



FEDERAL GOLF CLUB  
CANBERRA

## History of Federal Golf Club

Federal Golf Club was formed in 1933 in the grounds of the Acton Racecourse.

A nine-hole layout consisted of sand greens, with the majority of the holes located in the centre of the track. The golfers were not alone as they also shared the land with several sports fields and with many grazing sheep owned by neighbouring Kaye's Dairy Farm. To keep the sheep from straying on to the putting surfaces, each green was surrounded by a low fence which the players would have to chip over and then step over to putt out. It may not have been a perfect arrangement, but in some ways it was idyllic.



As for the Members it was finally the realisation of a dream to have a club they could call home. Initially, the club had a small weatherboard building inside the race track. Later on, a larger building was erected on the slopes of Butter's Hill, still inside the racecourse boundary. The club flourished, but became a victim of its own success. Such was the demand for golf it became clear that an alternative site would at some stage be required.



An unexpected decision in 1946 to grade and re-design the Acton racetrack left the club without a course and the search for a new home was more pressing still! Numerous alternatives were explored, with the Commonwealth government suggesting three possible sites. The one at Red Hill – our current home – was chosen because of its potential and because it offered security of tenure that the other two sites did not.

A hardy band of 14 Members led by the president, Mr O. J. Ratford, supported by local MP Mr A.D. Fraser and with the assistance of the Department of the Interior, set to work to build a golf course, virtually with their bare hands, out of the beautiful but virgin site.



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James Herd Scott advised on the design of the original 9 hole layout. In 1967 Prosper Ellis, a golf administrator and A grade player was engaged to advise on layouts and improvements. Ellis would go on to work on many more courses including those at Belmont Golf Club, Windsor Golf Club, Woollahra Golf Club and Camden Valley Golf Resort, as well as remodelling numerous existing layouts.

The Members though, deserve much of the credit, because without their blood, sweat and tears the club would never have taken shape. Working on Saturdays and Sundays and public holidays, their efforts were rewarded two and a half years later. On March 26, 1949, the club opened a nine-hole sand course with local MP Mr Fraser, in solemn ceremony, unfurling the flag at the log cabin clubhouse.

The club pressed on to complete the second nine holes by 1951. In September, 1953 the first section of the new clubhouse was opened by Mr Gordon Freeth, the Minister for the Interior.



Still pursuing the dream of the original band of 14, whose ranks were by now thinning, club Members, by means of a tremendous voluntary effort at weekends, and assisted by Mr Les Robinson of the Parks and Gardens Section and Mr Alan Hunt, the club's greenkeeper, were able to construct and open in September 1955, the 18 grass green holes which now make up the championship course. When difficulty was found in obtaining suitable tenders for extensions to the clubhouse three years later, the club decided to undertake the work itself.

This spirit and the "can do" attitude has endured over the years, with each generation leaving its own mark on improvements such as course irrigation and improved off-course facilities that are so richly enjoyed today. While the current layout has blossomed into a championship course of which everyone associated with Federal Golf Club should rightly be proud, our original home has sunk without trace. It now lies several metres beneath the waters of Lake Burley Griffin!