for the Racing Club. Doug did. He said that they were there first and were largely responsible for the clearing of heavy bush that allowed for much of the golf course to be developed later. He also maintained that the agreement between the two clubs clearly stipulated the height of the trees that has been the bone of contention between the two clubs ever since.

So there you have it: golfer, administrator and gentleman.

Written by George Shand