

For Old Time's Sake

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The SICC Heritage
Chronicles



Phyliss Clegg returns to what used to be Royal Island Club



Join writer Raja Jumira as she takes a trip down memory lane with an old member of the Royal Island Club who was in Singapore for a brief visit

Phyliss Clegg arrived at The Singapore Island Country Club on 10 March 2011 without knowing what to expect. The bespectacled old lady – fondly known as Phyl – emerged from a blue taxi and gave me a warm hello.

Phyl is the type of person that people immediately take to. I was struck by her gentleness, humility and warm demeanour. Her eyes behind the silver-rimmed spectacles speak of years of wisdom, enhanced by her humble beginnings. She is no longer as nimble, moving around slowly with the aid of her walking stick.

A trim, beautiful woman with coiffed snow-white hair, Phyl is elegantly but unfussily put together, dressed in a long-sleeved blouse, dark pants and pearl earrings with matching necklace, and well-manicured pink fingernails. You would not have guessed that she is 93 years old.

The friendly woman exudes an easy warmth and extends her wrinkled hand to pat your hand gently as she speaks softly.

“Thank you for having us,” she smiled.

At her back – a back of generous breadth – followed a man and another lady, smiling most hospitably, but looking somewhat awkward, as though not quite knowing what they were to expect of the arrangements at SICC. We shook hands affectionately all around, and they introduced themselves as Stephen and Suzie Evans – Phyl’s son-in-law and daughter.

The Reminiscence Bump

Phyl stood at the Island 19th Hole, and lingered, as though intoxicated by the landscape. “There used to be a swimming pool,” she said, pointing to where the practice putting green now is.

This memory trigger got Phyl started. “I was one of the few

“There used to be a swimming pool,” said Phyl



who objected to the installation of the pool.”

“It obstructed the view,” she declared.

Phyl then pulled a white envelope out of her bag and started flipping through old photos.

“We were members of the Royal Island Club from 1953 to 1956. The members back then were mostly British businessmen and service members.”

Phyl added, “My husband, Arthur Clegg, was the Joint Services Representative with the Royal Air Force (RAF). He was on a three-year posting in Singapore.”

Coincidentally enough, while at the terrace of the Island 19th Hole, Phyl reconnected with a long-standing member, Robert (Bob) Cordeiro, who has been a member of the SICC since 1963 – the year of the merger between the Royal Singapore Golf Club and the Royal Island Club.

They greeted each other, and talked and laughed and reminisced about the old days.

Faces in the Photographs

Phyl shared with us a photo of the 1954 Committee of the Royal Island Club.

“Arthur was part of the Committee,” she said, pointing to the picture of her husband. “Sir Malcolm MacDonald was the President then. A charmer, he was.”

A familiar face in the photograph caught my eye. “This man...” I said, my voice trailing off.

“That’s Loke Wan Tho,” Phyl immediately replied, reading my mind. “Arthur used to play golf regularly with him. Wan Tho had passion for ornithology, and so did Malcolm MacDonald. They used to climb trees, together with Wan Tho’s wife, Christina, to observe and photograph birds.”

Phyl paused, sipped her cold beer in between, conjuring memories of



The programme of a ball held at SICC in 1954 that Phyll kindly donated to the Club



Phylliss Clegg reconnected with a long-standing Member, Bob Cordeiro (third from left) who has been a Member of SICC since 1963. The others in the photo are Phyl's son-in-law Stephen Evans (second from left), Club Vice-President Chua Tiang Hee and General Manager/Secretary J-P Schneider



Phyl holds a committee photograph dated 1954 and identifies her husband Arthur Clegg (fourth from left, standing) and Dato Loke Wan Tho (first from left, seated)



*Royal Island Club Committee 1954
Standing left to right: Unidentified, Unidentified, C C Tan, Arthur Clegg (Joint Services Representative and Squadron Leader, RAF), unidentified, unidentified, George Addison (Director of Botanic Gardens) and Jimmy Laigne (Secretary)
Sitting left to right: Loke Wan Tho, The Honorable M R Jumabboy, Tan Chin Tuan, KCMG The Rt Honourable Malcolm MacDonald P. C. (President), Dato SQ Wong, unidentified and Jimmy MacMullen (Financial Advisor)*



Phyl tries to identify the members of the 1954 committee as son-in-law Stephen Evans looks on



The Race Course Cup and monthly medal cups that Arthur Clegg won

her times at the Royal Island Club. She seemed to be able to recall a few other people in the photo; at the same time, getting her daughter, Suzie, to write the names down.

Tell me more about Arthur, thought the curious writer.

“My father was the Squadron Leader in the RAF. He was a great sportsman,” said Suzie with a gracious smile.

A photograph of awards and trophies was handed to me. “Arthur was an avid golfer. He devoted much time to his love of golf and continued enjoying a rich vein of form, which saw him notch a slew of victories,” Phyl recalled.

She spoke of the time when Arthur won the 1954 Race Course Cup – a memory that lit up her eyes when she was reminded of it. “The club was seeing rigorous golfing activities. I was pleased when he won the Race Course Cup. His friends had tried to fix him a few drinks the night before the game. It was such a close contest between Arthur and George Addison, Director of the Botanic Gardens. I was just glad that Arthur won.”

Phyl also recounted amusing stories of the memorable times she had shared with her late husband and their friends at club events. They used to attend regular balls and parties at the club, and a photograph of Phyl and Arthur at the New Year’s Eve Ball clearly shows how much they enjoyed themselves.

“Billy Banks was performing at the club that night. He’s an American cabaret singer. I jumped on the stage and we began to sing ‘When The Saints Come Marching Home’,” she remembered. “Billy Banks was fantastic, absolutely fantastic! Everyone was dancing on the floor.”

Her eyes widened as she recalled the countless hours spent talking with friends at the Ball. “We never went home,” Phyl revealed. “The crowd at my table,” referring to the photograph, “we went on to the golf course, sat around the greens, and we talked and talked. Then we got in the car and went to someone’s house, continued going to somebody else’s house until we realised it was about 3 o’clock in the next afternoon, and no one had been home!”

She added, “It was a New Year that I will never forget. And I never got

tired, no one seemed to get tired and no one seemed to get drunk either! Everyone was driving their cars around and just enjoying themselves.”

Such fond memories are priceless, I must admit.

Retracing Those Unforgettable Moments

The year 1956 was the period when Arthur and Phyl went back home to England. About a year later, Suzie, their one and only child, was born.

Suzie had vague details of the club except being told often by her mother about the beautiful memories she had of the Royal Island Club. “Phyl would always say that she lived there!” Suzie quipped.

“Well, Arthur and I spent almost every evening in the club during the weekdays. And we were only staying a few miles from the club, at Braddell Heights,” Phyl clarified.

By now, listening to Phyl made me develop a deeper interest and apparently lasting attachment to her. “What was a typical weekend at the club like for you and Arthur?” I asked.

Her voice trailed off for a moment before she spoke again. “Both of us would golf in the morning; have a very long lunch with our friends, followed by a game of 9 holes in the afternoon, and end the night with a wonderful dinner at the clubhouse.”

And no wonder the club was home to Phyl, I thought.

“There was this man,” Phyl suddenly recalled, “By the name of Lyn Holloway. He was the former editor of The Straits Times, and a member of the Club too.”

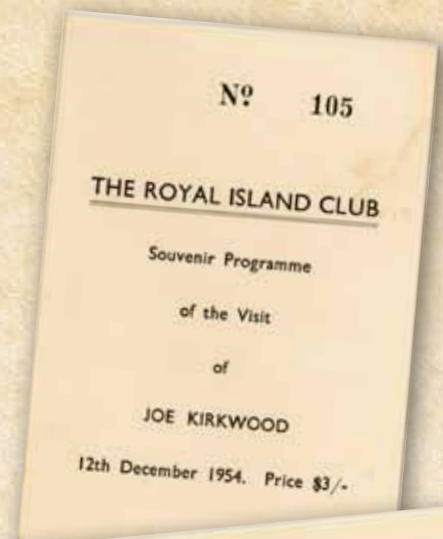
“He was my god-father,” Suzie explained. “Is he still in Singapore? It’s been more than 25 years since we kept in touch!”

“He’s based in Hong Kong now,” said Bob Cordeiro. “But he still comes here every now and then.”

Without a second thought, this writer decided to hunt Lyn Holloway down. A few calls to the Membership department and the next thing I knew, I was having a conversation with Lyn Holloway, who was, at the point of time, playing golf at (yes, you’ve guessed it right!) SICC, Bukit Location.



Phyllis Clegg (second from right) at a New Year's Eve party at SICC in 1954 while her husband Arthur Clegg is second from left



Souvenir programme of golf professional Joe Kirkwood's visit to Royal Island Club in 1954. Phyl has generously donated this programme to the Club



One for the album - from left: General Manager/Secretary J-P Schneider; Suzie Evans, daughter of Phyl, Club Vice-President Cbua Tiang Hee, Phyl and Stephen Evans, Phyl's son-in-law

This was too much of a coincidence, if you were to ask me. My initial intention was only to get Lyn's contact details for our special guests. Since he was at the Club, wouldn't it be a nice surprise and a wonderful reunion if I were to take Phyl and the Evans over to the Bukit Location?

After all, it is not often that meet-ups like this would happen - all in one day, that is!

Memories Left Behind

Phyl bade farewell to Bob. The old fellow, in his civil and demure manner, had his arms encircled Phyl's tiny frame in a warm embrace as they stood underneath the distinctive propeller blade that has been hanging on the arch of the A-frame Island Clubhouse since 1954.



Phyl with Bob Cordeiro at the entrance of the Island Clubhouse. Phyl could still remember the wooden propeller above the entrance

It was about 1 o'clock when we arrived at the SICCC Bukit Main Clubhouse.

Phyl and the Evans were given a quick tour of the club and then we proceeded to Bukit Room for lunch. All these whilst I was constantly on the phone in an attempt to get hold of Lyn Holloway!

Then there he was. A tall, bald man with glasses perched on his nose, smiling brightly as he strode up towards our table.

"It's been a long time," Lyn murmured. Phyl chuckled as she saw the surprise in his eyes.

Phyl knew he was not talking about the time he had been away from the Cleggs. He had finally seen, in her eyes, the memories that had been missing since they last met.

Her lips curled in a watery smile. “Yes. So, how have you been?” she joked wryly. Lyn laughed with a slight shrug, and suddenly became aware of the four pairs of eyes watching them warily.

“What?” Lyn asked defensively. “It’s been over 25 years. We have a lot of catching up to do!”

Suzie giggled and soon everyone else was chuckling as well.

“I can’t stay for long though.” Lyn wrapped an arm around Suzie’s shoulders, squeezing her gently, and then turned to Phyl. “I’m in the midst of a golf tournament. But tell me where you’re putting up in Singapore, I promise I will give you a call this afternoon.”



Old friends meet again after 25 years - long-standing Member Lyn Holloway meets Phyl at the Bukit Room

She smiled up at Lyn, nodding in agreement to keep in touch, her heart full of joy and hope. Phyl said candidly, “Just make sure you don’t go missing on us again. Do call and we shall arrange for dinner while we’re both still in Singapore.”

Lyn was about to leave the restaurant when he hesitated a moment, turned around to face Phyl and said, “Phyl...” he paused. “You are looking so beautiful,” his voice deepened on the last words.

Everyone was silent for a long minute and I heard Phyl whispering a quiet thanks.

Phyl could not believe what was happening. One minute she was reminiscing about those wonderful times gone by, and the next, Lyn Holloway was there, standing right in front of her, bringing those memories literally back to life.

Beyond Time

Nothing comes so easily with old age except for wrinkles, but in case of some, everything is well-balanced and they grow old without showing any sign. As Abraham Lincoln said, “It’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your year that matters.”

And in the case of Phyliss Clegg, it is the priceless memories of Arthur Clegg, Lyn Holloway and the Royal Island Club that remains deeply etched in her mind and heart.

Arthur Clegg is survived by Phyliss, their daughter, Suzie Evans, and a 23-year-old grandson.

Let’s Treasure Our SICC Heritage

We are proud at SICC of all our Members who have contributed so richly to Club life and building up our shared heritage. We hope this heart-warming story about the Clegg family will inspire our Members – young and old – to continue to develop their own passion for the Club and endearing memories.

The Member & Public Relations Committee (MPRC) and Marcom teams also hope that Members have enjoyed reading the new SICC Heritage Chronicles that have been introduced to *islander* to enhance appreciation of our Club’s Heritage. As we add today to the pages of Club history and innovate to modernise our Club, we would do well to remember not to neglect our past. In this vein, the MPRC will soon be unveiling other Heritage-related initiatives geared to enhance SICC Heritage. Please look out for these in the *islander* and we hope you will support us in these important projects.

If Members have interesting photographs and personal Club memorabilia to share with the editorial team, please do approach us at 6431 8352. If you like what we are doing and have ideas to share, we would also look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.