

Life for 'big hit' George!

A BRITISH RAIL plate-layer, who used to caddy at the club as a schoolboy for 10d a round 50 years ago, has been made a life member of Delamere Forest Golf Club.

He is George Johnson, an amateur golfer extraordinary who almost made the Walker Cup side in 1948, and is already something of a legend for the colossal distance he can hit the ball. He represented Cheshire for more than 10 years.

The honour comes not only because of his long association with the club, but also because of his willingness to encourage new members, particularly high-handicap golfers.

His association with the club started 50 years ago as a schoolboy caddy for 10d



GEORGE JOHNSON . . .
"colossal drives."

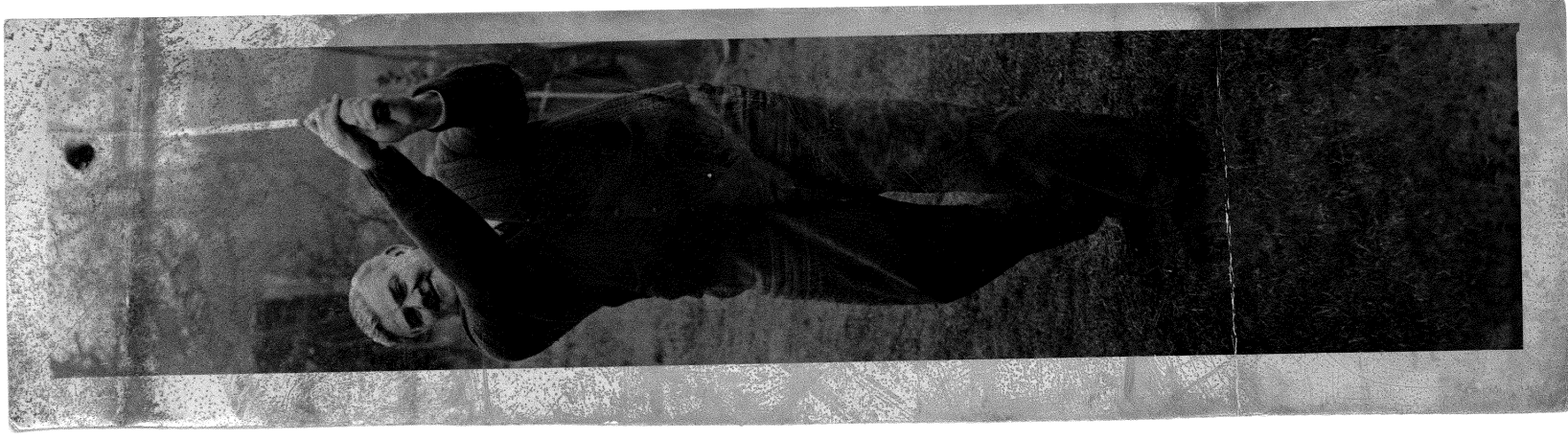
a round. When he actually joined the club in 1946 at the age of 35, his first three rounds—against a par of 73—must have staggered the handicapping committee. He returned a 72, 73 and 74 and was given a handicap of three. A year later he was scratch and by 1949 was off plus two.

COLOSSAL

The basis of his successful game has always been his colossal drives. Working on the simple theory that the best way from tee to green was by the shortest direct route, he has staggered all with his booming drives.

His most memorable drive, which came in a club event, was a monster 413 yards with wind assistance to the eighth green. In the early fifties he set up a course record of 66 which has never been touched by any amateur since.

In the words of Dennis Comboy, the Delamere Forest professional: "I can honestly say that in all my years in golf I have never seen anyone—amateur or professional—hit the ball as far as George."





CHESTER ENJOY A COUNTRY TRIP

Keen play in summer foursome at Curzon Park

A representative team of Chester golfers, under the leadership of R. F. Walker, defeated Delamere Forest G.C. in a friendly match, at Delamere, on Monday night.

Rural and remote, what a magnificent heath course this is. The golfers from the city enjoyed the well kept greens (as they were later to enjoy the hospitality of their hosts) putting well to win two games, halve two games, and lose one.

Any match in which the cheerful George Johnson is featured is worthy of attention. The Forest captain, H. B. Harrison had Johnson alongside him in the game against skipper Ebb Walker and his aide-de-camp Rusty Williams. Johnson was once considered for Walker Cup honours and is undoubtedly the best golfer in Cheshire not to have won the County championship.

DROVE GREEN

Johnson drove the green at the first hole played, over 320 yards, and won it with the expected birdie. He continued for the next couple of hours to demonstrate all his old skill and the frightening lengths to which a golf ball can be hit. The Chester captain and Rusty Williams were impressed but undaunted even at four down. Chester hung on to the four down position until the Delamere pair fell into error at the sixth 15th where Johnson was heavily bunkered. Chester plundered this hole and stole another at the 16th where Johnson pulled a fantastic drive far away to the left.

The Chester captain then performed the remarkable feat of winning the last two holes, sinking brave putts for a birdie at each against George Johnson's regulation par figures and thus an apparently lost game was valiantly halved.

TOP GAME

In the top game against Delamere's West and Bancroft, Bearne and Fielden combined splendidly to put Chester ahead, but almost at once Jimmy Evans and Paul Moores exacted revenge by the same margin (4 up and 3 to play) at the expense of Les Barrett and Stephen Gee.

From four down with seven to play Chester's Jiggins and Oldfield fought back in the best "never-say-die" tradition to halve the game with Light and Harvey, and to keep the whole match on level terms.

Finally, and this re-union of old friends was quite a cliff-hanger, Brian Holden and John Ashbrook of Delamere produced some sparkling golf against George Ashton and Andy Small only to be ambushed on the last green, losing the game and the match by the narrowest possible margin, one-down. A triumph of nerve for the city golfers.

Details (with Delamere pairings first): H. B. Harrison (capt.) and George Johnson halved with R. F. Walker (capt.) and G. E. Williams; R. S. L. West and G. M. Bancroft lost to C. C. F. Bearne and R. H. Fielden 4 and 3; James E. Evans and Paul Moores beat L. G. M. Barratt and Stephen Gee 4 and 3; D. B. Harvey and T. G. Light halved with A. H. F. Jiggins and Wing Com Old-

field; Brian Holden and John Ashbrook lost to G. G. Ashton and Andrew Small 1 down.

MIXED FOURSOME

The main event at the Chester Summer Foursome meeting was at Curzon Park on Saturday was won by Peter Ford (13), in collaboration with Mrs. D. Critchlow (21), with a net of 68 a score to be equaled within ten minutes, of it being posted by Stephen Gee (8) minutely supported by Mrs. Dorrie Crump (28). All four proved themselves expert in the difficult but rewarding art of hitting alternate shots.

Equity was served by awarding first prize to the front runners, Ford/Critchlow, three strokes in hand at the turn. They had combined splendidly from the third hole onward and were to fair only once on the run-in. At Vampire Point, the 12th, they drove out-of-bounds to accumulate a disheartening 8, and were at once overhauled by Rusty Williams and Phyllis Jones. Proceeding steadily throughout the piece, W. L. Wilson and Miss P. Dixon, an admirable combination of experience and youth, were reeling off an endless succession of tie 4's. They and the solid Gee/Crump pairing were now well placed to pose of Ford/Critchlow.

Rusty Williams and Phil chipped badly at the simple start and were then out of the reckoning, although they did have the satisfaction of returning the best gross score of returning the best gross score (84) at the finish.

Meanwhile the mercurial Peter Ford and Mrs. Critchlow had quickly erased the dismal 12th from their collective conscience and completed the round with a remarkable run of figures (net) reading 4, 3, 4, 4, 2, 4. This was a brave recovery deserving far prize it earned.

Leading returns: Peter Ford (13) and Mrs. Critchlow (27) 68; Stephen Gee (8) and Mrs. Crump (28) 68; W. Leslie Wilson (8) and Miss P. Dixon (28) 70; Rusty Williams (12) and Mrs. Phyllis Jones (14) 71; John Palmer (15) and Mrs. W. L. Wilson (14) 71; Cliff Crofts (20) and Mrs. J. Palmer (21) 71; Brian Abel (12) and Mrs. Smart (28) 72; Claud Maddison (8) and Mrs. Blackwell (24) 74; Andrew Small (9) and Mrs. Holgate (12) 74; P. F. Walker (6) and Mrs. Beck (28) 74; J. H. Beilby Shr. (11) and Mrs. A. Small (11) 76; Jack Spenser (6) and Mrs. Eileen Brown (18) 76; R. G. M. MacDonald (14) and Mrs. E. Dixon (18) 76.



ON GOLF

George's Tiger feat

■ DESPITE his Open setback, Tiger Woods still make the headlines for his awesome driving power. But another bit hitter is being remembered at Delamere Forest.

A plaque is to be put at the 8th where George Johnson drove the green, a distance of 418 yards. This was in the 1960s too, long before the days of graphite shafted clubs and other aids to knocking the ball great distances.

■ George, a foreman plate layer on the railway, played in the Cheshire Championship and the British Amateur and was a tri-alist for the Walker Cup squad.

Perhaps those who played with him regularly were not as astonished as others to hear about his drive at the 18th. He quite regularly drove the 304 yard 15th. George died about two years ago in his early 80's.





