

BRIEF HISTORY
OF KING EDWARD BAY GOLF CLUB

BY

MR DONALD JONES

History of King Edward Bay Golf Club (Howstrake)

- 1892** In connection with the development of a new roadway and the new Electric Railway line from Derby Castle to Groudle, Tom Morris of St. Andrews was engaged to lay out a golf course over 9 holes on the Howstrake Estate starting where the Skandia building now stands at Port Jack and heading up to what is now the Royal Avenue area towards Onchan village before looping back to the starting point.
- 1893** An early set back when the course had to be closed as the land was required for the development of the Douglas Bay Hotel and the Port Jack/Royal Avenue area.
- 1894** One of the local golfers, a Dr. Farrell found an area towards Groudle which had been earmarked as a location for a park but which was suitable for golf. Tom Morris together with George Lowe of Lytham St. Annes laid out a new Howstrake course of 18 holes over much of the area we now use, and a new clubhouse, timber framed and covered by corrugated iron sheeting roofing was erected just above the railway lines behind what is now the 15th green - the foundations can still be seen there. The clubhouse afforded a fine view over Douglas Bay and was one of the first public buildings in the island to have electric lighting which was obtained from the railway system just below. It is recorded that the initial Howstrake club membership was 60, the annual fee being one guinea (10 shillings and 6 pence for non-residents), the Captain being Frederick G. Callow who subsequently became the first Chairman of Onchan Commissioners in 1896; the Secretary was a Mr J.H. Quine of the ill fated Dumbells Bank.
- 1896** Howstrake was said to be one of the best courses at that time and prestigious Spring and Autumn Open Competitions were held -with prizes totalling about £70, a very large sum in those days- attracting players from England and Scotland.
- 1899** The course was leased by the development company Douglas Bay Estate Co. to the Douglas Bay Hotel.
- 1900** The crash of Dumbells Bank had disastrous financial consequences for both the development company and the Douglas Bay Hotel.
- 1902** A Mr. Prestwich took over the course on an 8 year lease and ran it privately but reduced it to 9 holes. This was also the year that King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra travelled along the coast road to Ramsey at the end of their visit resulting in the name of the road being changed from Marine Drive to King Edward Road.
- 1910** Control of the course passed back to the landowner, now Howstrake Estate Ltd., who had acquired the Howstrake Estate - including the course - at a coroners auction in 1903.

1914 Things improved as land was sold from parts of the Estate and the course was extended back to 18 holes.

1916 The 1st World War had caused income to fall to an uneconomic level and the course was again reduced to 9 holes.

1920's After the war Howstrake Estates sold off it's Groudle Glen assets and constructed a new 18 hole layout, increasing the course area from 70 to 150 acres by using the fields between the old course and Harbour Road. The Howstrake Hotel (now the Warehouse Restaurant) was built in 1921 and the clubhouse was transported from King Edward Road to its new position opposite the hotel in 1923.

Howstrake Golf Club prospered and the Club's Honours Boards show all the Captains, Presidents and major competition winners from 1925 to date. In 1929 the British Ryder Cup team, including Henry Cotton, came to play in a 54 hole Tournament at Howstrake, Port- E- Chee and Fort Anne.

In 1926 the first IOM Golf Championships were played at Castletown and in 1927 and 1930 the qualifying rounds were played at Howstrake.

1937 Howstrake Estate (including the golf course) was purchased by Mr L.L. Corkill (a local builder and ^{developer} ~~decorator~~) with no significant changes during the war period except a drop in the number of players which only started to increase again in the 50s

1948 Howstrake hosted the IOM Golf Championships .

Players representing Howstrake have won the Championship 9 times with the Club capturing the Team event (Sanderson Cup) 6 times to date.

1958 Following the death of the tenant Professional/Green Keeper Charlie Stirling, Mr Corkill's company gave a 10 year leases on the course to the owners of the Majestic Hotel (excluding sheep grazing rights) who installed Mike Wilson to succeed Charlie. He was subsequently succeeded in 1964 by Mr Reynolds who only stayed in the position for about 2 years.

1965 The course was rundown and Basil Jackson of the Majestic wanted to reduce the course to 9 holes and switch the clubhouse to the Hotel. Mr Corkill supported the members objections to this.

1966 The Club took over the lease for the remaining 2 years with Harold Jones operating the course. From 1968 Mr Corkill would only agree 1 year leases which caused a worrying lack of security, but Harold carried on as Mr Howstrake for nearly 20 years assisted by his family and stalwarts such as Maurice Castle, Roy Gilbert, Harry Pevitt and Jack Pedder.

- 1970** The course was purchased from LL Corkill by Ramsey developers Manor Investments and the Club eventually received a 'notice to quit' in 1972. Despite public meetings and a strong campaign the course was closed at the end of 1972. Members were obliged to join other clubs but the committee stayed together and kept options open.
- 1974** After negotiations with Manor Investments and much hard work by the committee and members, in particular John Davies and his father Arthur, Colin Quayle, Ron Kelly, John Jones, Dave Moore, Roy Gilbert, Harold Jones and many others, the course reopened over a revised 55 acre site consisting of 13 holes and with a 5 year lease with Harold and helpers continuing in charge, working from 'the green hut' which is now the Green Keepers building. Initially there were 44 members with annual green fees of £10 - conditions were primitive but club spirit was superb.
- 1975** Jack Pedder opened the new 1st hole - now the 10th - having constructed the green himself with a spade and wheelbarrow, so saving the double climb up the hill from the Groule end of the course.
- 1979** Manor Investments refused to renew the lease and instead gave the Club a 'Licence to Play' which afforded little security.
- 1983** The Club considered purchase but the asking price of £150,000 was considered too high at the time.
- 1984** A London developer Bob Bhanja with grandiose plans started purchase negotiations with Manor Investments which came to nothing, but led to a consortium of 9 local businessmen headed by Peter Gough forming Golf and Leisure Ltd., purchasing the course, building the fine clubhouse, restaurant and bars that we now have. The new facility was opened by the Lt. Governor in December 1987 and the course was renamed King Edward Bay, with the Club also changing its name to King Edward Bay Golf Club in 1989. Harold Jones retired at that time and the new owners appointed Roy Moore as Head Green Keeper and by 1991 the course was restored to 18 holes. Since then there has been a steady improvement in the condition of the course, thanks largely in recent years to the efforts of Peter Gough and Head Green Keeper Brian Duggan, resulting in the course being in the best ever condition in its 111 year history.

**DETAILED HISTORY OF
KING EDWARD BAY GOLF CLUB
AN ABSTRACT TAKEN FROM**

A REPORT

BY

MR PETER KELLY

ISLE OF MAN HISTORIAN

HOWSTRAKE GOLF LINKS - 1892/93

The game of golf came to the Isle of Man in the 1880's, the exact date is not known, when General Brereton bought a mansion called Riverside on the Jurby Road and it was on some adjacent land that the General had a private golf course laid out for his own use.

The Island's first public golf course opened at Ramsey on 27th. September 1891 and was laid out by Tom Morris of St Andrews who also designed the original Douglas course at Quarterbridge meadow which was opened on 4th November 1891. Early newspaper references to this course appeared in The Isle of Man Times of 31st October 1891 which stated that "...Douglas golf links will be open to subscribers on the afternoon of Wednesday next.." and in its following issue The Times mentioned that the "...links were laid out by the proprietor, Mr George Drinkwater, assisted by Tom Morris..".

Golf was a comparatively unknown game on the Island. At the opening of the Port-e-Chee links, the proprietor, Mr Drinkwater, gave a talk to the spectators in which he explained the purpose of the game and how it was played. It is also apparent from reports in the newspapers that journalists were unfamiliar with the terminology of golf and they wrote of "teeing grounds" or even of "teeing holes". One considered it necessary, when writing of a "four-some", to explain that this was a match involving four players.

Over the years there have been four distinct golf courses on the Howe. The first, and the one about which least is known, started from the site of the former Douglas Bay Hotel. This was followed by the links at the Eastern end of Howstrake which overlooked the coast near Groudle. Then came a move to a course which started at the Howstrake Hotel in Harbour Road and, finally, this course was modified and adapted to suit a reduction in the available land to form the present links on Groudle Road.

Over the years, the ownership of Howstrake and of the golf course was in the hands of a number of companies, The Douglas Bay Estate Co Ltd. from 1892-96, The Douglas Bay Estate and Groudle Glen Co. Ltd. from 1896-1903, and The Howstrake Estate Co. Ltd. from 1903-1937. However, over this period the beneficial ownership remained in what were basically the same hands. Alfred Lusty's involvement as a director, shareholder, or mortgagee spanned a period of some 45 years until 1937 when Mr L.L. Corkill's company Howstrake Estate (1937) Ltd bought the land on which the course stood. In 1972 the Howstrake estate was acquired by Manor Investments Ltd and in 1985 the land which the course occupied was purchased by Golf and Leisure Ltd.

The various golf courses on the Howe were often under the control of a series of lease holders. Amongst these were The Douglas Bay Hotel; Richard Henry Prestwich, a Manchester cotton spinner whose wife had purchased The Mansion House and who had taken a lease of the course as a private facility; Majestic (1958) Ltd who leased the links when they acquired the Majestic Hotel; Rex Hotels Ltd., Mr Basil Jackson's company which ran the Majestic Hotel from 1964 and had the lease transferred; and, in 1967, the golf club itself obtained a lease on the course.

Whilst no precise date is available for the beginnings of golf at

Howstrake, and the early records of the club there appear not to have survived, a few clues exist in the newspapers of the period. One such item is found in a report of the club's tournament held in 1896. This appeared in the Isle of Man Times of 22nd September of that year and also in The Peel City Guardian a few days later. Mr F.G. Callow, Club Captain and son of the previous owner of the Howstrake estate, asked Mr Alexander Bruce, who was the President of the club and manager of Dumbells Bank, to present the prizes. In his introduction Callow remarked that Bruce "...was the man who originated these links, and he was the first man who introduced golf into this Island..".

In his reply Bruce provided posterity with what appears to be the only information available regarding the early years at Howstrake and even here no exact dates were given. A part of Bruce's speech was reported and read - "As regards golf in the Island, I believe General Brereton had the first private links in the north of the Island; and a Ramsey gentleman, speaking to me, said "If you want to develop Milntown property the best thing is to get a good golf links" and then another friend...a late captain of Hoylake links, suggested we should get Tom Morris over. Well, we got Tom Morris over, and the Ramsey links were laid out and he, at the same time laid out two more courses, viz., one on the Howstrake, or Douglas Bay estate, and the other, the Port e Chee links, on behalf of Mr George Drinkwater. The ground of the former was afterwards changed from that laid out in the first instance by Tom Morris, and which was from the site where the Douglas Bay Hotel is now built, round to Onchan Village, to that discovered by Dr. Farrell, and which, some two years afterwards, was laid out by Tom Morris and George Law...". (The name Law was a misspelling of Lowe).

This quotation from Bruce's speech is the only known reference to Howstrake's first golf course. The mention of the removal of the course to that "...discovered by Dr Farrell.." refers to the fact that the whole of the high portion of Howstrake, which overlooked Groudle, was originally earmarked to become a scenic, or pleasure park, to be known as Howstrake Park. Dr Farrell suggested, rather forcibly by pulling out the surveyors' marker pegs, that the land would be better suited to be a golf links to replace the original course on the Douglas Bay Hotel site.

Bruce's use of the phrase "some two years afterwards" might offer a clue to the date of the original course which started from the Douglas Bay Hotel. There are two surviving records which confirm the date of the new course which occupied the high ground at the Eastern end of the Howe overlooking Groudle. A booklet published in 1894/5 entitled "Beyond the Silver Stream in Manxland", stated that "...the first hole was dug on 9th May 1894..". Another record in The Manx Sun of 16th June 1894 reported the news that "...Play has already begun on the new Golf Links on the Howstrake estate, Douglas, and we expect, this will hasten the already remarkable growth in popularity of the royal and ancient game..". The reference to "the new Golf Links" distinguishes it from the original course at the Douglas Bay Hotel. On the face of it, this evidence would indicate the date of the original course as two years prior to the new course, or about May or June 1892, but there are other factors involved.

There were press reporters at the 1896 prize presentation and Mr

Bruce commented, jovially, on their presence there. Their reports of the speeches appear to be a verbatim record of what was said. Bruce stated that Tom Morris had laid out the links at Ramsey and that "...he, at the same time, laid out two more courses...the Howstrake...and...the Port-e-Chee links...". As we have seen, the links at Douglas and Ramsey were opened in the Autumn of 1891 but there are no references to Howstrake at that period. The estate of Howstrake belonged to the Callow family until its sale on 10th September 1892 to the Douglas Bay Company. F.G. Callow was the senior male member of the Callow family and was an advocate in Douglas. If Tom Morris did in fact lay out a Howstrake course "at the same time" as the Douglas and Ramsey links, and the verbatim report of Bruce's speech states that he did, who was his client?

Callow stated in his introduction at the 1896 prize presentation that Bruce "...was the man who originated these links...". Bruce is on record as saying "...I am not an enthusiastic golfer myself..." and it might seem strange that he should be credited with the beginnings of golf at Howstrake. However if Bruce was not a golfer, he had certainly been involved albeit coincidentally or indirectly with the start of many Island golf courses of his time. As an example, Bruce was a trustee of the estate which sold to General Brereton in 1880 the land on which his private golf links was to be built. It was Bruce who in 1891 had brought Tom Morris to the Island to lay out a further three courses at Ramsey, Port-e-Chee, and at Howstrake and, once more, it was Bruce who brought Morris to the Island to design the Fort Island links for Mr Dodd. Whilst Bruce may not have been an enthusiastic golfer, he was undoubtedly an entrepreneur and man of vision. But Bruce, the banker and a director of several companies, appears to have had no direct connection with the Howstrake estate until he became one of the original subscribers to the Douglas and Laxey Coast Electric Tramway Company. The shareholders of this new company were virtually the same as those of The Douglas Bay Estate Ltd. and both companies had an identical registered office at Frederick Saunderson's premises at 7, Athol Street, Douglas.

Frederick George Callow was a lawyer and son of the family which owned Howstrake. During the Summer of 1891, John Travis, in whom the estate was vested as trustee, had been engaged in negotiating the sale of the estate to Frederick Saunderson, who, in May 1891, had announced his grand scheme for Howstrake. This included road and tramway links along the undeveloped coastline from the Derby Castle to Groudle. Saunderson had produced a plan of the Douglas Bay Estate, probably in 1891 or 1892, and this proposed that the entire estate be developed as housing. There was no provision for a golf links. The South Western part of the estate, including the future site of the Bay Hotel, was shown as high density terraced housing and the remainder as far as Groudle, including the summit of Bank's Howe, was scheduled as large building plots. Saunderson had previous development expertise and had created new streets in Ramsey and had laid out the Ballaquayle estate in Douglas.

As the owner of the estate in 1891 when Morris laid out the links on the future Bay Hotel site, it might be thought that it was he who had engaged Morris for the work. However, Callow had remarked at the 1896 prize presentation that as far as golf was concerned "...I am quite a beginner...and my experience is as yet very limited...". This would scarcely tie in with a man who, possibly emul-

ating George Drinkwater at Port-e-Chee, might have commissioned Morris to lay out his own links. However, if a prospective purchaser had a golf course in mind and wished Morris to prepare a lay-out during his visit in 1891, in anticipation of the purchase of the land in due course, Callow would hardly object.

Saunderson's proposals for developing the estate did not include a golf course but it is unlikely that Bruce would have overlooked the advantage of including one within an extensive housing development. Some years previously, Bruce and Saunderson had been the trustees of a marriage settlement, and thus knew each other, and it was probably Bruce who made the suggestion of providing a golf course and arranged for Morris to design one at Howstrake in the course of his visit in 1891. This supposition, if correct, could explain Callow's remark that Bruce "...was the man who originated these links..".

We shall probably never know a precise date, but what is certain is that the site on which the hotel was to be built was bought by Mr W.H. Marsden on 1st June 1894 and that the Howstrake links had moved to the site overlooking Groudle. Of the original course we know nothing except that it went "...round by Onchan Village...". It is likely that it took advantage of the stream which came down roughly on a line with what is now Royal Avenue. Morris used the river and mill-race at Port e Chee to create natural hazards and would probably have adopted a similar strategem at Howstrake.

By September 1893 the tramway to Groudle was in operation and the roadway which ran alongside the track was completed. These developments were to provide easy access to the new course overlooking Groudle.

It would appear that there was little, or no, interruption of the facilities for golf at Howstrake during the period of moving from the original course to the new links. The land from which the old course started was sold on 1st June 1894 as the site for the Douglas Bay Hotel. As previously noted, the new links were in use in that same month. The construction of the new course had been completed in around four to five weeks. It is noted earlier that the work on the new links started on 9th May and this is confirmed by The Isle of Man Times of 12th May which published an item under a heading of "New Links at Howstrake". This related that Tom Morris and George Lowe "...are at present laying out a golf course on the Howstrake estate, which is to be called The Howstrake Links..From the conformation of the ground, the nature of the grass-sod, and from the "bunkers" and the other natural hazards which are to be found there, Howstrake is pronounced a most suitable locale for golf links. Passengers from the Electric Tramway will be landed at the first teeing-hole, a little beyond Onchan Harbour...". The report noted that it was a full eighteen hole course. The length was said to be about four miles but this appears to be overstated as the club's advertisement in the 1896 Guide stated that it was "...over three miles in length..".

The Isle of Man Examiner of 6th July 1895 reported that "...during the past winter the teeing grounds and putting greens have been still further improved...". The Isle of Man Times of the same date refers to "the pretty lodge which forms the headquarters of the Howstrake Golf Club", confirming the existence of both the club-

house, or pavilion as it was frequently called, and the Howstrake Club itself, in 1895. As regards the club however, it might be a reasonable assumption that it was instituted in the previous year following the completion of the new course. It is also a possibility that a club existed at the former course at the Douglas Bay Hotel site in 1893, although, as will be seen, even The Golfer's Guide and The Golfing Annual cannot agree on this point.

The Golfer's Guide, Volume IV, of 1897 gives the year of formation of the Howstrake Club as 1893. However, the Historian of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrew's, Mr R. Burnet, states that The Golfing Annual consistently dates the Howstrake Club as instituted in 1894 and goes on to say that "...I am fairly sure that that is when they should be celebrating..[the centenary]..". Although it is generally accepted that both the Ramsey and Douglas clubs were instituted in 1891, the Golfer's Guide dates the Douglas club to 1890 and this may cast doubt on the accuracy of some of the information it published.

The glacier-borne boulder displayed in a raised flower bed at the rear of the new club-house and which has an incised inscription, "JUNE 1891 (???) JULY 18?? R ? WALSHAM" and which was removed from that part of the links which was formerly Howstrake Park can have no relevance, because of the 1891 date, to the links, or the park, as neither had by then been envisaged. It is, however, an interesting piece of contemporary graffiti.

The Golfers' Guide of 1897 contained a plan of the 1894 links and made the following comments -

"Howstrake Golf Club, Douglas, Isle of Man. Inst.- 1893. - This links is situated on the spur of a hill known as Onchan Head, two miles from the Victoria Pier, Douglas. It is an eighteen-hole course, and was laid out three years ago by Tom Morris of St. Andrew's and George Lowe of St. Anne's. The greens are in good condition, the turf is springy, and the course, which is decidedly hilly, is of a highly sporting nature. The bunkers are well made and judiciously placed. From the links the view obtained is magnificent, Douglas Bay being right under foot. The Douglas and Laxey Electric Tramway passes within fifty yards of the Club-house, a large and comfortable pavilion fitted up with every convenience and lighted by electricity."

Alexander Bruce was named as President, F.G. Callow as Captain, J.H. Quine, of Dumbell's Bank, as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer and the greenkeeper was a Mr. W. Corkill. The subscription was one guinea for residents and half a guinea for non-residents and the membership was given as 60. As a comparison, the Douglas club was stated to have about 180 members and Ramsey 136.

The Isle of Man Examiner of 6th. July 1895 reported that "...Soon after the proprietors of the Douglas Bay Estate acquired the extensive lands of Howstrake, they, noting the great strides in popularity made of late years by the Royal and Ancient Game of Golf, decided to devote a portion of their estate to the purposes of a golf links. The high lying land known as Banks' Howe was, they found, admirably adapted by nature for the purpose and but little assistance was required from art to form the land....into a first class links. The aid of the ablest professionals, including that

of the veteran Tom Morris, was obtained and soon the Links were properly laid out...During the past winter the teeing grounds and putting greens have been still further improved....". The report went on "...that the proprietors being desirous...that the Link should become known among golfers...arranged through the Howstrake Golf Club, for an exhibition match...". At the time of this match in July 1895 the Howstrake links were of 18 holes and were reported as having a total length of 3365 yards. Mr. John Mclean of Kegworth in Derbyshire superintended the construction and he had also been involved, during the first six months of 1895, with the setting out and landscaping of the adjacent Howstrake Park.

The Isle of Man Times of 25th. June 1895 announced "Pending Interesting Matches at the Howstrake Golf Links" in connection with which "...The Isle of Man Steam Packet Co. and the Electric Tramway Co. are issuing golfers' tickets at reduced prices, so that with the certainty that there will be two famous players among the competitors there is likely to be a large gathering at....the Howstrake Golf links.....and the electric tramway passes within a few yards of the Club-house....".

The three days which included Tynwald Day 1895, the 4th. 5th. and 6th. of July were momentous in the history of the Howstrake Golf Club. The Mona's Herald carried a lengthy report of a "Golf Tournament at Howstrake". This was held on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday and the Herald reported that of 70 entries over 50 turned up for the event. There were, in fact, 62 entrants, 49 gentlemen and 13 ladies. In the male events, 27 players were from the United Kingdom and the Douglas Club was represented by 9 competitors, the Ramsey Club by 8, the Castletown Club by 2 and Howstrake, the youngest club, mustered 3 players. The ladies included 6 visitors from the United Kingdom, 5 from the Ramsey Club, and 2 from Douglas, making a total of 13. The Ball family was particularly well represented. John Ball, Junior, of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club, of whom the Mona's Herald commented that "...Mr Ball's record entitles him to rank as the best amateur player in the world...." was accompanied by his two sisters from Moreton Ladies Golf Club, Miss K and Miss M Ball, who finished first and second respectively in the Ladies Scratch Competition. Their brother, unfortunately for the family honour, came second to Mr H H Hilton of Formby Golf Club in an exhibition match between the two former champions which ended at the fourteenth hole with Hilton six up and four to play. These names were indicative of the high calibre of amateur golfers which the Howstrake Club managed to attract in its first major event.

The arrangements for the event had been carried out by Mr John H. Quine, the Club Secretary, and Corresponding Clerk at Dumbell's Bank, and by Mr Harold Aldred of the Bank's auditors, and both of these gentlemen featured in the trial following the Bank's collapse in 1900, the former as a witness and the latter as a defendant. Bruce, the General Manager of the Bank, congratulated both on the arrangements made in connection with the event and indeed this praise was well earned. Where once flocks of sheep had roamed over Bank's Howe the tournament had seen spectators, estimated as numbering several thousand, and the Herald report stated that "...many who had before tabooed the game became ardent champions in its praise, so that the Howstrake Club may immediately look forward to a great accession of members....". The newspaper also

commented that "....amongst the fashionable crowd that assembled, and who, as intending witnesses of the game for the first time, scoffed at it as unexciting, and not half as good as "cammag", [a Manx form of hockey similar to shinty or hurley], once started, padded the hoof round the full length of the course..only to give vent to the exclamation, "Well, this is fine...". The same spectators were "...most eager for the "foursome" or four player game of the afternoon, which they also accompanied round in their dumb struck admiration....".

Thursday morning saw the exhibition match between Ball and Hilton followed by a scratch and handicap competition. Later on that day a foursome competition was held won by Ball partnered by Withington of Lytham St. Anne's. On Friday there were amateur scratch and handicap competitions, which took place in beautiful weather and in the scratch event Ball reversed his defeat by Hilton on the previous day. H. Holden of Bowdes had the option of taking either the second scratch or first handicap prize and chose the latter. On Saturday morning a match was held for professionals and Pulford of Hoylake broke the course record scoring 73. The remainder of the day was given over to the Ladies' Competitions and the Herald recorded that "...delightful weather prevailed..". In the scratch competition Miss K Ball came first with her sister in second position, and won a pair of cut glass, silver mounted, scent bottles, and a case of silver fruit spoons respectively, an appropriately feminine choice of awards. The prizes in the handicap event consisted of bon-bon trays for first and second with a silver backed hair-brush for third place.

On the Thursday and on the Saturday the Directors of the Electric Tramway placed a special car at the disposal of the golfers, and Dr. Farrell of the Howstrake Club, and who had taken part in the tournament, acted as a guide and pointed out various objects of interest including the Laxey Wheel.

Hospitality was also provided following the Thursday's exhibition match and Dr Farrell on behalf of the owners of the links invited "...all present to a luncheon in the pavilion. The luncheon was provided by Mr. S.H. Marsden, of the Douglas Bay Hotel, and was splendidly catered...". On the Friday evening a ball in honour of the tournament was given at the Douglas Bay Hotel, attended by a large number of the visiting golfers and local people.

At the close of the tournament on the Saturday, Mrs Gill, wife of Deemster Gill, presented the prizes and, as the winners came forward to receive them, the Howstrake Park Band played "...an appropriate air...". And what prizes they were! John Ball won a massive fluted solid silver salad bowl, valued at £12., and Hilton received a silver tray worth £7. The total value of the prizes came to £69. which, in 1895, was an appreciable sum.

The Herald reported that "the majority of the ladies and gentlemen whom the competition attracted stayed at the Bay View Hotel [the Douglas Bay Hotel] and expressed their surprise to find such a magnificently appointed hotel in Douglas..".

The tournament must have been a tremendous boost to the fledgling Howstrake Golf Club and three of its members, Dr. Farrell, Thomas Stott and S.H. Moyle were among the 62 golfers who participated

in the Club's first major event. It would also have provided invaluable publicity for Bruce's ambitions for the development of the Howstrake estate as a desirable location on which to erect a superior dwelling house with all the amenities of a nearby town, coupled with the enjoyment of open countryside and a golf links.

A competitor in the 1895 tournament, in a Press interview, commented that "...he thought the distance between the holes rather short....", but was "...assured that this would be shortly remedied by the taking of some adjoining land...". The Examiner report of 6th July 1895 gave the course length as 3,365 yards whilst the advertisement in the 1896 Guide claimed it to be over three miles in length, which has to be more than 5,280 yards. It is unlikely that any extension of the course could have been achieved before the 1896 Guide went to press and presumably the 3,365 yards was a misprint for 5,365 yards.

The Board of Advertising Guide for 1896 mentions the Golf course "...on the Howstrake Estate at the end of the Bay overlooking the sea...", and goes on to record that "...The Howstrake Links were laid out under the supervision of those well-known professionals, Tom Morris of St. Andrews, and George Lowe, of St. Anne's. The views from the whole of this elevated position are very beautiful and the links themselves are pronounced by the most competent authorities to be of a very superior character, not to be beaten by any in the British Isles. Cars run from the foot of the Victoria Pier to the very entrance gates of the links...". (The entrance gates were not the imposing ones at Lag Birragh. These were erected to serve Howstrake Park).

This same Guide of 1896 carried an advertisement in the following terms -

"Howstrake Golf Links, DOUGLAS BAY, Isle of Man. An excellent 18 Hole Course - over 3 Miles in length. Electric Trams pass the Links every few minutes during the Season. Amateur Scratch and Handicap Competitions will be held on July 6th., 7th. and 8th., and September 7th and 8th. In addition to several other Prizes, a SILVER CUP, value 25 Guineas, will be given by the Committee to the person who makes the best net score at the above handicap competitions. For particulars apply to JOHN QUINE, Dumbell's Bank, Douglas, Isle of Man". Following this competition the prize presentation was held at View Park Mansion, courtesy of Mr Glenn McAndrew who had just acquired this house from his late brother's estate. Two subsequent occupiers of this property were also to be involved with the links. Richard Prestwich, who had come over to the Island to attend the 1896 tournament, leased the course from around 1900-08 and in the 1960's Mr Basil Jackson of the Majestic Hotel, which since 1922 had embodied the original mansion, had a lease on the links. It was noted in the Isle of Man Times of 22nd September 1896 that, although the tournament had attracted a good number of players from England, including, for their second visit to Howstrake, John Ball and H. Hilton, the support of other Manx clubs was less than in 1895.

The Guides for 1896-98 carried, on their back covers, further advertisements for the Howstrake links, giving the address of Dumbells Bank and confirming the continued involvement of the Douglas Bay Co, and the Bank, in the running of the course. Bruce was the

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common factor in all three undertakings.

CONTRACTED?
Around 1898/99 the links were acquired by the Douglas Bay Hotel. The Guide of 1899 carried an advertisement for this Hotel, which was presumably prepared in 1898, the previous year, which stated that the "...Howstrake Golf Links, 18 hole course, and covering 77 acres, now belong to the Hotel...".

The Hotel's control of the links did not last long. Following the collapse of Dumbells Bank in 1900, the estate company was unable to sponsor golf at Howstrake and the lease of the links to Prestwich came into being. The Guide for 1904 mentioned the "...magnificent 9 holes course at Howstrake, Douglas, the private property of Mr R.H. Prestwich..." and noted that "...members of the Douglas Club are privileged to play over this by courtesy of the proprietor...". Within a period of about five years from around 1898 to 1903 the course had not only changed hands but had also been down graded from 18 to 9 holes. An advertisement in the Guide for 1908 again referred to the course being controlled by the Douglas Bay Hotel and this was repeated in 1909, but thereafter the Howstrake Estate Co Ltd, who were by then the owners of the land, were back in charge of the course.

In about 1913 the links were remodelled, restored to 18 holes and re-opened in the Summer of 1914. The course was then 5,320 yards and the holes varied from 455 yards, the first, to 130 yards. The links occupied an area approximately to the East of a line drawn from the last house on the landward side of King Edward Road, the aptly named Balnahowe, in a Northerly direction to Groudle Road. The plan marks the land to the West as being "out of bounds" and the boundary was probably defined by a hedge or stone wall, since demolished, but which was shown on the 25 inches to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1869. The fairways tended to run parallel to each other with, in places, only about 100 yards separating them. The layout is shown on a plan dated June 1914 which appeared in a brochure of the period. It is likely that the earlier versions of the course also occupied this same general area of land. To the West, Howstrake continued to be farmed by the Taggart family. The new 18 hole course had to be abandoned in 1916 because of lack of tourist patrons, coupled, no doubt, with the fact that so many of the Island's menfolk were away serving in the armed forces.

This 1914 brochure provides not only evidence of the location of the club-house, but also a photograph. The structure was referred to in press reports of the 1895 tournament, in which it was described as a pavilion, and Black's Guide of 1909 mentions "...the Howstrake Golf Chalet just above highest point of tram route...". The 1914 plan shows the structure sited a few yards to the East of the curve in the road near Balnahowe house, and set back about 50 yards up the slope from the tramline. A request tram stop was sited a few yards further along. The position is also confirmed by a photograph of 1907 by P. Pannell and taken from what are now the King Edward Bay Apartments. The club-house is clearly to be seen on the skyline and above the curve in the tramline.

The upgrade to eighteen holes proved to be short-lived. The 1920 Guide carried an advertisement for the "HOWSTRAKE GOLF LINKS. The most perfectly laid out nine-hole course in the Kingdom, commanding some of the finest views in the Island. There is a comfort-

able Club House, where refreshments can be obtained, and also a telephone on the premises for the convenience of Golfers. Electric Cars stop at the Links on request, and special fares are made to Golfers. For further particulars apply to THE SEC'Y, Howstrake Golf Links". During a period of about 25 years the course had twice been of eighteen holes and twice reduced to nine.

The Howstrake farmhouse had been converted into an hotel in 1921, or possibly a little earlier, and by early 1921 was known as The Howstrake Golf Links Hotel. The owners, The Howstrake Estate Co., applied to the courts for a license in March 1921 and stated that "...it was the intention of the management to convert the present nine-hole golf course to an 18 hole course and to extend the farm house hotel from a seven-roomed building to a thirty-roomed one. The extension would not be complete until Spring of next year...". The owners envisaged not merely a conversion of the links back to 18 holes, but a course that would occupy virtually all of Bank's Howe rather than just its Eastern extremity. Whilst it was anticipated that the hotel extensions would be finished by the Spring of 1922, no indication had been given for the date of completion of the new and extended links and speculation must have been rife at the "nineteenth-hole" of the old course (or do nine hole links have a "tenth-hole" ?). In November 1920 individual fields of the Howstrake Farm had been offered for letting for grazing or cropping until the November of 1921 and so the golf club members would have known that work on the course could not start until then. In the event the license application was refused on the grounds that it was premature but at least the intentions of the Howstrake Estate Co. were known as regards the future of golf on the Howe.

An advertisement for the Howstrake Golf Links in the 1922 Guide mentioned the "LUNCHEONS and TEAS provided at the New Golf Links Hotel, Harbour Road - a few minutes walk across the fields. Light refreshment provided at the Club House on the Links". The statement that access to the hotel was by "a walk across the fields", referred to a public footpath which ran from the Onchan Head tram stop, through what are now King Edward Park and Eskdale Road, and went across the land where Sunningdale Drive was later built, and lead to the new hotel. This would be the normal means of approach for players coming by tram from Douglas. The mention that, as an alternative, refreshments could be obtained at the club-house on the links, indicates that the old course remained in being at the Eastern end of Bank's Howe when the 1922 Guide went to press at the end of 1921. ✓ *

This was confirmed in March 1922 when there was a further application by The Howstrake Estate Co. for a license for the hotel. In the course of evidence it was stated that "...they would have an 18 hole course ready in 1923..". The application was again refused and this may have been a spur to greater effort in laying out a new course, for the 1923 Isle of Man Examiner Annual, which was issued in December 1922, listed Howstrake as having 18 holes and so did the Guide for 1923. However, the entries may have been in anticipation of the imminent completion of the course. The hotel came first, in about 1921, and the new course probably came into use in the Winter of 1922-23.

And so the reduction of the course to 9 holes was but a temporary affair as the 1923 Guide proudly proclaimed not only the new How-

strake Golf Links Hotel but also the eighteen hole Howstrake Golf Links, both then owned by the Groudle Glen and Hotel Co. Ltd. The links were described as "now extended to Magnificent new 18 hole Course (5,900 yards) planned by Mr. T.G. Renouf, of Manchester Golf Club, Northern Champion 1920". More importantly, the Guide went on to record that "...the New Course commences at Onchan Harbour Road, close to Onchan Head Electric Car Station...", and also that "...The first tee of the Golf Course starts just at the Hotel Gate...".

In 1923 after the construction of the new 18 hole course the club house was dismantled and moved to a site on Harbour Road opposite to the Howstrake Golf Links Hotel, where it was re-erected on new stone foundations. The building was formed of timber frames clad in corrugated iron sheeting and after the move its appearance was unchanged. In 1993, its hundredth year, it still stands, although the verandah has gone, and is used by Tudor Homes Ltd as a store. Its original foundations above the King Edward Road were visible for some time after its demolition but these are now buried deep beneath the raised tenth tee of the present course.

For a period from 1922 to 1939 the Examiner Annuals listed Island clubs and gave details of the Secretaries and in 1922 the Secretary of Howstrake was Mr H.D. Gleaves. He was followed by Mr J.H. Skillicorn in 1923/25 and other Secretaries of the pre-war period included Mr R.M. Hely who took over the position from 1926/28 and Mr W.S. Kennedy from 1929/30. In 1931 two ladies, Mrs Powers and Miss Maud Callow, held the position as Joint Secretaries. In the following year Mr H. Heaps took over the Secretaryship, remaining in the position until 1936. He was followed by Mr E.C. Chadderton for the years 1937/39. The members and officials of the Howstrake Club included some Douglas residents and the ban on Sunday golf at the Douglas Municipal course at Pulrose in its early years may well account for this fact.

In February 1937 the Examiner's headline screamed "FUTURE OF GOLF COURSE IN BALANCE". It transpired that Mr L.L. Corkill had become the new owner of the Howstrake estate apart from the Groudle Glen and the hotel. However, having attracted attention, the item went on to state that there were no definite plans for the land "...but we understand there is little likelihood of the golf links being disturbed for some considerable period, if at all...". The article pointed out that there was plenty of land available fronting upon existing developed or partly developed roads, to allow for extensive building to be carried out without encroaching on the links. And so it was, and it is the 1922 links which will be remembered by golfers who are now approaching, or a little past, middle age and which were to last, in the same basic form, for the following fifty years.

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In August 1958 the Majestic Hotel was acquired by a new company, Majestic (1958) Ltd., which also obtained from Mr L.L. Corkill a ten year lease of the golf links. The lease provided for the use of the course by the guests of the hotel but did not preclude the members of the golf club from continuing their activities there.

In 1964 the Majestic Hotel passed to Mr Basil Jackson's company, Rex Hotels Ltd., and he arranged that the lease of the course was transferred to his company. Mr Jackson had his own ideas for the

future use of the links and his plans were to lead to a period of acrimony between him and the golf club. One of his proposals, put forward in February 1963, was that the club should transfer from its headquarters in Harbour Road and re~~o~~locate at the Gate Lodge of the Majestic Hotel. Coupled with this, he suggested that play should start on the eighteenth tee. The club rejected the ideas. Undeterred, in November 1964, Jackson proposed that a new club be formed, to be known, not surprisingly, as The Majestic Golf Club. His intentions included plans to reconstruct the links by June of the following year, as a nine hole course of 3,500 yards, and he claimed that the shortened course "...will have a good standard of golf but would cancel out much of the hill climbing on the links which has kept many golfers away from Howstrake". The club turned to Mr Corkill and his company, Howstrake Estate (1937) Ltd, with the result that Jackson was reminded that his lease provided that he was "...not to make or suffer any material alteration without the consent of the landlord..". Mr Corkill went on point out that such permission had not been sought and that had it been it would not have been granted. At the Annual General Meeting of the club in November 1964 a proposal "That this meeting reaffirms that the club shall be known as The Howstrake Golf Club" was passed without dissent. In the same year also, Mr Corkill presented a solid silver trophy to the club to be known as "The Howstrake Trophy".

By 1965 the condition of the links was declining and in August of that year Jackson offered his lease to the club and in April 1967 the club took over the course. However, as Mr Corkill was then in his eighties, he did not wish to grant an extended lease and the club took over the links on an annual basis.

In November 1965 it was agreed that two of the club's members, Mr Harold Jones and Mr Mike Castle should take over, on a commercial basis, the maintenance and running of the course. There followed a rapid improvement to the condition of the links and refurbishments to the clubhouse, then nearly 70 years old, and to its verandah.

Up until this period Banks Howe was still used for the grazing of sheep and in 1939, and between 1946 and 1949, the course had been used as a venue for sheep dog trials including The Irish National trials.

In 1969 the inevitable happened. The Examiner of 17th April broke the news that developers had obtained an option to buy the Howstrake estate, including the golf course. The company's architects were reported to have met members of the Village Commissioners to discuss possible layouts for housing which would leave an 18 hole links intact. It was said that the company specialised in housing which was centred around golf courses and had completed many such developments. The Clerk to the Commissioners was reported to have said that "the development as suggested was roughly on the lines which the Commissioners were anxious to see adopted at Howstrake" and in The Examiner of 21st August, Len Hamer, the Club Captain, assured his members that an 18 hole course would be retained.

In September 1969 the members were notified by the Club President that the course had been sold and that building developments were probable on parts of it. Nothing materialised out of this report and, in any event, the Club's lease had another year to run. How-

ever it later transpired that negotiations over the future of the links had been taking place since 1965. Details of these came to light in a statement by the owners, Howstrake Estate (1937) Ltd., which was published in The Examiner on 4th August 1972. The estate company stated that "...The golf course on Bank's Howe was let to the Howstrake Golf Club at a nominal rental until August 1970. In 1952 planning approval in principle was obtained for the development of parts of the Golf Course between Groudle Road and Howe Road. This permission is still in being". The statement went on to say that "...In 1965 the late Mr L.L. Corkill, on behalf of the company, offered the Golf Course to the Isle of Man Government. By a letter dated the 17th. January 1966....the Government refused to buy the course. The company were approached in 1969 by Onchan Village Commissioners and the Commissioners were offered a lease of the Golf Course in perpetuity subject to certain restrictive covenants. By letter dated 5th March 1969 the Commissioners terminated negotiations".

Following the collapse of the negotiations with the Commissioners "...the Howstrake Company sold the Golf Course to Comprehensive Development Company (Onchan) Ltd. for development. The Golf Club at that time had no lease and since that time the Club have had no tenancy of the course. Howstrake [Estate (1937) Ltd] later re-acquired the course...". It was, presumably, following this that the Club was granted the short-term lease until August 1970 and this was subsequently extended until 16th September. The future of the golf links and of Bank's Howe as an open space was however still very much in doubt.

The Examiner of 21st July 1972 made public the news that the Golf Club had been served with notice to quit from the coming September. Coupled with this was speculation that the estate was to be sold to a building developer. Without confirmation that the sale had indeed taken place, the Society for the Preservation of the Manx Countryside pleaded that the planning authorities should rescind the 1952 approval, or restrict development to low-density, luxury housing costing in the region of £40,000. The Society said that "...Onchan Head must not be allowed to be completely destroyed...". Mr Jack Nivison, M.L.C. and Captain of the Parish called a public meeting to be held on 28th July and the Commissioners, the Golf Club and the members of the Keys for middle were invited to be present. However, no direct invitation was sent to the owners of the estate and it was this omission that prompted the issue of the statement, referred to previously, by the estate company. The object of the meeting was stated to be that of ascertaining what the facts of the matter were, but already there were suggestions that the estate should be compulsorily purchased and a deluge of letters appeared in the press. Some of these were unconstructively hostile to any changes but a few writers suggested that it was possible for a reduced number of new dwellings to co-exist with a redesigned golf links and an Examiner editorial of 21st July 1972 supported this view, with a proviso "...that what does occur is of a high standard and enhances, rather than detracts from, the remaining green belt...".

It was not until September that confirmation was received that a sale of Howstrake was about to take place. The new owner gave the Golf Club, which was under notice to quit by 16th of that month, a rent-free licence to operate the golf course until such time as

he needed the land. Whilst this was a reprieve, Mr Arthur Smith, one of the Club's trustees, commented that this did not mean that there was much hope in the long-term.

The Examiner of 22nd September revealed the identity of the purchaser as Mr Ralph Randall's Manor Investments Ltd and that some 197 acres of Howstrake had been acquired at a cost of £250,000 of which £100,000 had been paid in cash and short term mortgages had been given to Howstrake Estate (1937) Ltd. for the balance. The Examiner reported that surveyors were already at work on the land and a group called The Friends of Howstrake Golf Course paid for notices in the papers in opposition to developments on the links.

On 20th October 1972 The Examiner recorded that Manor Investments had submitted plans for 254 bungalows and for 52 blocks of flats, two and three storeys in height, on 50 acres of the estate. Within a week a public petition was being circulated in opposition to the proposals.

On 7th November a second public meeting was held and was reported in The Examiner under the heading "WAR AGAINST HOWSTRAKE PLAN" and this resulted in an Action Committee being set up. Donations were made to fund the fight. It transpired that the Commissioners had looked into the possibility of acquiring the land but that an increase in the village rate of some 54% would have been required to fund the purchase. The Clerk to the Commissioners outlined the grounds of the objections which his Board had submitted and these included the density of the proposed dwellings, the unsuitability of the area for flats, and the fact that part of the development was outside the area covered by the 1952 planning consent. Mr Ted Ranson, M.H.K. for Middle, advised the meeting that he had leave to introduce a Bill into Tynwald which would cancel any planning consents granted before 1962. This was to be a useful weapon in the fight but was to create repercussions, not only in Howstrake, but beyond the Island itself.

In early December Manor Investments' planning application was rejected and the company promptly lodged a request for a review. In the meantime the Club received yet another notice to quit, this time by 30th December. At the same time the new owners offered a possibility of a lease on sufficient land for a nine-hole course at an annual rental of £3,000. This amount was, of course, out of the question and the owners must have known this. On 17th of that month the Club met and a decision was made to retain the Club, at least for the time being. The Examiner of 22nd December reported that "For probably the last Christmas competition which was held last Sunday at Howstrake the winner was B. Martin". Arthur Smith announced that the Club intended "to carry on until such time as the future is more positive....In the meantime the Club is planning a special competition to mark the last day". He added that "It will be our swan song". These were indeed sad times for golf at Howstrake, where it had been played on various parts of Bank's Howe for some eighty years, and for a golf club which had existed for almost as long.

The review of Manor Investments' planning application started on 29th January 1973 and was adjourned. By the middle of that month, Mr Ranson's Bill had passed through the Keys and was before the Legislative Council. On 23rd March The Examiner recorded that an

amended plan had been lodged for Howstrake. The intention was now to build around the periphery of the links and to erect bungalows and flats along Howe Road, Harbour Road and at The Fairway. This proposal was for 141 bungalows, together with 14 blocks of flats, up to three storeys in height, all on 30 acres of land. The same issue reported that "...The Save Howstrake Action Committee firmly believes that there has been no change in public opinion favouring the retention of Howstrake as an open area expressed at the public meetings held in July and November...". Opponents of this revised plan claimed that it proposed a higher density of housing than the original scheme.

The Howstrake Club doggedly held an annual dinner at the Majestic Hotel on 6th April 1973. During the following week, however, it became known that Manor Investments had received consent for its amended plan. The Examiner of 11th May stated that The Howstrake Action Committee planned to seek a review of the decision.

By this time Mr Ranson's Town and Country Planning Bill had been passed by both branches of Tynwald and had been sent to London to receive the customary Royal Assent. The Examiner reported on 1st June that a petition had been sent to the Privy Council with the object of delaying the Royal Assent to the Bill. In an editorial, the paper commented "...What a disgraceful state of affairs! Royal Assent to the desperately urgent Town and Country Planning Bill is being withheld, it was revealed by the Privy Council in London, until talks with "all interested parties" in the Island have been completed...". The paper asserted that the only truly interested parties were the Manx people as represented by Tynwald and that they had already had their say. It made the point that "...no petitions or memorials were presented to the Legislature during the course of the Bill's passage...". In the meantime, the appeal by Manor Investments against refusal of their original planning application was set for 13th June, a few days before the Bill was expected to become law. To further complicate the position, the approval granted on their alternative proposal was "on condition that such permission shall be deemed to cancel previous approvals for development of the land". Finally, the Privy Council decided on 20th June to disregard the petition and a situation which had the makings of a constitutional crisis was averted.

The battle continued. Some 4,374 signatures had been obtained to the petition against the development of Howstrake, of which 1,265 had come from within the village, but on 4th July it became known that as a result of the review which the Commissioners had sought the approval granted to the amended application had been upheld. In the following week, Manor Investments Ltd. commenced an action for damages against the Local Government Board and the final step was that an appeal was to be lodged by the Commissioners. On 17th August the developers agreed to delay any site clearances on the estate until all appeals were out of the way.

On 31st August 1973 the Howstrake Club placed an advertisement in The Examiner that they were organising an Onchan Cup Competition to be played at the Rowany links on 8th September.

A special planning committee sat on 5th October and again on 11th to consider the appeal. The decision was that the approval was to stand although development was restricted to the lower-lying part

of the Howe. On 14th December The Examiner reported that detailed plans of the first of the six development phases had been lodged. It was noted that the proposed density of the buildings was considerably reduced. In the same issue, Mrs P.A. Townsend, Secretary of The Save Howstrake Action Committee published a statement that "...it is with reluctance that the...Committee has come to the conclusion that it can serve no further purpose and therefore it has decided to disband..".

Whilst a large area of the Howe had been lost to the development company, the prospects for the golf club were improving. In January 1974, negotiations with Manor Investments Ltd resulted in Mr Peter Partington, architect and a member of the club, being asked to produce plans for some 55 acres that might be available for a golf course. Apart from grazing for sheep, there was little else that could be done with the land and the existence of an adjacent golf links would be an advantage in finding buyers for the houses which the developers were to construct. A five year lease, at an annual rental of £200, was agreed upon.

At the Annual General Meeting of the club, held at the Metropole Hotel on 25th February, the members were told that Manor Investments had "...offered the club an area which could be made into a 14 hole course on the land where the planning permission does not apply..". In reporting this news, The Examiner of 1st March 1974 under a headline of "BRIGHTER HOPES AT HOWSTRAKE", noted that the "...hopes of golf re~~p~~commencing on the Howstrake course at Onchan, - after a lapse of over a year - are now considerably brighter". Mr Roy Gilbert, Club Captain, was recorded as commenting - "There will certainly be no clubhouse facilities to start with".

Two weeks later, The Examiner, under a title of "GOLF COURSE TO RE-OPEN", announced that "...Howstrake Golf Course will shortly be opening up once again after a period of approximately 16 months.. Bernard Jones the professional for the club has worked out a very interesting 18 hole course..". There was a lot of work to be done on the links and working parties of the club's members were needed to get the new course back into shape. The Examiner reported that "to get things started, a dinner and dance has been arranged at The Palace Hotel on April 3rd".

Following this celebration work began in earnest and The Examiner of 17th April wrote that "...The fine and dry weather of the last fortnight has brought the volunteers out in force, and armed with lawn-mowers and other gardening tools they have been busy on most evenings cutting the grass, laying out the tees and preparing the fairways...Formerly an 18 hole course, it is now only 14 holes in extent. Changes...have been necessary to provide for four holes to be played over twice to make up for the missing ones..". The club was pressed for funds during these renovations. A new temporary clubhouse was to be erected and a grass-cutting tractor had to be bought at a cost of £400 following the theft of the wheels of the previous one. A sponsorship scheme was announced whereby donating companies could advertise on tee blocks and flags on the greens. A planning application for the erection of a temporary club house was lodged on 19th April. A gesture of support came from the Commissioners at their meeting in May when they agreed to meet the cost of a new sign indicating that the entrance to the course was in Groudle Road. The club's first event on the new course was a

medal competition scheduled to be held on 12th May 1974. Further work on improving the layout of the new course continued and in June 1976 Mr Jack Pedder, a long standing member of the club, had the honour of officially opening the course's new first hole. In the same year the club took positive steps to attract visitors or potential golfers to Howstrake by advertising a round of golf for 75p and the hire of clubs and balls for £1.25.

In 1985, The Examiner of 29th May announced that a Mr Bob Bhanja was interested in acquiring the course and proposed a new 18 hole championship course together with extensive club house facilities and car parking. Nothing came of this plan but the idea was taken up by a consortium of local professional and businessmen who took over the ownership of Howstrake on 22nd November 1985. After some month's of uncertainty regarding the links, the move had the full support of the club. All the members of the consortium were, or had been, active golfers and three were members of the club. The consortium was made up of John Davies, the club secretary and a former builder, John Campbell, a building developer, Peter Gough, a wholesale newsagent, Kevin Fryers, an accountant, Brian Aspden, another builder, Rex Cole, a chartered surveyor, John Handley of the Port Jack Chippy Diner, Michael Kerruish, an advocate, and Mike Pearson, an insurance broker. The new company, Golf and Leisure Ltd, made known its intention to restore the Howstrake links to a full 18 hole course but changed the name to the King Edward Bay Course. The club, then at least 91 years old, continued under its original name as the Howstrake Golf Club.

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~~The new owners wasted no time in putting their plans into effect.~~ The construction of a new 18 hole course, whilst allowing play to continue on the 14 hole links, was a daunting one. Whereas early owners of Howstrake had brought over golf links designers such as Tom Morris, George Lowe and T.G. Renouf, Golf and Leisure looked towards local talent and appointed Mr Roy Moore as the head green keeper. Mr Moore had an enviable record on the Island's golfing scene and had won the Manx championship in 1968 at the age of 21 and had twice, in 1981 and 1984, been the runner up. He had seven years experience of green keeping, four years at Douglas and three at Ramsey. At the time of the Bhanja negotiations, Roy Moore had drawn up a lay out for the new Howstrake and this was resurrected and, with modifications suggested by club secretary John Davies, was to form the basis of the King Edward Bay links.

The facilities planned for the new club house on the Groudle Road included bars, snooker tables, a cabaret room and a high quality restaurant. Longer term plans included a driving range and an indoor sports complex catering for tennis, badminton and bowling.

The redevelopment of the links was a radical one and involved the reclamation of substantial areas covered in gorse and heather to provide for new greens and fairways and, conversely, the existing 10th and 13th were to be left to revert to nature. The large area of land at the Groudle end of Howstrake which, in 1895, had been developed as the short-lived Howstrake or Lag-Birragh scenic park was to remain untouched. The new course was designed to eliminate some of the steeper climbs, especially to the 10th and 13th, and this had been one of the objectives of Basil Jackson's plans for his proposed 9 hole course back in 1964.

Work was underway on the new links by the end of 1985. Mr Moore, and his assistant green keeper Ros Jones, with the help of earth-moving equipment were busy clearing undergrowth and building new tees. At the same time, the White City amusement park was being demolished to provide the site for the King Edward Bay apartment complex and some 12,500 tons of hardcore, fill and top soil were transported from Onchan Head to provide foundations and to build up raised tees at the new links. RJA

The developments at Howstrake received a lot of publicity in the press with headlines such as "HOWSTRAKE - NO LONGER THE POOR RELATION". Following the club's first major tournament in July 1985, the Mona's Herald forecast that "...the Howstrake Club may immediately look forward to a great accession of members..". Whether this ever came about is not known but The Isle of Man Gazette, in January 1986, stated that "Membership of Howstrake Golf Club has risen above the 300 mark and at the last count stood at 310. When the nine-man consortium took over on November 22nd the membership stood at 182". NEIL RICHMOND AS PRO + JUNIOR SECTION. PRO SHOP ?? *

The new club-house, which is part of the King Edward Bay Golf and Country Club, was completed in 1987 and officially opened by Sir Lawrence New, the Lieut.-Governor, on 2nd. December of that year. To make full use of this fine facility, a social membership class was introduced. This was to be discontinued and the premises were eventually granted a public house license.

Although it was initially hoped that the new course would be completed within two years, in the event, it took some five years to see the work through to a conclusion. The restoration of the Howstrake links to a full 18 hole course was achieved by 1991 and a "Festival of Golf", to celebrate the completion of the new layout of the 5,821 yard links was held on Friday 4th October and on the following Saturday and Sunday.

The owners of the course, using the date of the first links which started from the former Douglas Bay Hotel in 1893, celebrated the centenary of golf on the Howstrake estate. Notices in Manx newspapers announced that "THE HOWSTRAKE FRIENDLY GOLF COURSE IS 100 YEARS OLD - 1893 - 1993".

HOWSTRAKE PARK - 1895

The following report is taken from the Mona's Herald of 15th. May 1895 -

"For many months past, the Electric Tramway Company have employed Mr. J. McLean, landscape gardener, in superintending the laying-out as a marine park the whole of the turf slopes of Howstrake stretching below the line, from the awe inspiring crags of Lagha-Birrag, round by the bold sea cliffs, to a junction with the charming glen of Groudle. The work of planting trees and making paths is almost complete, and the park, which will be unrivalled of its kind in the Kingdom, will be open to the public by the 1st July next. In addition to revelling in the extensive seascape commanded, with magnificent coast and inland views, and inhaling the undiluted ozone as it sweeps up the soft turf from the open sea, leaving the base of the rocky ramparts, frequenters of the

EXTRACT FROM

1914 LAXEY TOURIST GUIDE

MAKING REFERENCE TO

HOWSTRAKE GOLF LINKS



ELECTRIC RAILWAY STATION, LAXEY.

HOWSTRAKE GOLF LINKS.

A twenty minutes' run on the Electric Railway takes devotees of the Royal and ancient game to the splendid natural turf course at Howstrake Golf Links. This year it is increased from nine to eighteen holes. Visitors are made welcome at the Club, at charges as follows:—Day, 1s 6d; week, 6s; month, 10s 6d. Situated on Ondhan Head and overlooking Douglas Bay, golf may be enjoyed under ideal conditions and amidst magnificent scenery. Special facilities are offered to golfers from Laxey by the Manx Electric Railway. These tickets being available at the Laxey booking office only.

Towering at the head of the Laxey Glen is Snafell Mountain, the highest point of Mona. A trip to its summit, either by road or through the ancient hill village of Agneash, or by Electric Car, is well repaid by the glorious views to be obtained. One can see the whole Island spread out in a beautiful

HOWSTRAKE GOLF LINKS

18 HOLES.

Situate between Douglas & Groudle Glen

Nearest Course to Laxey.

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