

Evolution of the Dunany Golf Course

Golf in Dunany began on a three-hole course laid out over the pastures of the Smith Farm. The course was soon expanded to six holes and by 1927, there were nine holes. Other than the order in which the holes were played, the layout of the course remained unchanged from 1927 until 1949. Then, over the next two decades, major changes were made to lengthen and improve the course. Since 1972, many improvements have been made, but the layout of the course has remained the same.

This chronology of the evolution of the course was pieced together from my own recollections, conversations with my parents and many others, essays by my Aunt Beth (born in 1911), minutes of Ladies Branch meetings, old scorecards, photographs, conversations in 2022 between Dianne Vanstone and Sandy Hyde (born in 1924), extensive research by Dianne Vanstone and Johnny Cleary's crystal clear recollections of four decades working on the course. Johnny shared his recollections with Rod Armstrong as they drove around the course in the old Jeep in the fall of 2021.

According to the written recollections of Beth Sutherland, the earliest course was a three-hole layout (Diagram 1). It is not known for certain that Over Brook, Punch Bowl and Home were the first three holes, but it seems logical because they were the 1st, 2nd and home holes when the course was later expanded to nine holes (Diagram 3). Beth Sutherland wrote that after the three-hole course was built, it was soon expanded to six holes (Diagram 2) and then to nine holes (Diagram 3).

The six-hole configuration is speculation, but it seems likely that the back three holes would have been the last ones added as they are the most remote (the 6th, 7th and 8th holes in Diagram 3). The order of the holes in the 6-hole layout likely would have been as shown in Diagram 2, as Beth Sutherland describes her father (W.H. Sutherland) making a hole-in-one

on the 2nd hole. She noted that the sand green was a shallow bowl and a ball reaching the green tended to roll towards the hole. The hole played from a tee behind the current 1st green up to a green to the left of the current 6th green.

Once the course had been expanded to 9 holes, this hole became the 5th hole and most, if not all, of the greens would have had grass on them. It is likely that W.H. Sutherland made his hole-in-one in 1924 or 1925, when the course had 6 holes.

The earliest known nine-hole configuration was par 32 (Diagram 3). The Ladies Branch minutes from 1927 refer to a proposal to reduce the ladies par to 37, so clearly there were nine holes at this time. Jeff Adams found a scorecard (Photo 1) under the clubhouse in the fall of 2020, probably from around 1930, though I am told this same card was used in the late 1940s, when for a few years, the holes were played in their original order. The card was most likely designed earlier than the 1940s because the golfer on the front of the card is wearing plus fours and the clubhouse in the background closely resembles the old clubhouse, which was located behind the current 1st tee. As well, the 234-yard Punch Bowl would not have been played as a par-4 in the 1940's, a decade after steel shafts replaced hickory.

The card confirms the yardages and pars, and the order of the holes at the time (Diagram 3). The actual yardages of the holes were likely a bit less than those shown on the card because they would have been measured with a tape along the ground. It is amusing that the yardages on this card were not added up correctly. The par of the 2nd hole (Punch Bowl) was changed from 4 to 3 at some point after the card was printed, though no changes were made to the hole. Par for the course decreased from 32 to 31.

The first nine-hole layout started with Over Brook, a 200-yard par-3 from beside the current clubhouse kitchen, over the creek to an elevated green on the plateau (Photo 2).

The 2nd, Punch Bowl, was a 234-yard par-4 from the top of the hill to the right of the current 8th hole landing area, to the low flat area in front of the red tee on the current 9th hole (Photo 3). Since the green was not visible from the tee, the bell on the current 5th hole was mounted on a small tower on a platform to the left of the green. The bell was donated to the club by T. Howard Stewart in 1929.

After ringing the bell, players went up a set of stairs and through the woods to the 3rd tee. The tee was about 40 yards in front of the current 7th tee, but 25 yards or so into the woods on the left. The tee was supported by a retaining wall made of dozens of stones, which are still visible. The hole played downhill to the current 7th green, a distance of 430 yards.

The 342-yard 4th hole was the same as the current first hole except that the green was on the small plateau to the right of the current green.

The 5th was a 142-yard par-3 from behind and to the right of the current 1st first green, up the hill to the flat area to the left of the current 6th green. The tee is still clearly visible in the woods to the right of the current 7th fairway.

The 6th hole was a 185-yard par-3 played from the current 3rd tee across the canyon to the flat area to the right and in front of the new pine tree.

The 7th hole played 166 yards from the woods in front of and to the right of the current 5th white tee, downhill to the left and behind the current red 5th tee. The tee shot was blind so there was a gong made from an old brake drum, which was struck with a tire iron hanging from a chain.

The 8th hole played 320 yards from the current red 5th tee to the current 5th green.

Players then walked through the woods that would become the current 6th fairway, to the 9th tee, which was in the woods to the left of the current 6th fairway. A small clearing is still visible where the tee was located.

The 350-yard 9th hole played downhill to the current 9th green. The flat area beside the pine tree and the large rock to the right of the landing area on the current 9th hole was the ladies tee, which was built in 1953 (Photo 4). A ladies tee on Punch Bowl was built at the same time.

At some point prior to 1933 or 1934, when Sandy Hyde first started playing golf in Dunany, the order of the holes was changed (Diagram 4). The 1st hole became the 7th, the 2nd hole became the 8th, the 3rd hole became 6th, the 4th hole became 1st, the 5th hole became the 2nd, the 6th hole became the 3rd, the 7th hole became the 4th and the 8th hole became the 5th. The 9th hole remained the home hole.

However, some time after the new clubhouse was completed in 1939, possibly in 1945 or 1946, the order of the holes was changed back so that Over Brook was again the 1st hole. There was a supply of the old scorecards and they were brought out and used again. This change was very unpopular, because many thought the 1st tee should be close to the parking lot, and that the 1st hole should not be the very difficult Over Brook, with its elevated green that was difficult to hold.

So, in 1949, when the current 2nd hole was opened for play, the order of the holes was changed back so that Over Brook was again the 7th hole and the 1st tee was next to the parking lot. Note that the cement terrace visible next to the door of the old clubhouse in Photo 5, is still there beside the blue tee on the 1st hole, though much of it is now covered by earth.

Major changes were made after World War II. When more space was required to expand the course, the club purchased a section of the Boyd Farm to the left of the 1st fairway. At this time, the current Dunany Road going past the 2nd tee did not exist and the road went around the north side of Boyd Lake and up Monte Hill.

The land provided space for the current 2nd hole to be built, for

the 1st fairway to be extended to the left and for the 1st green to be moved to the left and enlarged. In 1949, the par-3 2nd hole was replaced by the current par-4 2nd hole, which was built as a memorial to Garth Fish and the other members who served in the war (Diagram 5). Garth Fish was killed in action in 1944. At the same time, the tee on the 6th hole (currently the 7th hole) was moved back to its current location, making the hole a par 5. With these changes, par for the course increased from 31 to 33.

In 1953, the trees between the old 3rd green and the current 3rd green were cleared, as shown in Photo 6 taken at the time by Don Sutherland, Sr. The fairway was built and grass was grown prior to August 1956, as the fairway is visible in Photo 7 taken on the Pines 4th tee in August 1956. However, the 3rd hole was still played as a par-3 until 1960 or 1961 because, as Johnny Cleary recalled, the extended fairway was too wet to play on and the drainage had to be improved. Photo 8 shows Don Sutherland, Sr. standing on the original par-3 3rd green in July 1957. When the extended 3rd hole was opened for play (Diagram 6), par for the course increased to 34.

At some point prior to 1956, the current 1st green was built and the fairway was extended to the left, as seen in the background of Photos 9 and 10, taken in November 1956 and July 1960, respectively. Photo 9 also shows the rock and tree that used to be in the middle of the 1st fairway about 150 yards from the tee. This tree was on the left side of the 1st fairway before the fairway was widened. It is not known why the tree was left where it was.

In the late 1950's the club considered expanding the course to 18 holes. Sufficient land was purchased, but it was decided that expanding the course would drastically change the nature of golf in Dunany, so the plan for expanding the course was abandoned. The members did not regret purchasing the additional land as it still serves as a buffer and prevents any development on the boundaries of the course.

The trees on the current 6th hole were cleared in the winter of 1959. Photo 11 was taken in October 1960, after the tree stumps were removed, but before the green was built. Once the hole opened for play in 1961 or possibly 1962 (Diagram 7), the Pines 4th hole was no longer used. It is likely that the current 5th white tee was built at this time. This would not have been done earlier as the 4th and 5th fairways would have crossed.

In 1957, the current 4th fairway was cleared. In 1959, earth and manure were spread and the fairway was seeded. The green took a long time to build because of the demands of maintaining the course so the hole was not opened for play until 1966.

When the new 4th hole was close to being ready for play, the par-3 7th and 8th holes were combined to make a dogleg par- 4, by bulldozing the 7th green (Diagram 8, Photos 12 and 13). Par for the course increased to 35.

In 1972, the extension of the 8th and 9th holes was completed for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the club. The 8th fairway was extended to the east and the 9th hole was converted to a dogleg par-5 (Diagram 9). Par for the course increased to 36. No major changes have been made to the course since then.

Don Sutherland, April 1, 2022, updated July 20, 2022