Belle Haven in October
by Jim Meier, CGCS

On October 13th, Jim Meier and Belle Haven Country Club will host our next monthly meeting. This may be the Mid-Atlantic Region but when you’re talking Belle Haven, you’re talking real southern history. Just for openers, 1000 (that’s right, one zero zero zero) slaves are buried between the 4th green, 5th tee, 9th green, and 6th tee. The plantation house itself sat next to the springs to the left of the 5th fairway. The old plantation roads came in under the 4th green and between the 8th & 9th greens. The plantation itself ran all the way out to the island which is now in the middle of the Potomac.Hill who worked in Alexandria, the area was home to an Indian tribe.

During the Civil War, Union soldiers used the tombstones for practice and you can still find one of their bullets every now and then. Before proceeding into “new” Alexandria, trolley cars used to run where today’s 17th tee is located and picked up passengers at a hotel that was once located on the site of the 3rd fairway/rough.

Belle Haven Country Club was built between 1924 and 1926. Originally constructed for the residents of Belle Haven Hill who worked in Alexandria, the course consisted of 9 holes and crossed both Fort Hunt and Belle Haven roads.

Members also had a hand in designing the greens and their handiwork shows in #2, 4, 5, 7, and 12. Records are spotty for the early years so it isn’t always possible to identify who did what. For example, #1 was built 90 yards forward and #8 to the right. Rabbit & Sprigg did #10 and we can vouch that #5, 3, 9, 11, and the practice green have never been touched since construction. #3 is sinking and I feel for the cup cutter on #11 because it is common to have to chisel the plug out of the cup. The 13th and 16th holes were built from fill that came from the construction of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and Route #1. Part of the driving range and other landfill came from Crystal City excavation. Ed Ault designed the 13th through the 16th holes as well as the 17th and 18th greens. The 18th green was sodded but others were built by a company from North Carolina.

Since 1980 the course has had Midiron sprinkled on it. Lakes are being rocked, bunkers rebuilt, new irrigation installed, and Zoysia is being plugged on #3, 4, 5, 15 and 16 tees. The lower tee on #17 and #1 tee are new. In past years, the course would be totally submerged after every rain storm. Now things are getting better, since 1984, this only occurs once or twice a year when the tide is in and electricity off. Joe Emanuel and I used to see if I could close the course, now we are hardly ever closed.

In 1980 Belle Haven played 20,000-25,000 rounds of golf. In 1986 we were at 39,506 rounds, which I was told was still under by 2,000.

Greens are poa and bent and are cut 6-7 days per week dependent on activity. (This past July & August, they were cut 5 days a week.) Height this year is set at 1/8 to 5/32 inch dependent on time of year. Tees and collars are cut twice a week at 1/2 inch and fairways at 9/16 inch 2-3 times each week. We overseed annually with rye on the fairways and tees and bent (when we can get it) on the greens.

As you can see, Belle Haven has a strong history and it certainly seems that every person in the U.S. has had a hand in its design/construction. It is a challenge to maintain as well as to play. Its history and setting should make for a memorable day of golf and I welcome all members to come and enjoy!

Golf is available after 11 a.m. Carts are $14 and lunch is available; dinner is $16.50. Cash or charge to club applies.

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