

# Communiqué 1

## The New Mowbray Golf Club: A Foundation is Established

*Golf is 20 percent mechanics and technique. The other 80 percent is philosophy, humor, tragedy, romance, melodrama, companionship, camaraderie, cussedness and conversation. (Grantland Rice)*

Chapter 1 of a fuller History, that will be published later, focuses on golf in Launceston from 1895 to 1934, including the birth and demise of the original Mowbray GC. What appears below is part of Chapter 2 that describes the emergence of the new Mowbray GC, its move to 'Janefield' and its development from 1934 to the end of that decade.

The starting point is in May 1934:

*At a meeting at the Y.M.C.A. it was decided to form a new golf club in Launceston, to play on the links at Mowbray recently vacated by the Riverside club, ... a name for the club has not yet been decided upon.*<sup>1</sup>

Within a month work began on building a small club house and *a nice nine-hole course has been laid down, and while not being big, some good holes are included.*<sup>2</sup>

These links were *...at the back of Mowbray racecourse on a property owned by Mr J.J. Broomby.*<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with Ian Main, who is writing a History of Riverside GC, suggests it is likely these links were located in the Remount Road area rather than behind the Grand Stand of the racecourse.

Competition commenced with a mixed foursomes event on Saturday, 30 June.<sup>4</sup> Six weeks later L.R. Lee (score 86-24-62) and H. Ward (score 83-21-62) tied in an 18 hole stroke event. It was stated in the Examiner *Lee used to play as a boy at Kings Meadows, and was promising. He is a left hander.*<sup>5</sup> Then in late September it was reported that the Mowbray GC *conducted the first qualifying round of 18 holes for the club championship, J. Broomby winning with a score of 80-26-54 (while) entries close for the ladies championships tomorrow.*<sup>6</sup>

Mowbray's season of 1935 was opened officially on 4 May.

*The ceremony was performed by the president (Mr H.G. Lowe), who also drove the first ball. Between 30 and 40 pairs played in the open mixed foursomes over nine holes. Long driving, approaching and putting competitions were also keenly contested... In the driving competition, men, newcomer to the game, H. Savage, won. He drove 220 yards to beat Alex Broomby by three inches. Mrs J.I. Abbott, with a drive of 150 yards, won the women's event.*<sup>7</sup>

At this time the Club's activities stretched beyond playing golf. For example, an article in a column headed 'Woman's World' provided a vivid picture of the club as a social entity at the time:

*Invitations to the Mowbray Golf Club's first annual ball were so eagerly sought that the limit of 200 dancers to which it was originally intended to adhere was left far behind. In view of this fact it was only to be expected that*

*the ball, which was held at the Crystal Palais\* last night, would be a success, and it certainly was a very bright and cheery affair. An extensive list of participants was provided and they were treated to an amusing 'golf fairy' dance by a modest member of the club who prefers to remain anonymous, and an exhibition dance by Miss W. Smith and Mr K. Gray, and the programme included 'whoopee' dances and a Jolly Miller.<sup>8</sup>*

About five months after the festivities noted above it was revealed that the Mowbray GC had been negotiating for the acquisition of about 4,000 acres of the property known as 'Janefield' on the East Tamar Road at Newnham.<sup>9</sup> Then, just days after this announcement it was reported

*At a well attended meeting of the Mowbray Golf Club at the Launceston Stock Exchange last night it was unanimously agreed that the club move on to the property known as 'Janefield', and situated at Mowbray comprising 170 acres of land. The club will play this season on a temporary course, which will be considerably longer than the old course, and meanwhile work will proceed on the laying down of a permanent nine-hole course of 3,140 yards.<sup>10</sup>*

Progress was rapid, and the 'temporary' course was opened officially on 18 April, 1936. The club had some 145 members at the time, and opening day featured two events. One was an open stroke handicap over nine holes, won by D. Cameron with a score of 50-12-38. The other was an open mixed foursomes over nine holes that attracted 80 players and was won by Mrs Toms (Associates Secretary at Riverside) partnered by Mr W.H. Kidd of Mowbray.- their score was 49-15-34.<sup>11</sup>

Ten weeks later the Club began its first competition roster on the 'temporary' course.<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime work progressed on development of a 'permanent' course. By early September progress was described this way:

*Now that the rain has ceased work is progressing rapidly on the permanent course. The fairways are showing a fine body of new grass. Many of the trees are completed, and the work of sowing down the permanent greens, bunker lips, and approaches and pitch blocks will start early this month. The pump for the watering system has arrived, and the club is fortunate in having had a very fine industrial power plant donated by the President, Mr W.A. Dawson.<sup>13</sup>*

Over the next two years the course watering situation was much improved. A report revealed that during the spring of 1938 a permanent water supply was assured by the construction of a new dam. The ultimate capacity of the system was said to be 300,000 gallons (approximately 1.14 million litres), *and when completed it will provide excellent swimming facilities for members.*<sup>14</sup> At the time of writing this document (2017) the dam in question is, indeed, a magnificent sight - especially when it is full and in full flush of its water lilies. Underneath this display, though, is much mud and many leaches, eels and so on. Nevertheless, Launceston was still recovering from the Great Depression, the Second World War was yet to come, and transport to other swimming facilities was scarce, so it is imagined that local children, at least, swam in the dam during the era.

In the meantime the erection of a new club house was undertaken and was opened officially on Saturday, June 20, 1936. *Mr W.A. Dawson, president, welcomed members and visitors. Mrs Dawson wore a frock of wine moire taffeta, while Mrs Dan Richardson, wife of the secretary, was in blue floral georgette.*<sup>15</sup>

Dances were held monthly in the new Club House. Media reports concerning these included: *Golf Club goes gay; many original costumes at masked dance*<sup>16</sup> and *Fun with 'Race Horses' at Golf Dance*<sup>17</sup>. These dances were either conducted in Spartan conditions or with just bits and pieces of furniture, since it wasn't until September that it was revealed:

*The furnishings for the new club house have been selected, and it is the women's intention to have the tables and chairs ducoed in the club's colours, green and orange. The club's pennant will be green and orange, with brown monogram.*<sup>18</sup>

Details of 1937s annual meeting as provided by the Examiner at the time are worth looking at. Mr W.A. Dawson was re-elected President and he stated *We have had an exceptionally good year.* He thanked Mr Eustace Headlam for his advice and help during the year and also the ground staff, led by Mr G.D. Wise, for their excellent work. Other election results were: Mr S.T. Tulloch - Patron; Mr J.L. Abbott - Captain; Mr D.L. Richardson - Honorary Secretary; Mr F.B. Stevens - Honorary Treasurer; Messrs W. Rainbird and D.M. Richardson - Committee; Mr D.L. Forest - Honorary Auditor. The meeting agreed to pay the Secretary an honorarium of 15 guineas.<sup>19</sup>

In another article on the same day the following headline was prominent:

**No Liquor  
Mowbray Golf Club Bans Bar  
Members Firm**

It was pointed out that since *the club was a young one and had a youthful membership* the members decided to delete completely all reference in the Club's constitution to the sale of liquor.<sup>20</sup> A column, attributed to 'Sonia' in the Mercury provided further reasons for the constitutional change:

*The lead taken by the club might well be followed by others. In far too many activities today - sporting or otherwise - there is a disposition towards the introduction of liquor, especially in the dancing sphere, and any move that represents a curb on this tendency is to be encouraged, particularly in respect to mixed gatherings.*<sup>21</sup>

'Sonia' also expressed a view that maintenance of a bar *makes the game much too expensive*, and this was *a point that seemed to have a telling effect* with many of the other members.

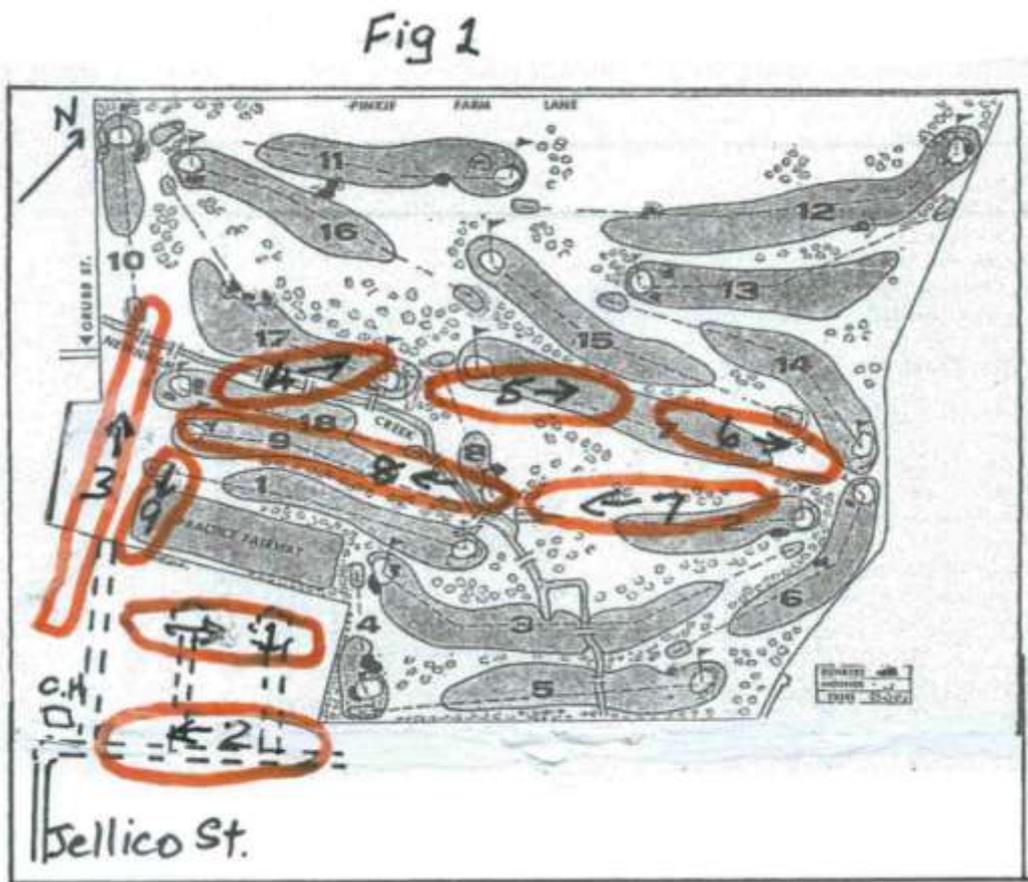
However the decision regarding the constitution did not prevent the Club's executive deciding to install bar facilities in the future. Indeed, a special meeting of the Club toward the end of the year gave the executive committee specific permission *to operate a liquor bar during playing hours if they desire to do so.*<sup>22</sup>

The 'temporary' course was progressively developed and greens had been reticulated by the time the 'permanent' course was scheduled to be opened officially on 3 April, 1937. The opening event was to be an open mixed foursomes handicap, and the field was to be *started by the club's professional, Eustace Headlam.*<sup>23</sup> Given his background, it must have been quite a coup for Mowbray GC to attract him to its

'temporary' nine hole course, and it's clear he was a good servant of the club, since the sixth hole was named "Headlam's" in recognition of his help in designing and laying down the new links.<sup>24</sup>

I have been unable to find a map/diagram of this 'permanent' course. However, the diagram displayed here as Figure 1 is likely to provide some insight into its location and nature. I am indebted to Lawrie Caelli, who was admitted as a Member in 1953, for his assistance in drawing this.

The course is outlined in orange and is superimposed on a map of the course as displayed in a pamphlet advertising the Mowbray GC's Spring Tournament that was held in October 1972. Notice in particular that Jellico Street ended at the Club House of the day and that Janefield and Barton Streets and Payne and Heyes Places had not been established at the time.



Two days after the opening of the 'permanent' nine hole course the Examiner<sup>25</sup> displayed a photograph of a periscope that was installed ... to enable players to get a view of a hidden green (and) is believed to be the only one in Australia. The photograph seems to depict a device nearing two metres in height, about 30cm x 30cm square, and with the eye piece being accessed by climbing a couple of rungs of a ladder to a small platform. Adrian Dennis (personal communication, 4 March, 2017) recalls the periscope being used on what would have been the fifth hole at the time. As the map of the nine hole course shows, the fifth tee was below the current (2017) seventh green and play was to the north east with out of bounds on the left and some shallow fairway bunkers on the right.

The annual meeting of the Club in early 1939 heard there were 101 full Members and 102 full Associates, and that *Anyone now going on to the course for the first time finds it very difficult to believe it was laid down only two years ago.*<sup>26</sup> Clearly, optimism prevailed.

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\*The Crystal Palais was located at 199 Charles Street, Launceston, and opened in the middle of September, 1934. At the time of writing (2017) the site is occupied by Hotel Tasmania. It was regarded as *Tasmania's most elaborate ballroom (with) the only secretly nailed spider-web floor.*<sup>27</sup> It was renamed the 'Carlisle' in June 1950.<sup>28</sup>

## References

1. Launceston Examiner, 10 May, 1934, p2
2. Launceston Examiner, 9 June, 1934, p3
3. Hobart Mercury, 28 May, 1931, p14
4. Launceston Examiner, 4 July, 1934, p2
5. Launceston Examiner 4 July, 1934, p2
6. Launceston Examiner, 28 September, 1934, p14
7. Launceston Examiner, 6 May, 1935, p8
8. Launceston Examiner, 5 September, 1935, p12
9. Hobart Mercury, 21 Feb, 1936 p7
10. Launceston Examiner, 25 February, 1936, p3
11. Launceston Examiner, 20 April, 1936, 8
12. Launceston Examiner, 11 May, 1936, p2
13. Launceston Examiner, 4 September, 1936,
14. Launceston Examiner, 4 March, 1938, p10
15. Launceston Examiner, 24 June, 1936, p8
16. Launceston Examiner, 29 July, 1936, p2
17. Launceston Examiner, 23 September, 1936, p2
18. Launceston Examiner, 4 September, 1936, p10
19. Launceston Examiner, 5 March, 1937, p5
20. Launceston Examiner, 5 March, 1937, p8
21. Hobart Mercury, 10 March, 1937, p5
22. Launceston Examiner, 17 December, 1937, p8
23. Launceston Examiner, 1 March, 1937, p10
24. Launceston Examiner, 2 April, 1937, p10
25. Launceston Examiner, 5 April 1937, p7
26. Launceston Examiner, 10 March, 1939, p14
27. Launceston Examiner, 15 September, 1934, p8
28. Launceston Examiner, 3 June, 1950, p16