



THE 13TH GREEN FROM THE RIGHT OF THE 17TH TEE

(EIGHT)

**MENTION HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE OF SANDY HERD.** Herd had won the 1902 Open Championship at Hoylake. It was a victory of enormous significance to the future direction of golf, and of golf course design in particular, because it was the first important championship to be won using the Haskell or rubber-cored ball. It has been suggested that Herd purchased the entire stock of the new Haskell ball from the Hoylake Professional so that the ball was not readily available to other competitors.

**Towards the end of 1909**  
 THE LADIES TOOK THE DECISION TO JOIN THE LADIES' GOLF UNION AND A COLLECTION WAS MADE TO PAY THE ENTRANCE FEE. AS IT HAPPENED THEY DID NOT JOIN THE LGU AT THIS TIME AND THE MONEY WAS USED, INSTEAD, TO PURCHASE MONTHLY SILVER MEDALS. THEY DID DECIDE TO JOIN, HOWEVER, IN DECEMBER 1910 AND THE SUBSCRIPTION WAS RAISED FROM 15/- TO 16/- ACCORDINGLY.

Up to that point all players had been using the gutta-percha ball or Cuttie. To the dismay of pure ball strikers such as Harry Vardon, the Haskell was much easier to get airborne with the primitive clubs available in those days, hickory-shafted, of course. But this was not the only difference. The Cuttie, once in the air, behaved entirely predictably on landing – it stopped dead. The Haskell ball, however, bounced and rolled on landing. Allowance had to be made for this and, until the advent of Balata balls and their contemporary successors, all golfers, professionals included, had to be able to play the pitch-and-run or bump-and-run shot. On a dry seaside links it was not unknown for a wooden-club or long-iron approach shot to have to be landed 40 yards short of the green and threaded between guardian bunkers in order to find the sanctuary of the putting surface.

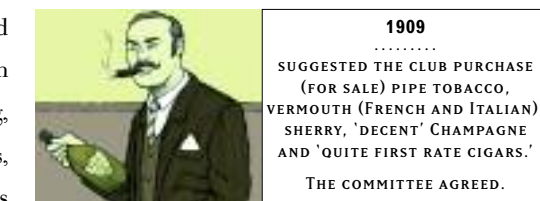


THE ORIGINAL FARMHOUSE — CONVERTED INTO THE FIRST CLUBHOUSE CIRCA 1908

(NINE)

A word about early golf course design... England's oldest club, Royal Blackheath, dating back to at least 1608, was unusual for its time in being located inland, albeit on fast-draining heath. However, it did not spark off a rush to build other golf courses in England. So far as is known there was no other until 1818 when what is now known as Old Manchester came into being, again inland. The next English course was its first links, Royal North Devon at Westward Ho! founded in 1864. Generally speaking, on traditional seaside links the omnipresent wind and fast-running fairways had encouraged the siting of greens on raised ground with plenty of trouble to either side, but usually with an open entrance. When golf courses began to proliferate in England in the late 1860s and early 1870s, most were inland and those who laid out these early courses seemed blind to the design features of typical links courses. They made no attempt to recreate these and their courses were crude. Green sites were rarely interesting, their shapes geometric circles, squares or rectangles; hedges and stone walls were left in situ (as they were at Disley), interrupting the flow of fairways haphazardly; mounds were usually makeshift humps created from piles of stones covered with soil and grass; and bunkers did not resemble the natural animal scrapes and wind erosions that they were beside the sea. These bunkers were straight-line trenches filled with sand. Importantly they were frequently to be found crossing the fairway immediately in front of the green, because the most telling examination of the golfer's technique in the days of the Cuttie ball was to loft the shot over a hazard to a precise length. Inland golf, then, was played on sterile, stereotypical courses of some ugliness, displaying a distinct lack of visual imagination.

A few years before the success of the Haskell ball, John Low and Stuart Paton demonstrated that it was possible to recreate the typical seaside hazards of subtly contoured greens and strategically placed and shaped bunkers on their early heathland course at Woking in Surrey. Not long after, Willie Park Jnr opened the eyes of inland golfers with his innovative designs at Sunningdale (1900) and Huntercombe (1901). Then came Herbert Fowler's magnificent entry into golf course design, Walton Heath, which opened for play in 1904. Suddenly the design of

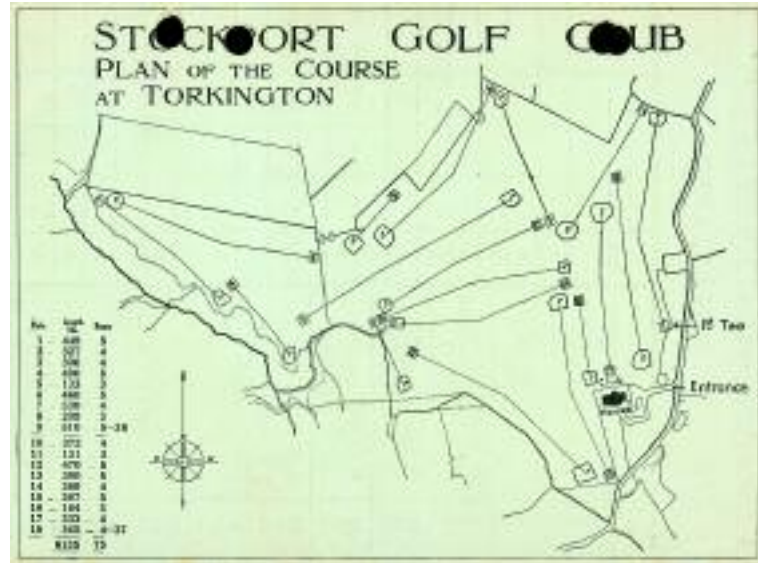


**1909**  
 .....  
 SUGGESTED THE CLUB PURCHASE (FOR SALE) PIPE TOBACCO, VERMOUTH (FRENCH AND ITALIAN), SHERRY, 'DECENT' CHAMPAGNE AND 'QUITE FIRST RATE CIGARS.'  
 THE COMMITTEE AGREED.

inland golf courses made a quantum leap forward, and it happened, not really because of, but certainly alongside the emergence of the Haskell ball. Fowler was one of a number of golf course architects who had not come from the ranks of the professional golfers. Colt, Abercromby, Alison, MacKenzie and Simpson were other 'amateurs' such as Fowler who were prominent over the next twenty or thirty years, many of them internationally famous and none more so than MacKenzie. Of no less impact on the development of course architecture were those who came out of the playing ranks, following in the pioneering steps of Old Tom Morris and Willie Park. The Great Triumvirate of James Braid, Harry Vardon and JH Taylor were much in demand to lay out courses with Ted Ray, Sandy Herd, Ben Sayers and a host of others being asked for advice in the routing of the multitude of new courses springing up in the British Isles before the First World War put a stop to that.

It is impossible to say how much input Herd had in the course that opened at Torkington on 7th August 1909 (*with an Official Opening on 9th May 1910*). Orme makes special mention of the considerable work carried out during its construction by Peter Barrie, the club's first professional. This is to take nothing away from Herd. It was standard practice in those days for Braid, Vardon, Taylor or any of the others to turn up, walk the property a number of times and then place a few stakes in the ground where tees, greens and other important features might be sited. Some notes on specific design features might have been given, but detailed contoured maps and drawings and sketches of the proposed designs were not at this time standard practice. After the basic routing was

THE ORIGINAL COURSE PLAN — NOTE HOLE LENGTHS DIFFER FROM TEE SAND'S QUOTED OVER



Torkington. Herd would certainly not have had the time to be at the course supervising all the small detail of shaping mounds, contouring greens, adjusting angles and slopes and fine tuning as construction proceeded. Credit for that must be given to Barrie.

Construction will have been carried out by a small number of men working with horses and scrapers, spades and wheelbarrows. The steam-driven mechanical shovel had not yet

become commonplace in the building of golf courses. While this contraption made possible the moving of huge quantities of earth, its operators were unable to carry out the subtle shaping of the ground that those working by hand could achieve. Straight lines, artificial mounds and banks, crudely contoured green complexes and square-box teeing grounds are the give-away signs of such construction. Those working by hand, slowly, were able to work in finer detail, patiently adjusting each mound, bunker, green approach and, in particular, putting surface until Barrie was satisfied that the good golfer would have to craft each shot played during the round to answer the questions set by an examining course. While there have been a number of alterations to Barrie's work, (*Colt 1911 and 1919/20, Braid 1935, Hawtree more recently and even some in-house work*) at Stockport it is still possible to get a clear appreciation of the subtlety of his art by attempting to play the running approach shots of the ground game demanded in his day. Sadly, modern golf is almost entirely an aerial game and much of Barrie's subtlety is no longer



THE ORIGINAL CLUBHOUSE — BRICK FAÇADE EXPOSED BEFORE BEING PAINTED WHITE

(TEN)

relevant. Of course, greens were then nowhere near as fast as they are today, and putting was a very different art, too.

However it seems that the greens were very good from the outset. In an article, 'Golf Gossip by Tee Sand,' dating from around the time of completion of the course, they were described as 'some of them natural, some of them laid as nearly as possible to their natural undulations, are already in wonderful condition.' The correspondent felt that a detailed description of each hole would perhaps be monotonous, but he added that at all the long holes bunkers had been placed to the right and left of the fairway to catch sliced or pulled shots. 'The green is approached over cross guarding bunkers, and the shot which is not on the pin will find punishment either to the right or the left of the green. The short holes are all excellently arranged. The way to the first of them — the fifth — is intersected by one of the most business-like looking bunkers I have seen lately. It is at least thirty yards long, with a considerable width, and occupies the site of an old reservoir. The next short one — the eighth — is a full mashie or half iron and the shot will be safer played to the left than to the right where a deep pit forms an admirable trap. But then to the left there are bunkers, and only the perfect shot will be safe. A similar remark applies to the sixteenth, where a topped shot will meet with terrible punishment.' Tee Sand very helpfully also printed a card of the course, noting that the total length was 5,761 yards, but that the length could be made up to 6,200 yards by setting the tees back.

1 445 YARDS	2 310 YARDS	3 315 YARDS	4 298 YARDS	5 160 YARDS
6 380 YARDS	7 470 YARDS	8 130 YARDS	9 376 YARDS	10 380 YARDS
11 470 YARDS	12 380 YARDS	13 150 YARDS	14 316 YARDS	15 352 YARDS
16 150 YARDS	17 320 YARDS	18 339 YARDS		

As we have seen, Orme and Hyde selected the site at Torkington for a number of reasons, not least the fact that they could guarantee not to lose the grounds through some future land deals. But there was also the fact that this was an open site, with few trees. In many respects it resembled an inland links and if today's golfer can somehow visualise the course without the thousands of trees it now enjoys it is possible to see how the original design used the natural features of the site in a manner that has

(ELEVEN)



many links-like traits. However, Torkington never had the natural drainage of a true links, and its turf must always have been of an inland quality and it is clear that adequate drainage has been an ongoing issue of some consequence throughout the life of the course, to this very day, indeed. It is true to say, also, that some of the depressions and valleys, vestiges of long-past coal mining in the area, are now

somewhat deeper and wider than when Herd first set eyes on the place. One particularly complex piece of work involved the construction of the 5th hole on the site of a large reservoir which was reduced in size by building a dam to leave the pond and the formation of a huge sandbank to fill in part of the depression. The water not required on the course was allowed to drain away.

The farmhouse included in the lease provided the basis for conversion into a clubhouse with facilities for both ladies and gentlemen and, importantly, it was possible to have a large dining room and an appropriate kitchen. Mastermind of the transformation into a clubhouse was an architect member, Oswald Stott, and it is recorded that the interior decoration was carried out 'most tastefully' by Alderman Hamnett, also a member. The farm buildings afforded accommodation for a motor car garage, sheds for bicycles and stables for horses, providing for members travelling from a distance.

After some 18 months of intensive work the new course was opened for play in August 1909. Some £2,000 had been spent and all the members marvelled at Barrie's creation. A match between the Captain's side and the Vice-Captain's side was played with the outcome shown over.



CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION



June 1909  
A BICYCLE PUMP BE PURCHASED BY THE CLUB FOR USE BY MEMBERS. COMMITTEE AGREE.

CAPTAIN'S SIDE		VICE-CAPTAIN'S SIDE	
HO BRANDT	1	TH GAGGS	0
G JENNISON	1	JL ROSTRON	0
WM JOHNSON	1½	F ROBINSON	0
F GREEN	1	WA RATCLIFFE	0
S ASHWORTH	1¼	J EASTWOOD	0
R HYDE (CAPTAIN)	½	GA ORME (V CAPT)	0
E RITSON	0	GE ROSTRON	1
W RALPHS	1	A ROBINSON	0
CR BRADY	0	MF DICKEY	½
H NEWTON	0	FA SHARRATT	½
H ARUNDEL	0	GA GASTALL	¼
GC GREENWELL	0	HOWIE SMITH	1½
RE HANCOCK	0	H MARSHALL	1
A NEILL	0	PT TAYLOR	1½
GW TAYLOR	0	PHILIP WHITEHEAD	1
W BARKER BALE	1½	HE CORBIN	0
RW GUDGEON	1	T HUNT	0
H GREEN	1	JT HOPKINS	0
RM ETCHELS	0	B SELLERS	1½
WF BRIGGS	1	WH HADFIELD	0
WM SLACK	0	W STOCKDALE	1
JOHN HOWARTH	0	S KAY	1
G GASTALL	1	RA MURRAY	0
AE EARDLEY	0	F LOWE	1
GJ LONGSON	1¾	J STOTT	0
	14½		11¾

Herd returned to Stockport for the official opening of the course in May 1910 to take part in a 36-hole better-ball match between JH Taylor and Harry Vardon representing England and James Braid and Alex Herd representing Scotland. The Committee invited officials from all the neighbouring clubs, each member was entitled to bring five guests to the match and it was reported that a crowd of a thousand watched play during the afternoon. Unusually, the professionals were given hospitality in the clubhouse, with Mrs Angel laying on excellent meals, while spectators were provided with a marquee for refreshments. Recent heavy rain made the course soggy and the greens dead. Nonetheless, the professionals displayed 'the grace, the power, and the beauty with which they played the noble and artistic game.' In the morning, during brilliant fine weather, the English team went round in a better-ball score of 70, one ahead of the Scots. Vardon played beautifully and Herd was very consistent. Braid was the longest off the tee but was less reliable on the greens, while Taylor started poorly with the driver, although he was never in serious trouble. During the afternoon round Vardon continued his fine form on the greens, using a wooden putter, while Braid was said to have

been unlucky with his putter. Taylor recorded a two at the 160-yard 5th and Vardon made a three (*two under bogey*) at the 10th. The Scots both missed putts on the 12th to put the English side 4-up. When Taylor and Vardon took the 15th the match was over, but play continued to the end, with Taylor and Vardon this time shooting 68 while Braid and Herd could only manage a 73.

Each of the golfers expressed their admiration for the new course and Herd was particularly delighted with the way Barrie had carried out the construction. Indeed, after the match a presentation was made to Barrie with the four eminent players amongst those who crowded into the clubhouse to witness it. Arthur Briggs, the Captain, and Mayor of Stockport told of how 'many of the holes which had been played on that day were sown with wheat, and mown during the course of the previous summer. When they also remembered the bad weather which had been experienced since, they would agree with him that its present condition spoke eloquently of the splendid work done by Barrie who had been a great friend to the club. All the members liked him, and they all appreciated his excellent qualities and the devoted service he had shown in the laying out of the course.' Barrie received warm applause as Briggs presented him with a handsome testimonial.

There was further praise for Barrie: 'At the second annual general meeting of the Company, held at the Golf House, Torkington, on Saturday 28th of February 1910, the Captain, Mr Robert Hyde, presiding, an unanimous appreciation was expressed of the excellent services rendered by Mr Peter Barrie, the professional and head groundsman of the club, in laying out the new links at Torkington. The club obtained possession of the farm of 120 acres upon which the course is formed in November 1908, the land then consisting of a number of separate fields in various tillages, and in many parts quite undrained. The whole has been laid out as an excellent 18 hole course as planned by Mr Alex Herd. About 60 large bunkers have been constructed, upwards of 14 miles of drain pipes have been put in, many acres ploughed up and sown with grass, and the links made ready for play by the opening day on August 7th, 1909. The entire operations, including both manual and team labour, have been carried out by administration, and not by contract, under the sole control and supervision of Mr Barrie, and the results attained present a most eloquent testimony to the devotion, energy, and ability displayed by him in the discharge of the duties with which he was entrusted.'

ROBERT HYDE Chairman of meeting      FRANK ROBINSON Hon. Secretary



ILLUMINATED ADDRESS PRESENTED TO PETER BARRIE IN 1909