

This Jubilee brochure, designed for private circulation among the members of Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club, has been prepared and is issued by authority of the Committee, in the belief that members may appreciate a souvenir of an interesting occasion in the history of the Club.

The Story of Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club

1887—1937.

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IT is nearly 500 years since the Scottish Parliament, intent on its current re-armament and get-fit-for-war programme, decreed and ordained that "the fute-ball and golf be utterly cryit down and nocht usit." (For all the attention the people paid, the Parliamentarians might just as well have got on with their knitting.)

From which it will be seen that, proportionate to the history of golf in Scotland, the story of Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club, covering a mere fifty years, is in length as a putt to a drive; but to Kilmarnock golfers, especially in this year of jubilee, it may seem to have as much significance in the 500 years' round of golf as the shortest putt has on medal day.

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I.

AT HOLMES FARM.

THERE were golfers before there was golf in Kilmarnock. In the early years of Troon Golf Club, Kilmarnock men formed a considerable and influential part of its membership. But the distance from Kilmarnock to Troon was then long, and leisure and evening light were short, and around the time that Queen Victoria was celebrating her jubilee as

a sovereign the golfers of Kilmarnock began to toy with the idea of having a golf course nearer to their own doors than Troon or Gales; and reinforcing the desire to suit their own convenience was a public-spirited wish to provide golfing facilities for their fellow-townsmen, and especially those of the younger generation, for whom golf at Troon was impossible because of its costliness.

On Friday, 25th November, 1887, fourteen Kilmarnock citizens met within the George Hotel (the spirit of which has long departed, though its outer husk lives on as a drapery store and picture-house), and resolved "that a golf club be formed." The sponsors of the Club were men of substance and prominent personalities in their day, and their names still have significance in Kilmarnock. The first name to appear in the minute book is that of Mr. Joseph Harling Turner, the first Captain of the Club, and now the sole survivor of those pioneers. The others were Thomas Kennedy, D. McCulloch, J. C. Dykes, Hugh Lauder, John Torrance, Andrew Yates, James Blair, J. W. Wallace, Thomas Smith, John Dunnett, William Douglas, T. C. Young, and John Sturrock, jun. Mr. Sturrock presided at the meeting and was appointed to act as secretary.

A committee having been appointed to secure the necessary ground, they entered into a provisional agreement with the tenant of Holmes Farm for the use of an area sufficient for a 9-holes course. The agreed rent was £40, and with an entry fee of one guinea and an annual subscription of 10/6 a minimum membership of 80 was regarded as essential. The minimum was quickly exceeded, and at a meeting held on 12th January, 1888, the Ossington Golf Club was duly constituted and office-bearers appointed. These were :—Hon. President,

Alexander Walker; Captain, J. Harling Turner; Secretary, John Sturrock, jun.; Treasurer, W. B. Challoner; Committee of Management, Andrew Yates, David McCulloch, Hugh Lauder, Thomas Smith, James Blair and Thomas Young.

A week later the committee met at Holmes Farm, "the ground was perambulated and the sites of the different teeing-greens and putting-greens marked off," and a gardener was employed to make the greens; and on 10th March, 1888, the course was opened for play. The golfers of Kilmarnock, in nondescript apparel—in deer-stalker caps and diminutive cricket caps, in bowler hats and square felt hats—assembled at the first tee, and there was cheerful wagging of clubs and of beards.

Some may see a certain appropriateness in the fact that Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club suffered its birth-pangs on the site now occupied by Kilmarnock's new Maternity Home. There was little to alleviate the pangs except the wine of good-fellowship. The fertility of the rough and its impenetrability made golf at Holmes Farm a sport for Spartans. Ambassadors were early sent to the farmer, who agreed to cut the grass round the course at least twice during the summer, but in the second season it was reported that the grass was "so long as to render the game quite unplayable." And the farmer, being again approached, wrote a letter "peremptorily declining to cut one single blade of grass round the course until a claim (for damages) he alleged himself to have" against a member of the Club was settled.

This novel form of intimidation was allowed to succeed; the farmer's claim was settled and the grass was cut. But almost overnight it grew again, and at the end of the summer of 1889 it was resolved to play on the

course only in winter, and to leave the cattle in undisturbed possession for the rest of the year. In winter the ground was heavy and water-logged. A Club member wrote to the local press that "it was nothing more than a quagmire," and another more tersely described it as a "a dagont clayey hole."

There were other trials and vexations of spirit. In the middle of one winter season the farmer (a new tenant) began to spread farmyard manure liberally over the fairways. On being remonstrated with, he demanded that his rent for the six winter months be increased from £15 to £45. Eventually he agreed to accept £20, but insisted on his right to spread the manure. Not surprisingly, interest in the Club languished, and the membership from being over 100 in the first year had fallen to 59 in 1892.

While these and other difficulties certainly added to the rigours of the game they were not conducive to low scoring, yet some quite creditable performances were recorded. At the end of the first year Mr Alexander Walker, the Hon. President of the Club, presented a gold medal to be played for monthly under handicap. The winner of the first medal competition, played on 23rd March, 1889, was Mr. W. C. Cunningham, who, playing from scratch, returned a score of 97. (Two rounds of the 9-hole course constituted the medal round.) The best scratch scores ever made in medal play at Holmes Farm were 84 by Dr. David Lawrie, 87 by Mr. John Sturrock, and 88 by Mr. Andrew Yates.

From the beginning the Club set itself to encourage young players and offered cheap membership rates to boys, and some of those youngsters who first learned to swing a cleek at Holmes Farm graduated into fine golfers and later Captains of the Barassie Club. At an

early stage, too, ladies were given the privilege of playing over the course.

The Barassie Club has long had the reputation of being a particularly sociable one, and the foundation of that reputation was laid at Holmes Farm. Social comforts there were none, but there was no lack of good fellowship. The first "clubhouse" was an old toolhouse gifted by the secretary, Mr. John Sturrock, and later this was replaced by a wooden hut containing lockers, the cost of which was raised by private subscriptions. Subsequently this hut was removed to Barassie, and it still lends a historic if less than elegant air to the Ladies' Clubhouse. Many of the Ossington members were also members of the Troon Club, and the most popular of the Kilmarnock Club's fixtures were the games played, alternately at Troon and Holmes Farm, between teams representing the Troon Club and the Ossington. Most of the Troon players on those occasions were also members of the Ossington Club, and as might be expected they, as the more experienced players, were generally (but not always) the winners.

In the winter of 1893-94 the tenant of Holmes Farm introduced a new variety into the game by giving his herd of Ayrshire cattle the privileges of the course. At the annual general meeting of the Club held on 3rd September, 1894, the members raged furiously together, and a special committee was appointed to try to arrange with the farmer to keep his cattle off the course. Shortly before this time the Duke of Portland had acquired the estate of Hillhouse, so the special committee—which consisted of Mr. David Lauder, Captain; Mr. Fred Alexander, secretary; Mr. J. Davidson, treasurer; Dr. William McAlister and Dr. David Lawrie—was also instructed to inquire about the possibility of securing suitable ground at Barassie.

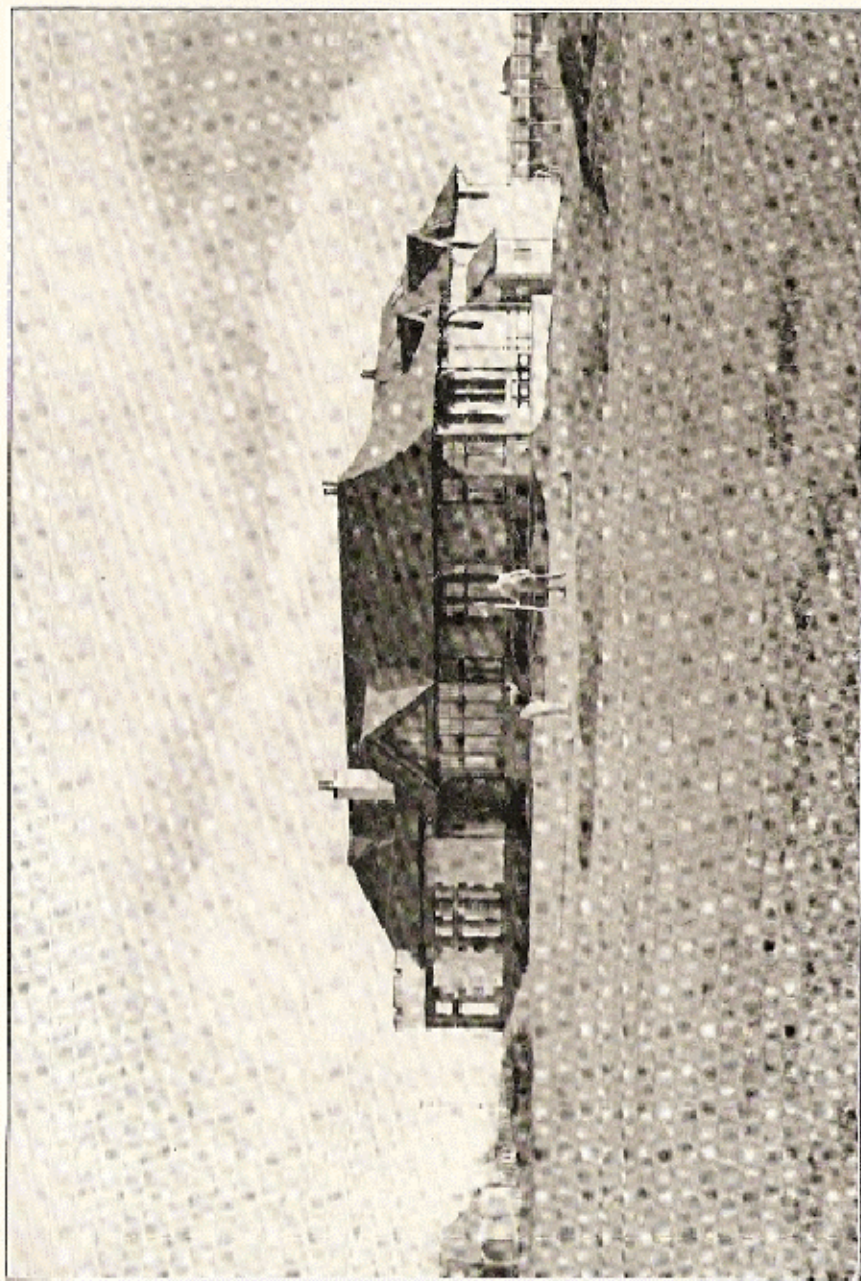
It became apparent that the cattle would continue to hang out, like the family washing, on the golf course, because the farmer declared that "the place was absolutely indispensable to him as an airing-ground for his cattle." The committee then approached Mr. J. Harling Turner, Commissioner for the Duke of Portland, and encouraged by him made a survey of the available lands at Barassie.

The site they especially favoured was one lying between the shore and the Glasgow-Ayr railway line, part of which now forms the southerly portion of Western Gailes. The chief drawback of this site was its distance from Barassie railway station, the alighting-place for Kilmarnock golfers, and in the end the committee decided in favour of the ground, extending to 123 acres, between the Kilmarnock-Ayr and the Glasgow-Ayr railway lines and lying near to Barassie station. The committee entered into a provisional agreement with Mr. Turner and with Mr. Dykes, the tenant of Hillhouse Farm and Barassie Mill, for the use of the ground, and this was reported to an adjourned general meeting held on 26th September, 1894, and was unanimously approved. The rent eventually agreed upon was £30 a year.

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II.

EARLY DAYS AT BARASSIE.

LESS than four weeks after the members of the Club had resolved to form a new golf course at Barassie they were playing on it. When one thinks of the preliminary survey and research, and the care and expenditure, that go to the making of a new golf course



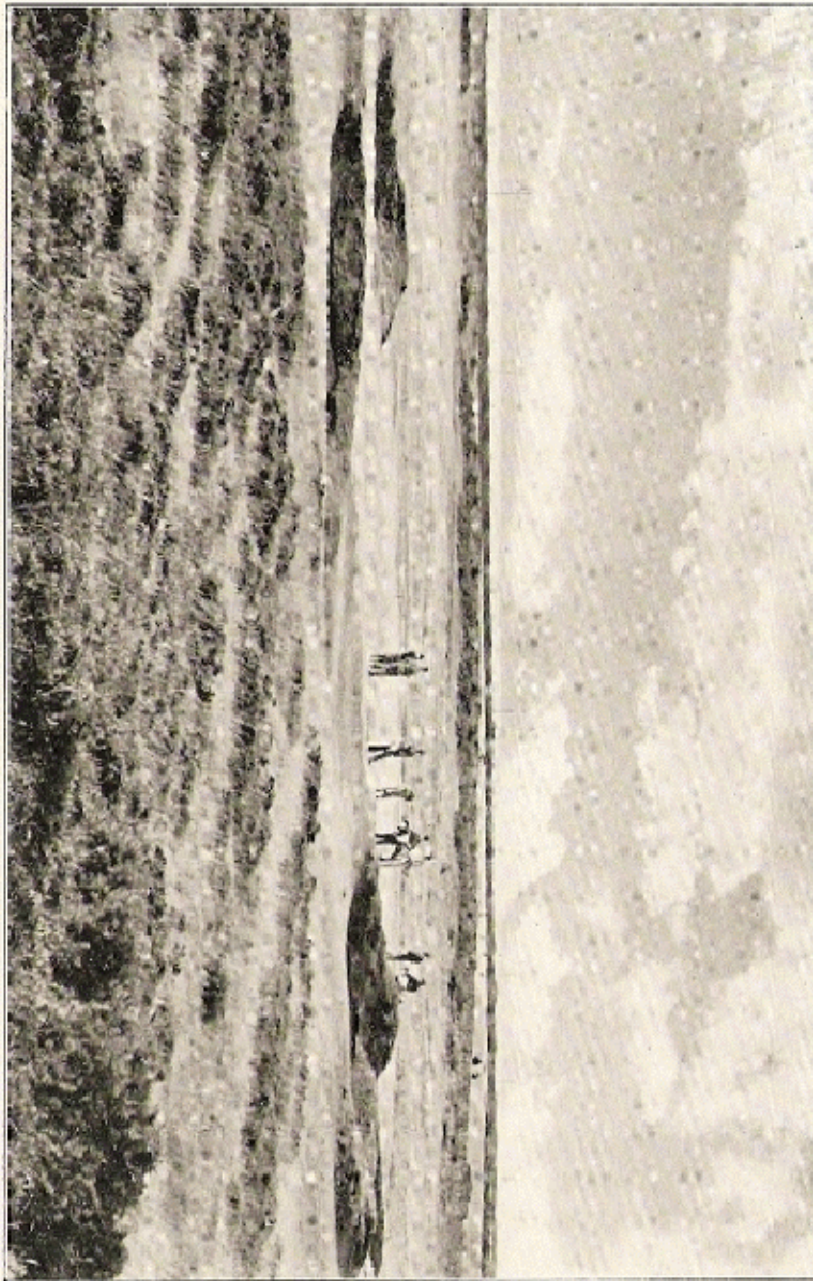
THE HOME GREEN AND CLUBHOUSE

to-day, the casualness of the laying-out of Barassie is somehow amusing. The minutes thus describe it:—on 2nd October, 1894, six members of the committee "met at Barassie with Mr. John Allan, professional, St. Nicholas Golf Club, and Mr. Richmond, gardener, Barassie. The ground was gone over and the sites of the various teeing and putting greens were marked off." And that was that.

The modern professional golfer who specialises in golf architecture may charge 25 guineas or more for merely walking over a course and suggesting where an additional bunker or two may be advantageously placed. John Allan, the St. Nicholas professional, who had the honour of being the original architect of the Barassie course, tendered a bill for 12/6 for "advice in laying-off course." Even the committee of the day, keen on a bargain as they were, felt that he had erred on the side of modesty and paid him a fee of one guinea.

On 20th October, 1894, the links at Barassie was opened for play. An exhibition game was played in the afternoon between Willie Auchterlonie, of St. Andrews, and Willie Fernie, of Troon, and this was preceded by a foursome—Ferne and Dr. David Lawrie (the Captain) v. Auchterlonie and Mr. Andrew Yates. At that time the golfing artists were restricted to the most modest of galleries, and only about two hundred people—Club members and golfers from the adjacent area—witnessed those exhibition games. Auchterlonie came all the way from St. Andrews for a fee of 2½ guineas, plus an allowance of 18/- for the expenses of himself and his caddie.

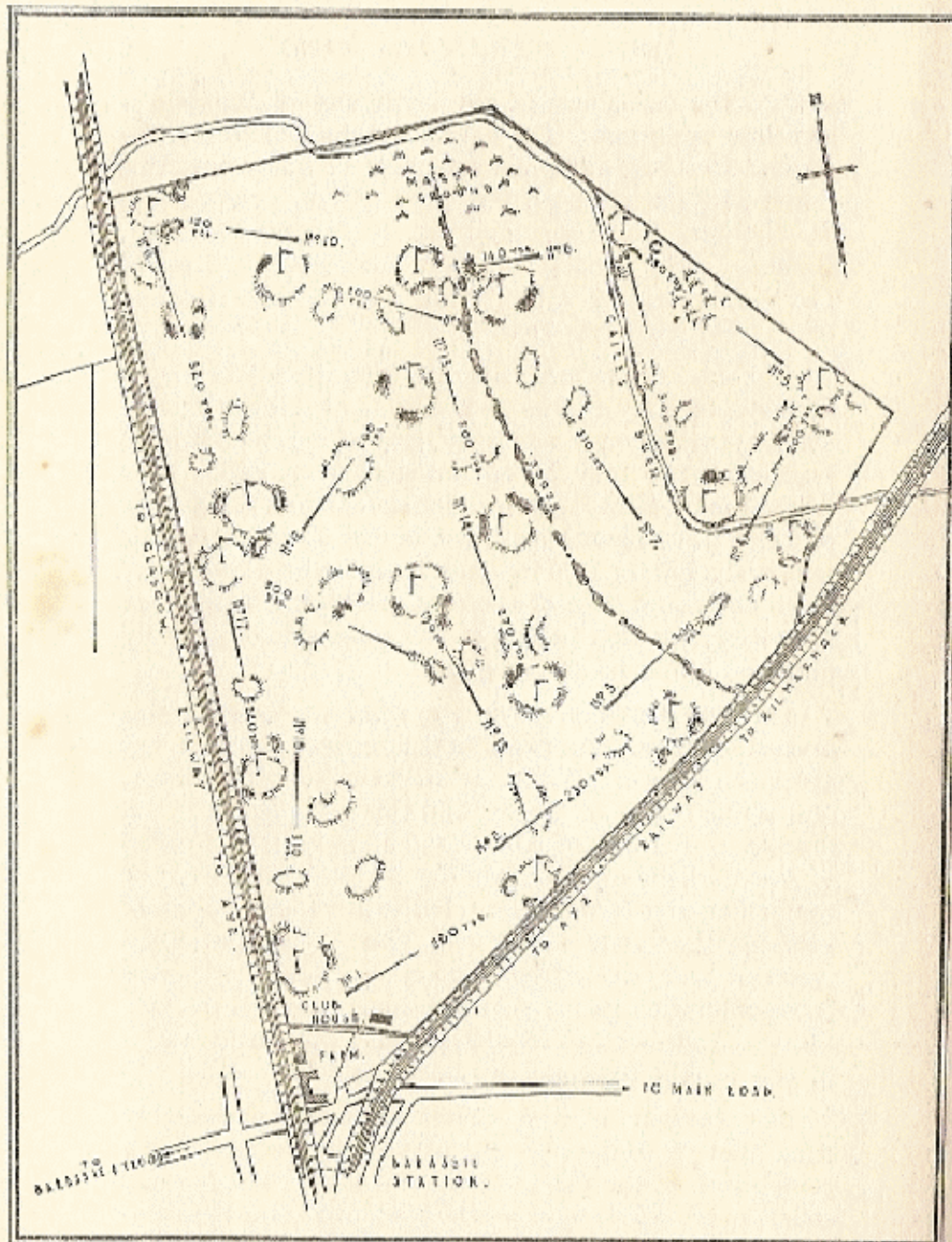
The lay-out of the course differed considerably from that of to-day, as can best be appreciated by a comparison of the plans reproduced here. The original course extended to 4390 yards, which was short even in those days of gutta balls, the longest hole (the 11th)



being 320 yards. Only six holes reached a length of 300 yards—the 3rd, 6th, 7th, 11th, 16th and 18th. The "Glasgow Herald" golf correspondent of the time was of opinion that "the Club had not taken the fullest use of the ground . . . and that the round might have been stretched out a little more": in confirmation of which he pointed out that "the brassie does not come into play in the whole round," and that "all the holes that cannot be carried from the tee are within the scope of a drive and from a wrist to a three-quarters iron shot."

The quotation serves as a reminder that golf in 1894 lacked something of the mathematical precision of the modern game. The Barassie golfer of 1937, approaching a green, does not concern himself with such niceties of physical control as are suggested here; instead, he takes a No. 7 or a No. 5 iron from his bag. But, perhaps fortunately for golf's sake, the advance of science ended with the mechanics of the game and left human nature unaffected; for the intrusion of mathematical formulae into the golf-bag has not served to lessen the delectable doubt that waits on every shot in the average golfer's locker.

Here is what the "Glasgow Herald" of the time had to say of the new course: "The ground . . . is for the most part covered with the natural turf that is usually associated with a sandy subsoil, and therefore suitable for the golfer . . . The general features of the ground correspond with those of Gales course . . . A bird's eye view gives the impression that it is flat, and it has indeed none of the mighty tops to cross that the player over Prestwick encounters, and it is not of the undulating character of the Troon links. But it is in every respect a varied round, with natural sand hazards rather sparingly *en evidence*, it is true, but



ORIGINAL BARASSIE LAYOUT, 1894.

Plan by G. Steel.

sufficiently so on a new course that must be otherwise somewhat rough."

Having regard to its heather-embroidered mantle, the infant Barassie might be said to have been born in the purple, but otherwise it had no special majesty among golf courses. The original course bore about the same relation to that of to-day as the block of marble, after the design has been roughed out by the sculptor, does to the finished statue. While sand bunkers were few there were fearsome hazards bordering the fairways and erupting into them—in the shape of jungles of tangled grass and rushes and scrubby heath. So dense was the rough that old players still tell of occasions when, exploring it in search of a lost ball, they found three or four balls within a few feet of their own.

A thorn hedge and fence, with a deep ditch, bisected the course from north to south, and have left a heritage of bad lies for the errant golfer in the crumpled ridge that runs between the present 8th and 13th fairways. The burn figured in the nightmares of the timorous and the impecunious; coerced now by a green-keeping staff into sedate and well-ordered ways, the burn was then, under the lax rule of Nature, dissolute and rebellious—its banks broken down and heavily overgrown with long grass and rushes, its bed fibrous with water-weeds. A ball in the burn was a lost ball; seldom was there any reprieve.

But, despite these discouraging conditions, the members of the Club were in good heart, for they knew that they had in Barassie the making of a fine golf course. When the decision to flit to Barassie was made the membership was only about 60, but within a week of the links being opened the maximum limit of 150 members had been reached and there was a waiting list. The

membership limit was raised to 250, entry money fixed at two guineas, and the name of the Club changed from the Ossington to Kilmarnock Golf Club; and in keeping with the enhanced prestige of the Club it was agreed to provide facilities for the employment of caddies and that these be paid "a sum of 6d per round." Other times, other economic standards!

In the improvement of the course the executive was compelled to hasten slowly because of the slenderness of the Club's financial resources, but every year had its tale of progress. Alterations were made in the layout, the burn was redd up and its banks barbered, the areas of rough adjacent to the fairways brought into some degree of subjection, and what the long handicap players doubtless regarded as a needlessly devilish ingenuity went to the devising and positioning of new bunkers. And even while the legend grew among the golf widows of Kilmarnock that "it never rains at Barassie" their spouses were erecting shelters at strategic points. Above all, with skilled nurture the fine bents and fescues of the natural turf wove themselves into a close-textured carpet for the fairways and smooth velvet coverings for the greens.

There has never been any prodigal expenditure in the fashioning or maintenance of the Barassie course. The Club has always been fortunate in having among its members men of good-will and public spirit who were willing, without fee or reward, to serve it and let it have the benefit of their technical skill and experience. That has been especially true in regard to the care of the greens and fairways. Barassie has had the services of a succession of "green conveners," all of whom have themselves had expert knowledge of the culture of grasses or have had special facilities for securing expert advice. Names that immediately rise to the memory

in this connection are those of Mr. W. L. Paterson, Mr. George P. Bryce, the late Mr. T. C. Smith, and Professor R. H. Leitch. The green-keeping staff has always been small numerically, relative to that on most other courses of similar standing, but the results of its work—reckoned in terms of good fairways and putting greens—have been satisfactory on any comparison. Sometimes in the past, of course, before water was laid on to the greens, drought contrived to defeat the best efforts of "green convener" and green-keeper, but it is seldom indeed that Barassie's greens and fairways have not won the praise of visiting golfers.

The early economic difficulties could easily have been solved by the admission of more members, but the Club purposely set itself to restrict the membership, primarily because the links was intended for Kilmarnock golfers, and it was not thought desirable to swell the membership from outside sources. Again, a majority of the members were Saturday afternoon players, and it was the aim of the executive to prevent undue congestion on the links at the week-end. These factors have resulted in the maintenance of a policy of restricted membership until the present day, as also of the policy, early adopted, of having at least two-thirds (now three-fourths) of the membership of the Club consisting of Ayrshire residents.

The wooden hut or locker-room—"a beggarly account of empty boxes"—that had been transferred from Holmes Farm was a poor and comfortless place for the golfer to relax after a valiant round—a shabby makeshift for the 19th hole of modern standards. Yet it could be a cheery place enough, even on a wet day when it was a huddle of damp but not too dispirited golfers. The conditions made for sociable intimacy if not for polished ease.

But then there was the farm. The farmhouse stood on the ground to seaward of the present clubhouse and close to the Glasgow railway line, and the steading extended over the site of the putting course. The presiding genius was Mrs. Howie, a kindly and hospitable soul who redeemed the plainness of "plain teas" with boiled eggs as fresh as a breeze off the Firth, and anticipated Woolworth in the moderateness of her charges. It was in the little farmhouse, over a pot of tea and Mrs. Howie's newly-baked scones, and amid the roar and rattle of trains that seemed to be passing directly over him, that the golfer's soul expanded and the story of his round became an epic. Old golfers still look back with happiness on brave, gay hours spent there, and it has become an article of their faith that never were any scones quite so good as Mrs. Howie's, nor eggs so fresh and full of Vitamins as those conceived in glory by the Barassie hens of yesteryear.

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III.

20th CENTURY STANDARDS.

WITH the coming of the new century and its new standards of comfort a demand arose for more adequate clubhouse accommodation. The Club's total income from subscriptions (including ladies' and juniors') in 1901-02 was only £218 17s 6d, and from entry money and life members £55 3/-, so that a really ambitious building scheme was out of the question. The clubhouse which the late Mr. James Hay, architect, was instructed to design was one that would

"provide the accommodation required as cheaply as possible, consistent with good substantial work throughout."

One initial difficulty in the way of the project was the securing of a water supply, and it might well have proved insuperable if it had not been for the good offices of Miss Finnie, of Springhill, who agreed to supply the Club with water from the system which she had installed for the service of her own house at Barassie.

Designed in simple bungalow style (more novel than now) the clubhouse—which was illuminated with acetylene gas—met the needs of its time very well. Exclusive of furnishings it cost £1,428 8/- to build, and was financed by an issue of 4½% debentures.

The clubhouse was formally opened on 16th May, 1903. The opening ceremony—at which the Captain, the late Mr. John Cuthbertson, presided—was performed by Mr. J. Harling Turner, the Club's first Captain, amid a downpour of rain, but at the house-warming—cake and wine and speeches in the lounge, and a hanselling luncheon in the dining-room—a more genial and appropriate atmosphere prevailed.

To secure publicity for the course and the new clubhouse, arrangements were made for an exhibition game between Harry Vardon and James Braid, then at the zenith of their fame. The game was played on 6th June, 1903, and attracted a gallery of some hundreds. The previous record for the course was 73, held by Harry Vardon and William Robertson, but in this exhibition game both players successively lowered it, Braid returning a 70 in the forenoon round, and Vardon a 72; while in the afternoon Vardon set up a new record of 69, against Braid's 75. In the following week, at Troon, Vardon won the Open Championship

for the fourth time. For this exhibition game the masters were paid £12 each—this being the amount named by Vardon when asked to quote his fee, while Braid in response to a similar request said he was content to "leave it to the committee"—thereby showing a spirit of trustfulness not always inherent in the ordinary Club member.

These events gave a new impetus to the Club, and within the next two years much was done to improve the course and to increase its length, a step that had been made necessary by the introduction of the rubber-cored ball with its greater powers of flight. The disposition of many of the holes was altered and became that we know to-day. Thus the 5th hole was carried over the burn, its new green being one that had been constructed for the 8th. The tee of the 6th was likewise carried over the burn. The green of the 12th hole was abandoned and its turf removed to form the green of a new hole—the 9th, and the old 9th green became the green of the 12th hole. The first hole was lengthened—as were also several others—by shifting back the tee; the second became a "dog-leg" by carrying the green away to the right, and this change allowed the 3rd to be greatly lengthened. Double tees were made at all holes. This reconstruction, which in the main was suggested and designed by Mr. John Sturrock, C.E., a member of the Green Committee, added about 600 yards to the length of the course—and, perhaps in sympathy, the fees for caddies were stretched from 6d to 1/- a round.

From its earliest days at Holmes Farm the Club encouraged ladies to play over the links by granting them playing privileges at much reduced fees—5/- a year in the first place, and 7/6 after the erection of the clubhouse. In the year 1903-04 the number

of lady members rose from 38 to 82, and in the latter year they were empowered to form a Club for the management of their own affairs. The limit of membership originally fixed for the Ladies' Club was 100, but a year later it was increased to 150, and later still to 175, and for many years there has been a long waiting-list. The golf widows have ceased their lamentations and have themselves resorted to the "swing" music of the links; and in this year of jubilee they sing an especially cheerful song, since there is a prospect that in the near future Kilmarnock (Barassie) Ladies' Golf Club will have a clubhouse worthy of it.

In 1904 the Barassie Club appointed its first professional, Douglas Given, and the growing prestige of the course was recognised by its selection in 1905 as the venue of the "Evening Times" Trophy competition—the first competitive event of any consequence to be held there. During the next decade the Club went quietly on an even keel. The course was kept in excellent condition, alterations were made as these seemed desirable, and the clubhouse was improved.

Then came the years when the clubs of the younger members rusted in their lockers, and the waiting crowd at the first tee on Saturday afternoons was a sadly diminished one of middle-aged and elderly men. A depleted membership and green staff presented difficult problems of administration in the war years. Members on service with the Forces were generously exempted from payment of annual subscriptions while yet retaining their full status as members. To enable this to be done those of the Old Guard who remained on the Barassie Front paid an annual war-time levy of 10/- (life members 15/-). The privileges of the course

were freely granted to Officers and Cadets and other ranks in training at Gailes and Troon.

Despite the difficulties of catering—with its accompaniment of food-coupons and fuel shortage—the clubhouse preserved its hospitable air. Parties of soldiers attending the shooting-range resorted to it for tea, and Cadets from Gailes were permitted to hold their farewell dinners there (prior to dispersal to their several units)—on condition that they observed the Defence of the Realm Act regulations and prevented any ray of light escaping from door or windows. Medal competitions were suspended, but periodically the Old Guard held competitions in aid of Red Cross funds.

To the members on service overseas, Barassie seemed an endless world away, but in dreams and waking nightmares they "babbled o' (its) green fields," and one of the biggest thrills of the man home on leave was the march from the clubhouse door to the first tee. That was the consummation of his dreams of Peace and Home and Blighty. But there were those who never came back. Their names are still honoured, and are enshrined on a bronze tablet above the fireplace in the clubhouse lounge:—

- PTE. JOHN BROWN, 7th A. & S.H.
- PTE. JOHN A. DUNLOP, 2nd Royal Scots.
- PTE. JAMES G. FINLAY, 17th H.L.I.
- PTE. ANDREW R. GIBB, 17th H.L.I.
- CHAPLAIN REV. JOHN KELLIE.
- PTE. MALCOLM MACKINTOSH, 5th K.O.S.B.
- PTE. JOHN McNAV, 9th H.L.I.
- PTE. ADAM MCGREGOR, 10th K.O. Liverpool Scottish.
- LIEUT. GEORGE STURROCK, 4th R.S.F.
- PTE. ARTHUR THOMSON, A.S.C.
- CAPT. A. INGLIS WYLLIE, 4th R.S.F. Tank Corps.
- CAPT. HERBERT J. WEIR, Ayrshire Yeomanry.

With a return to the pleasant ways of peace there was a whetting of the golf appetite. The membership of the Club at the close of the war was 370, but it quickly reached the maximum limit of 400, and since then—although the entrance fee has risen from 5 to 10 guineas, and the annual subscription from 30/- to £3 10/-—the membership has never, even in the days of the industrial depression, fallen below its full strength, and always there has been a waiting-list.

Fortified by the assurance of the course's growing popularity, the Club in 1920 purchased the Barassie links—which had hitherto been held on lease from the Duke of Portland—for £2,500, and financed the purchase by an issue of debentures. In the same year Mr. John Bain retired from the joint positions of honorary secretary and treasurer of the Club. The beginning of his 18 years' tenure of these offices synchronised with the Club's decision to erect a clubhouse, and his final service was the carrying through of the negotiations for the purchase of the links. In recognition of his valuable services to the Club and of the skilful and understanding way in which he had eased its growing pains, the members presented Mr. Bain with a chesterfield couch on which he might take his slippers; but so far he still prefers to spend his leisure strenuously on the links and is presumably keeping the upholstered lap of luxury for his far-distant old age.

IV.

THE NEW BARASSIE.

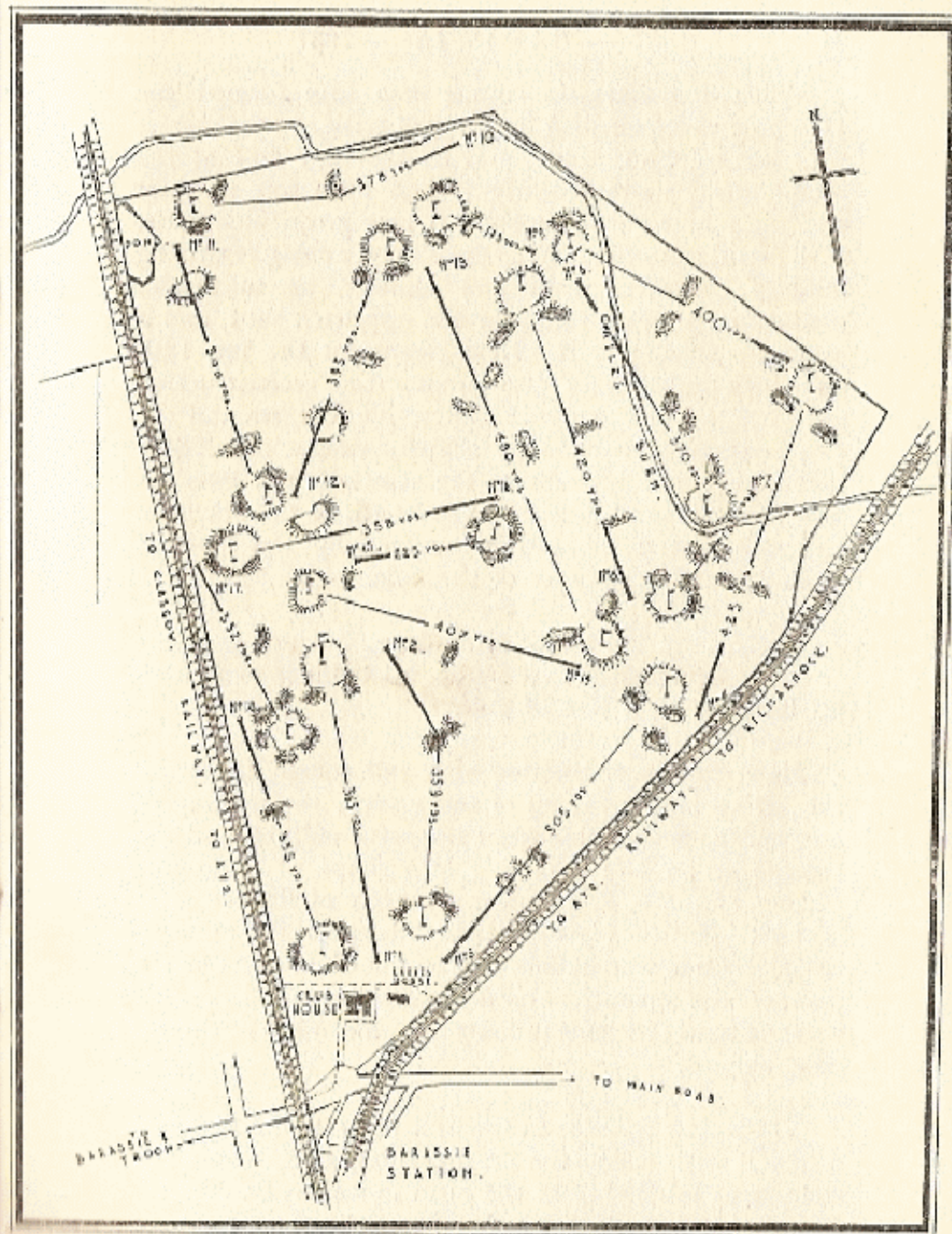
HAVING attained to the dignity of lairdship the Club proceeded to set its house in order. In 1921 a drainage scheme was carried out at a cost of £366, and a little later extensive alterations were made to the clubhouse, the lounge and locker-room being enlarged, the bar-room merged into the entrance hall and a new bar made. Subsequently electric light and heating were installed, and carpets replaced linoleum in lounge and dining-room. A parenthetical addition was made in 1926 to the name of the Club, which then became Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club, and in the following year the policy of electing life members was abandoned. The system of commuting annual subscriptions for payment of a lump sum—which ranged from first to last between 8 guineas and 35 guineas—had served a good purpose in providing additional revenue at a time when the Club was financially hard-pressed but it had outlived its usefulness.

The coming of steel-shafted clubs and more resilient balls had endowed the golfer with new power, and the brightly burning tigers were finding the game too easy; so, around 1931, the executive applied themselves to the apparently un-Christian task of creating more difficulties and snares for their weaker brethren. A general plan of reconstruction was prepared by Mr. Mathew M. Monie ("Theodore Moone"), well known as a golf architect and as a sprightly writer on the game. It was resolved to proceed with the reconstruction gradually, spreading it over a number of years, and also

that the work should, as far as possible, be done by the Club's own greenkeeping staff.

From 1932 till 1935 major reconstructive operations were carried out under the supervision of Professor R. H. Leitch, the green convener. The design of the course was strengthened and new features added with intent to abolish humdrum and heighten the interest of certain holes. Nature having conceived it her duty to make Barassie flat, the golf architect resolved that at least it should not be monotonous, even to the eye, and as the understudy of Nature he created miniature mountains and valleys—not solely for the purpose of providing new golf hazards but also to delight and refresh the eye. A feeling for beauty co-operated happily with art and science in the re-conditioning of Barassie.

A detailed description of changes so recent is unnecessary in this place. One writer has described the new 15th hole as "the *pièce de resistance*" of the round. A "one-shotter" of 223 yards, over rough country to a green nestling among hillocks, it puts a premium on accuracy from the tee. A similar accuracy is demanded for the second shot at the 17th—which, by reason of its cunningly fashioned green, has been acclaimed by many good golfers as one of the best and most exciting holes in Ayrshire. The 13th hole—of no special interest before, even for the sloggers and foot-sloggers for whom it was originally designed—has forsaken its straightened mode for a more straitened one; not "John Finnie Street" now, but a romantic highway that curves, when once it has cleft between the miniature Paps of Jura, to a beautiful plateau green that is like an oasis.



BARASSIE LAYOUT, 1937.

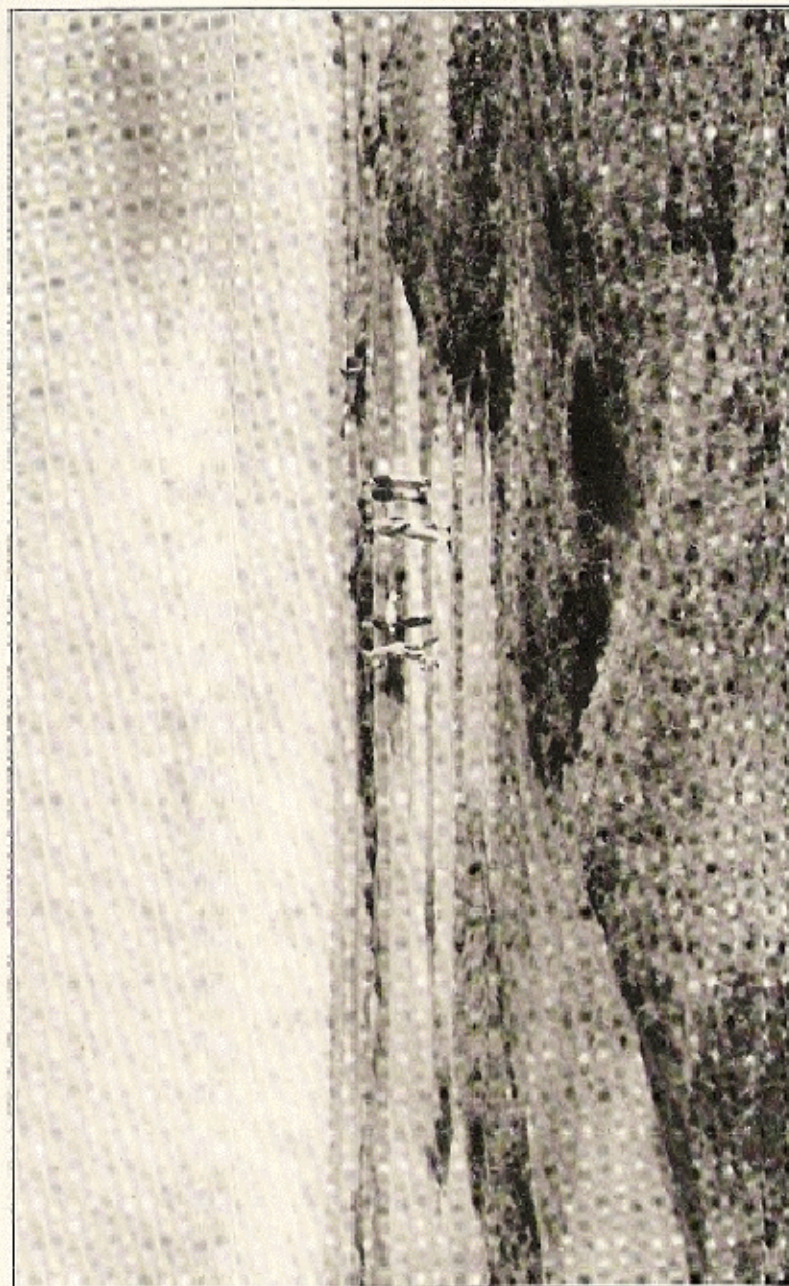
Plan by G. Steel.

When the Barassie course was first formed the 11th hole was described by the golf critics of the day as "an ideal golfing hole" and as the best hole of the round. But more recently it had been felt to start excitingly and finish tamely. A new green was made, with artful contours, and so positioned among encircling bunkers, heather, whin and knowes, as to render necessary an all-air route for the approach shot, and a judicious placing of it. New greens for the 1st, 14th and 16th holes were also among the reconstruction measures, all of them with distinctive features and the two last-named backed by shapely ranges of hillocks that add a new interest to the seawards sky-line. A new teeing-ground increased the length of the 8th hole, and so changed the terrain covered by the tee-shot as to alter the character of the hole.

These were the major alterations, but many others of lesser significance were made, all tending to tighten up Barassie as a test of golf.

Now, the reconstruction of a golf course, involving the lifting and re-laying of old greens, the making of new ones and the subsequent intensive culture, and the transportation and moulding into shape of thousands of tons of earth, is as much a matter of finance as it is of art. Not the least surprising feature of the Barassie reconstruction was its low cost to the Club. The major part of the operations was financed out of current revenue and without adding to the Club's capital indebtedness.

This result was due in the first place to the zeal and goodwill with which the greenkeeping staff, under the competent leadership of the head greenkeeper, Mr. W. Coombe, undertook the work, often delicate and always

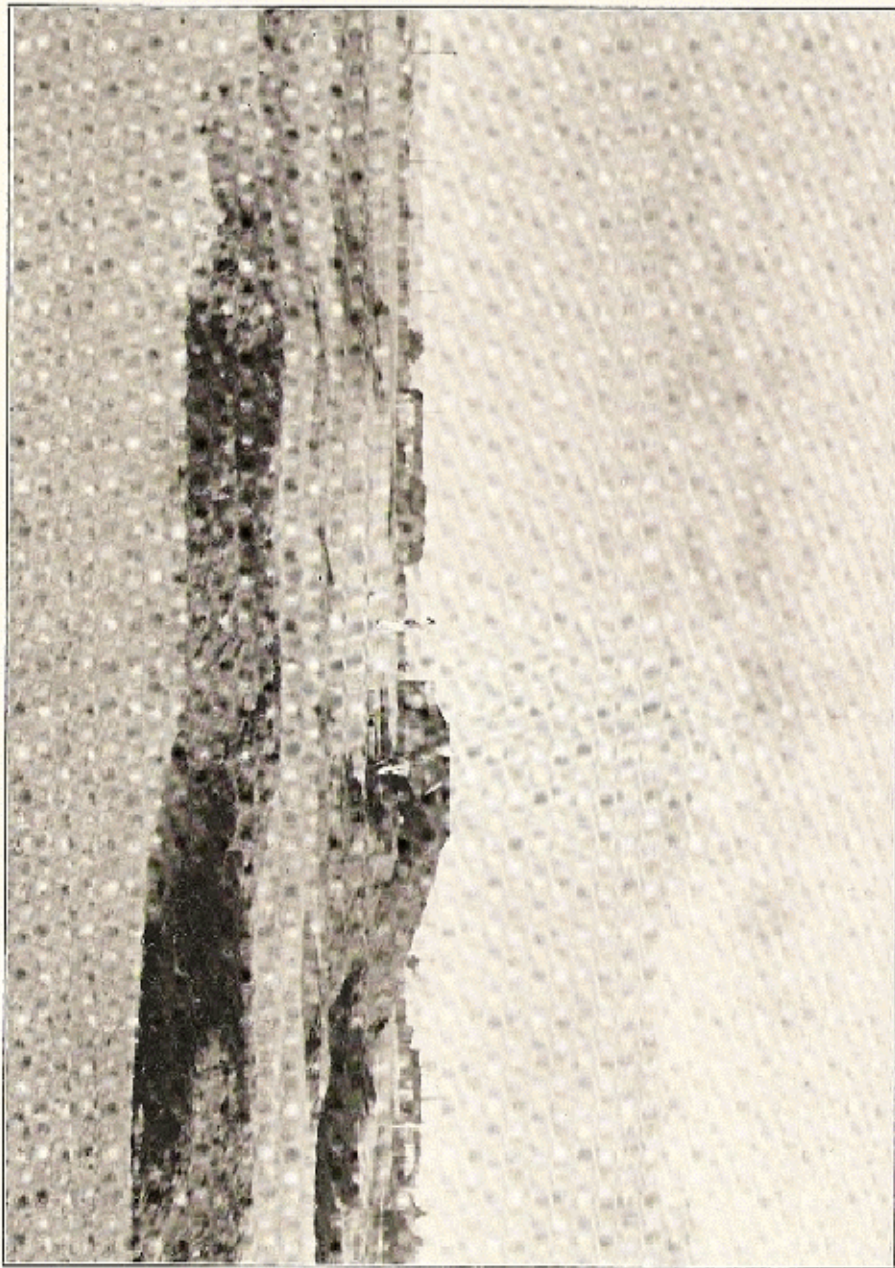


ON THE 12th TEE

arduous, and above all to the skilful direction and supervision of the green convener, Dr. Leitch, who for several years sacrificed his leisure time and to the utmost devoted his energies and his specialised knowledge to the work of reconstruction. Mr. Mathew Monie, always fertile in suggestions for improvement, was hardly less assiduous in his attention to the actual carrying out of the work. To *Mr. Monie and Dr. Leitch, whose labour was essentially one of love, the chief credit for "the new Barassie" is due, and Mr. Coombe and his staff are also worthy of praise for their share in producing it.

The major part of the reconstruction scheme completed—(the remainder, which includes the timbering of the burn, is still being carried out gradually)—the question of installing a water supply for the greens arose in acute form. Droughts in successive summers had impaired the best efforts of the greenkeepers, and in 1935 there was discontent which culminated in a special general meeting of the Club, at which it was resolved to instal a gravitation water system. The resolution was duly carried into effect in the Spring of 1936 at a total cost of about £700—an economical result largely due to the efficient direction of Mr. Alexander Bowie, another member who gratuitously placed his professional knowledge and experience at the service of the Club. And now the last alibi of green conveners and greenkeepers for poor and patchy turf may be said to have been drowned in the flood that is perpetually on tap at every green.

* Since these pages were written, Mr. Mathew M. Monie has met his death in an accident on the railway. By Barassie golfers, and by many people of varied interests in all parts of the country, his tragic and untimely end is deeply deplored. As architect of the Barassie reconstruction Mr. Monie gave his services, and his wealth of skill and experience, lavishly and cheerfully and without thought of personal gain, and the Club's debt of gratitude to him is not easily assessed.



In the course of this story there have been mentioned the names of a few men who served the Club well in specific ways; but the names of all the benefactors of the Club, if they were written, would fill many pages. As has been said, the Barassie Club has always been fortunate in having among its members men of public spirit and goodwill who were impelled by their interest in the Club to a service far beyond that which ordinary Club loyalty demands. Successive Captains and Members of Committee have ungrudgingly given their best talents to further the Club's interests; secretaries have given a zealous and painstaking attention to Club affairs out of all proportion to their financial rewards, and none more than the present secretary, Mr. Mungo Duncan; and a host of individual members have given the Club the benefit of their professional experience or influence, and have donated trophies for competition and gifts of many kinds for the comfort and convenience of their fellow-members and the improvement of course and clubhouse. That sufficiently indicates the inherent spirit of the Club, and the hold it has on the minds and affections of its members.

Some of those associated with the Club have made names for themselves in the wider world of golf. Barassie has produced many fine golfers, though perhaps none in the very first flight; and it is the only Club in Scotland to have had the distinction of providing the Scottish Golf Union, since its inception in 1920, with two of its presidents—Mr. George P. Bryce (1929-30, 1930-31) and Mr. A. R. Russ (1935-36, 1936-37).

Barassie has also served as a useful loupin'-stane for a number of young professional golfers. Douglas Given, the first of them, was succeeded by Arthur

W. Butchart, famed as a clubmaker, and winner of the Scottish Professional Championship in 1923. Butchart, now resident in Ireland, has been the only one of the line of professionals to establish himself on Barassie soil; his successors—good golfers all—have been young men in a hurry. Peter McEwan is now at Nairn; George Murdoch with Royal Belfast; James Adams with the Royal Liverpool Club at Hoylake (after smiling through the Open Championship of 1936 to become runner-up in it); and Jack McLachlan at Newcastle, County Down. The present professional, W. M. Hastings, the reigning Scottish Professional Champion, is too young and too sensible to sigh for further worlds to conquer; he practises conquering shots instead.

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THE YEAR OF JUBILEE.

SO we come to the Kilmarnock Club's jubilee year, happily marked by a widespread recognition of the new prestige of the Barassie course. Since its reconstruction the course has won the praise of discriminating golfers—as evidenced by such comments as that of "The Bulletin" golf correspondent, who has written, "Barassie now ranks with the most exciting and delightful courses in Ayrshire." The enhanced status of the course was witnessed by its selection as the venue for the Scottish Professional Golfers' Championship in June, 1937, and for the Scottish Amateur Golf Championship in the following month—these being the first occasions on which either of these premier Scottish competitive events had been

held at Barassie. The Professional Championship had a happy outcome in respect that it was won by the Barassie Club's young professional, W. M. Hastings—a success only achieved once before by a Barassie professional, viz., A. W. Butchart at Western Gailes in 1923.

The exacting test presented by the new Barassie was amply proved by the scores returned in both these competitions. Professionals and amateurs alike found it extremely difficult to break 70 under competition conditions.

The year 1937 has further been remarkable in the Club's annals in that it saw the authorisation of Sunday golf at Barassie. For some years previously there had been a good deal of unofficial play on Sundays, to which the committee in its wisdom and charity turned a Nelson eye, but in the Club's jubilee year the practice was legalised, arrangements made for supervision, and authority given for the opening of the necessary portion of the clubhouse, but without any service there.

Doubtless Barassie lacks some of the distinctive natural features that go to make a golf course great; doubtless, too, it lacks something of the scenic splendour that lends impressiveness to certain courses; yet who that knows Barassie will deny that it has a subtle but very definite charm of its own? There are golf courses that, while good, fall short of greatness, and yet have qualities that, for regular all-the-year-round play, make them more attractive to experienced golfers than other courses that would be awarded higher marks in any skilled assessment of their value as tests of golf. And Barassie is one of these.

"The new Barassie is lovely," a golfing commentator wrote lately: and almost certainly he was not referring simply to its choice turf, its inviting greens, its intriguing hazards. The seaward view from the Barassie course may be one of enchanting loveliness; always on a clear day Arran gives grace to the horizon, and on the clearest the golfer may get an added thrill by descriing the Paps of Jura beyond the long expanse of the Firth, or to the northward Ben Lomond etched against the sky.

Aloof from the sea, Barassie is yet under its spell. And in the summer evenings, when the sun is sinking behind the Arran peaks and the westward sky is aglow with colour—now of subtly delicate shades, again of barbaric splendour—and the sea is a golden salver, the golfer—intent on reaching the 18th green while there is yet light to see the flag—is apt, and glad enough, to find the sheer loveliness of Barassie distracting, and to be confirmed in his view that the sun ends its daily journey where it does primarily for the inspiration and delight of Barassie golfers.

And there are other pictures that the Barassie golfer carries in his mind's eye wherever he may go:—of spaces in No Man's Land touched to beauty by the purple of heather or the flaming yellow of gorse or broom—a dismaying prospect maybe for the man in search of a ball there, but a joy to the connoisseur of beauty waiting confidently on the tee; of little swelling ridges in a mist of blue with wild scabious or violas or bluebells; of banks whereon the wild thyme blows, camouflaging with exquisite grace the terrors of the bunkers behind; of the eastward hill seen at the onset of the gloaming, the windows of the isolated farms radiant with the reflection of the setting sun, and the Hillhouse Quarry divested of all its stark details

and looking like a mediaeval hillside town; of the sudden upward flight of a lark startled by feet blundering in the wilderness; and blending with these pictures the song of larks overhead, and maybe the call of the cuckoo that has mocked so many duffed shots at the tenth.

All this, you may say, is not golf; but who is to say that it is not magnificent? For these are among the things that contribute to the essential charm of Barassie—even as does the atmosphere of good-fellowship and camaraderie in the clubhouse on a Saturday afternoon.

KILMARNOCK (BARASSIE) GOLF CLUB.

Instituted 1887.

LIST OF CAPTAINS.

J. HARLING TURNER	1887-88	ADAM CAIRNS SMITH	1919-20
ANDREW YATES	1889	DAVID CARRUTHERS, Jr.	1921-22
ROBERT BROWN	1890	GEORGE PATON BRYCE	1923-24
JOHN HAGGO	1891	JOHN BAIN	1925
HUGH LAUDER	1892	JAMES D. WYLLIE ...	1926
DAVID LAUDER	1893	HUGH LAUDER	1927
DR. DAVID LAWRIE	1894-96	DR. ROBT. C. ROBERTSON	1928
ANDREW YATES	1897	MALCOLM HENDERSON ...	1929
MATTHEW ROBERTSON	1898-01	MATT. S. JAMIESON ...	1930
JOHN CUTHBERTSON	1902-03	ROBT. W. MCKINLAY ...	1931
JOHN STURROCK	1904-05	CHAS. A. LAUDER	1932
J. FINDLAY ROBERTSON	1906-07	A. B. FERGUSON	1933
JOHN HENDERSON	1908-09	R. B. FORREST (Vice-Capt)	1933
WM. C. CUNNINGHAM	1910-11	A. B. FERGUSON	1934
DR. JOHN ROBERTSON	1912-13	D. R. STURROCK	1935
GEO. A. INNES	1914-16	H. N. TANNHILL	1936
WILLIAM L. PATERSON	1917-18	CHARLES GIBB	1937

SECRETARIES AND TREASURERS.

JOHN STURROCK, Secretary	1887-89
W. B. CHALLONER, Treasurer	1888-89
JOHN STURROCK, Secretary and Treasurer	1889-90
W. C. STRANG, Secretary and Treasurer	1890-91
FRED ALEXANDER, Secretary	1891-94
JOHN DAVIDSON, Treasurer	1891-94
FRED ALEXANDER, } Joint Secretaries	1894-96
C. S. REID, }	
C. S. REID, Treasurer	1894-96
ALEXANDER MILLAR, Jun., Secretary and Treasurer	1896-02
JOHN BAIN, Secretary and Treasurer	1902-20
GEORGE A. INNES, Secretary and Treasurer	1920-30
MUNGO DUNCAN, Secretary and Treasurer	1930-

CLUB JUBILEE DINNER

EMPORIUM RECEPTION ROOMS

KILMARNOCK

WEDNESDAY, 24th NOVEMBER, 1937

Chairman—Mr. CHARLES GIBB, Captain

