

100 years of resilience, growth and relocation

Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club



1926-2026: White-knuckle rollercoaster ride on what is
today Australia's only true island-only golf course

Forewords

Club President Geoff Harris (2024-)

The Nambucca Golf Club has come a long way since inception in 1926.

The outline of its' history, contained in this document, provides a great reflection of its triumphs and tribulations in transforming itself from a small nine-hole course on Pilot Hill to The Island Golf Course we see now on Stuart Island girt by the Nambucca River.

Our dedicated club members, Mike Post and latterly Chris Knight, have spent countless hours dedicated to the task of compiling this information and Mike and his helpers need to be congratulated, as the completed story will live as permanent record of the club's history from 1926 to the mid-point of 2026.

The original course established on Pilot Hill was reportedly a great layout with exceptional views and good playing surfaces but it fell into disrepair during the Second World War and it never recovered.

This book describes how, in 1947, the new nine-hole course on Stuart Island came into being.

The club became a public company in 1982 and in 1989, work began to expand the layout to 18 holes.

The rest, they say, is history, though the story thankfully and inevitably marches on.

Littered throughout these pages you will find continuing tales of flood and causeway angst, along with inspiring accounts of the great work by our forebears who kept piecing this golf course back together. They are the heroes here and their diligence to task must never be forgotten.

We are indeed fortunate to have a beautiful golf facility not only for our members but for the community in general as it is one of the major tourist attractions in the Nambucca Valley.

Read on and you will delight in the timeline of the Nambucca Golf Club – in words and photos - and for some it will rekindle memories while for others it may provide context on the bumpy road travelled.

Longtime club supporter Lyn Vidler (1968-)

Looking through the history it is obvious that a lot of changes have occurred on The Island.

The original nine-hole course was challenging, though still with lots of water. It became obvious that 18 holes would be an asset as the club membership grew.

The clubhouse also grew over the years to become one of the best venues in Nambucca, with marvellous views and great food. Unfortunately the causeway being affected by tides remains an ever-present concern.

All the improvements on the course and clubhouse have been possible through the hard work and dedication of many different boards, committees and ground staff over the years.

We are very fortunate to have such a flat, demanding and interesting course to play on. It attracts many visitors to the area, most returning to enjoy the course and hospitality again and again.

Thanks must go to Mike Post and his committee for the many hours spent researching and compiling this history of NHIGC.

Statewide perspective

The first reliable report of golf being played in the colony of New South Wales occurred at Grose Farm in Sydney in May 1839, on a patch of ground that now forms part of the campus of the University of Sydney and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Grazing livestock were kept on the farm. It was to say a very rudimentary nine-hole course.

The first Australian Open was played at the Australian Golf Club in 1904 and won by Michael Scott.

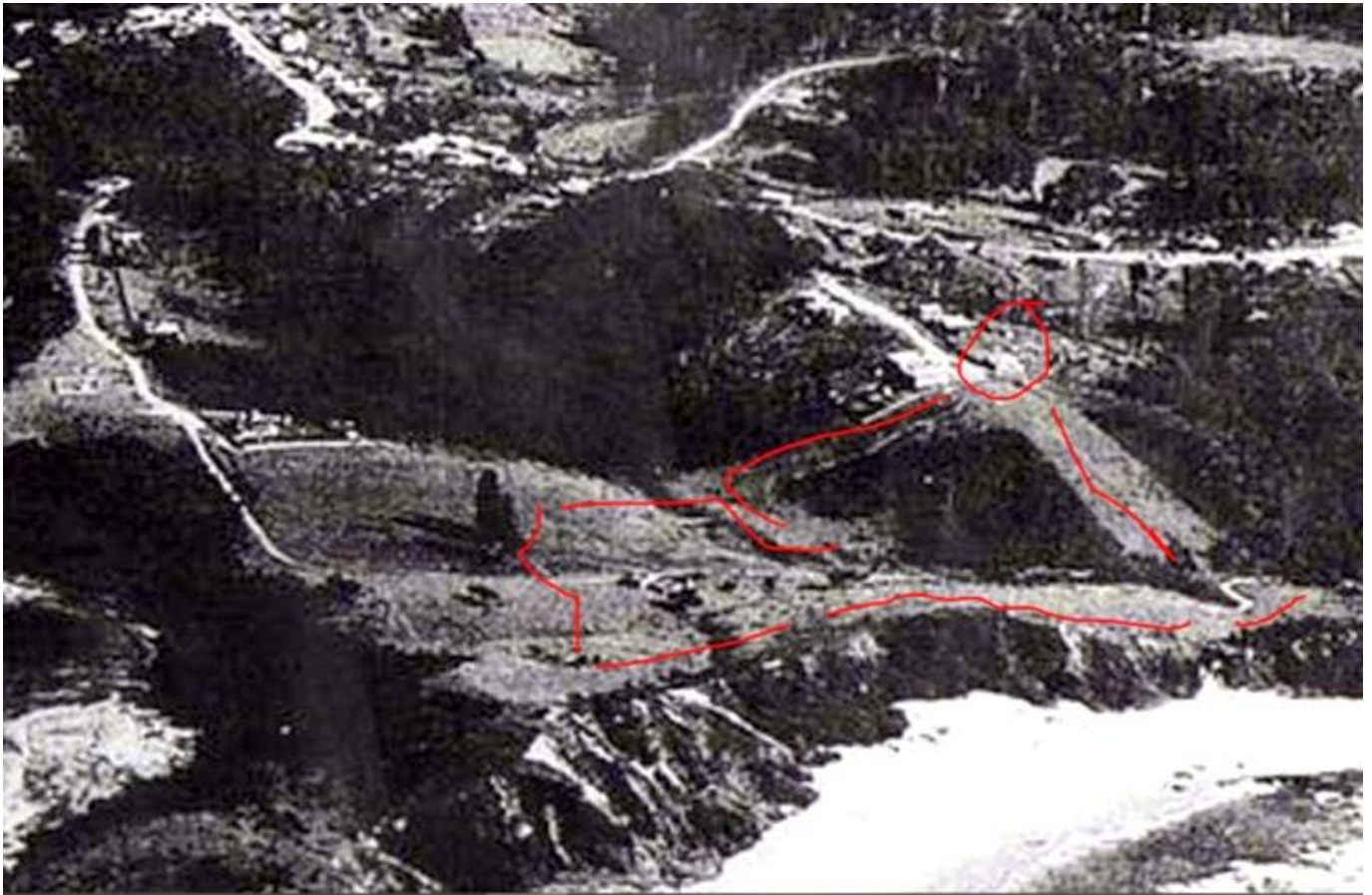
This book traces the fascinating history of the Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club, from its early days on Pilot Hill to its present location on Stuart Island.

Nambucca's first golf course

Nambucca Golf Club is celebrating 100 years of golf in 2026. The first course was situated on Pilot Hill, above Sandy Beach, opening on June 26, 1926.

The photo below gives some idea of the rough terrain (the circled area is the old clubhouse), but there was nevertheless a membership of dedicated golfers who played there in the 1930s.

Not many records of these early years are available but Judy Garner remembered that she and her cousin Don Williams played there as youngsters, as did Ken Summerville, Jack and Dolly Roberts, Bill and Daisy Young, Mary Malone and Glad Derrett. They were all prominent early members.



The following are excerpts from local newspapers, offering a glimpse into the early golfing culture in Nambucca Heads.

To the Editor



August 21, 1925

Sir. It will, no doubt, be of great interest to all your readers, but especially to those of them who are fond of golf and know "its fascination", that an enthusiastic meeting was held in the School of Arts on Saturday night last. Patron, president, secretary, and treasurer were elected — Mr. Harry Ellis, Patron; Mr. R. Beer, President; Mr. J. Haigh, Secretary, and Mr. Ken McGillivray, Treasurer.



August 21, 1925

A permissive occupancy of the land on the east and north of the Pilot Station has been granted to the Club and clearing operations will be well in hand during the next few days! It is anticipated the ground will be in order for opening early in November.

Arrangements have been made with Mr. McCarthy, the golf expert, to lay out the ground which prominent players say is one of the best in the State. In addition to the Trustees, it is suggested that the Committee of Management be in the hands of two or three Macksville and the same number of Bowraville players. A meeting will be held in the School of Arts, Nambucca Heads, on Saturday, 29th inst., at which progress will be reported and any other business enacted.



June 4, 1926

The Nambucca Heads golf links are now ready for players. A sum of over £50 has been spent on these links and they are now an added asset to the picturesque headland. Players who have tested these links declare they are the best sporting links on the Coast. Golfers are now well catered for and visiting players will be made welcome.



July 30, 1926

Golf at Nambucca Heads-
By ONLOOKER

Last Saturday afternoon witnessed one of the prettiest sights yet seen at this beautiful seaside resort. Golf players from the sister town of Bowraville joined in a friendly game on the newly-formed links. About 1 o'clock cars could be seen racing towards the Pilot Station and by 2 o'clock quite a lot of cars with their happy and expectant occupants had arrived when play commenced.

Foursomes were arranged between the Bowraville and Heads players and as they proceeded from green to green across the headland one was struck with the beauty, not only of the fair players, but with the exquisite scenery which everywhere presented itself.

As one player observed, every shot, gives one a fresh view of the beauties nature has so liberally bestowed here. Afternoon tea was served in the grounds of the Pilot House where tables and seats were kindly provided by the genial Pilot and his good wife, and as the good things were being enjoyed, the view from the grounds across the bar entrance, which is the prettiest on the Coast, was greatly admired.

At the conclusion of the games a ball was presented to Mrs. Palmer and Mr. Samuels, the winners of the first foursome played on the links, and the hope was expressed that the ball be kept by the recipients as a memento of the event.

After cheers were given for the visitors and the Pilot and his wife, the players dispersed with pleasant memories of the afternoon's outing. To those who are fond of golf and to those who would like to be fond, the Heads links possess a very great charm.



August 30, 1926

The members of the local golf club are not letting the grass grow under their feet, inasmuch as they are all working assiduously for the success of a concert to be held next week. Mr. SF McRae who is their livewire secretary, has arrangements well in hand and he is providing the lighting for the ball on this occasion from his picture show.



Nambucca Heads, circa 1915 — the old golf course is pictured, showing one bunker. The pilot's house is pictured on the top right. Head boat-man, Beilby's house is down the hill.



October 16, 1930

The Golf Links are looking more and more improved each time I visit them, and the good work of improving the greens is going on apace. They certainly reflect credit on the persons employed on the work and the turf, having been heavily cut, has lost none of its greenness.

Many of the younger players are giving good promise of making at least passable players, and should be heard of in the near-future.



November 13, 1932

Nambucca Heads, in common with the rest of the country, has been visited by the fire fiend though little damage has resulted, many anxious moments were spent by concerned locals. The cause of the fire was by some means unknown. The extension clearing for the Golf Links caught alight. Back fires were started and caused a check, but for two or three nights the glare of fire in the sky made an awe-inspiring picture and the smoke both day and night caused uncomfortable breathing and eye irritation.



23 April, 1937

NAMBUCCA HEADS

Just at present we are having a visit from an old-friend who used to be a very constant visitor, but has not been here for some years; he is Mr. Scott, who we hoped at one time would have settled amongst us. Mr. Scott is a very keen golfer and is pleased to see the great improvement to the golf course compared with what it was at his last visit.

WW11 1939-1945

World War II significantly disrupted local golfing activities. The Pilot Station's closure and reduced resources led to the original course falling into disrepair.



June 30, 1939

NAMBUCCA HEADS

After a period of partial collapse, golfing is taking on a new lease of life. A number of the younger folk are taking quite an interest in the game. On Sunday last, fifteen hit off. The greatest number for some months.



July 17, 1939

NAMBUCCA HEADS

Strolling round the headlands on Sunday last I was lucky to meet Capt. M. Triburg, President of the local Golf Club, and was taken by him to see the Club House recently purchased by the Club from the State Government. The building up to recently was the residence of one of the Pilot's crew, but owing to the temporary closing of the port the officer had been withdrawn, and the building was sold to the Golf Club.

With few alterations, it will make a very comfortable home for the Club. Its front veranda commands a splendid view of almost the whole of the course. Containing gents' room, ladies' room, dining room, pantry, bathroom, kitchen with stove complete, and a water supply from four large tanks.

The building will make an ideal place for resting after a long round on one of the best health-producing courses outside the metropolitan area.



September 1, 1939

Associates held their second open day on 27th August, all trophies being kindly donated by some of the associates, visitors and friends interested in the welfare of the Club; thirty-two players from various clubs nominated, total profits for the day being £8. Altogether, we had a very pleasant year.

M. MALONE, Associate Secretary.



November 24, 1939

Final of club championship

Last Sunday the final of the Nambucca Heads Golf Club's Championship was played. The contestants, Messrs. J. Roberts and W. Young, being well matched.

In the morning round Mr. Roberts led 2 up, the scores being 79 and 80.

In the afternoon session, Young showed his superiority, eventually winning 2 up and 1 to play. After the match Mr. R. Brown presented the winner with the Championship Cup which he will hold for the ensuing twelve months, and also a permanent souvenir with a silver-plated golf ball with stand complete containing a double inkwell.

Mr. Brown, in a few neatly chosen remarks, congratulated the winner, trusting he would retain his high standing in the club for many years.



December 15, 1939

Nambucca Heads.

The associate secretary of Nambucca Heads Golf Club reports as follows: "The number of financial associates for 1939 totalled fifteen, five of whom were active players throughout the year. During the season only twenty-one weekly competitions were held. Trophies for the weekly competitions were donated by the associates in turn. Concurrently with the weekly competitions, a point score competition was run. This concluded at the end of November, the trophy for which was won by Mrs. Roberts.

Total proceeds from weekly competitions amounted to £5/1/-. Afternoon tea, which was served every Sunday afternoon in the Clubhouse proved a good way of augmenting the funds to the extent of £3/6/6.



May 10, 1940

Nambucca Heads

The little village is very quiet at present. We have to thank the holiday-makers, who are still keeping up their number for any gathering that takes place, and as they are mostly of reserved disposition there is not much excitement.

The entrance to the river is still blocked so that even had the long-promised dredge put in an appearance it would not have "been able to cross into the river".

Golf seems rather dead at the sea sides. On Sunday last I took a stroll out to the golf course and was very disappointed to see only one foursome in progress. It seems a pity that the links should be deserted in this manner when it is considered the amount of money spent in bringing the greens and fairways to their present state of perfection.



May 26, 1940

A newspaper article announced the closure of the Nambucca Heads Pilot Station. The assumption is that this closure as well as the Second World War caused the original golf course to fall into disrepair. No records could be found to indicate that this site was used again.

The Island's back-story

When pioneer shipwright John Campbell Stuart arrived on the Nambucca in 1870, he chose the island known as Brushy Island, to set up his home and shipyards.

It is believed Stuart travelled here in one of his own ships, with his wife, family and possessions and that his home was built on what is now the 1st hole of the current golf course, near the big fig tree. The island has been known ever since as Stuart Island.

The Aboriginal residents

Stuart Island was gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve in 1883, the first known family there being the family of Frank Whaddy who farmed on The Island. They grew vegetables and planted fruit trees; the southern end of The Island was a thriving orchard.

Water was obtained from wells and was also carried across from the mainland by boat. A school was established on The Island in 1916 but was moved to the Bellwood Road Reserve in 1948. The old school building now houses part of the Historical Society Museum.

Fresh shoots at the new location

The first newspaper article found to mention The Island Golf Club at a greenfield site was dated September 2, 1947:

NEW GOLF COURSE AT NAMBUCCA HEADS

£300 will be borrowed to finance construction of greens and fairways on the projected new nine-hole golf course on Stuart Island at Nambucca Heads. This was decided at a meeting of the revived Golf Club at the Heads last week. It is hoped to have the new course ready for play within two months.

Ironically golf at The Island may never have got off the ground as back in 1928 a proposal for an aerodrome to be built on Stuart Island was gazetted. Below is an extract from the local newspaper:

July 20, 1928

Many with knowledge and authority recognise the proposed site as an ideal one and, in fact, one of the best in the State and Commonwealth.

It therefore, should behove the Council, the Nambucca district generally, and Nambucca Heads in particular, to assist and request that an expert inspection be made at the very earliest convenience, with the advisability of having Stewart Island proclaimed as the central aerodrome or 'landing ground of the future North Coast route.

For a permanent aerodrome it is advisable to have an area that will allow runs of 1000 yards; although smaller areas are set aside, judging from the wonderful progress of aviation, these, at a later date, will have to be enlarged from adjacent lands at greatly enhanced prices.

It is preferable to have a sight that is removed from such obstacles as electrical transmission and telephone lines, located in open country away from hills and mountains and surrounded by trees or high buildings.

The proposed site is admirably free from all such obstacles, with ample space for 1000 yards and upwards. As a take-off — up-stream, down-stream, across-stream or direct to sea.

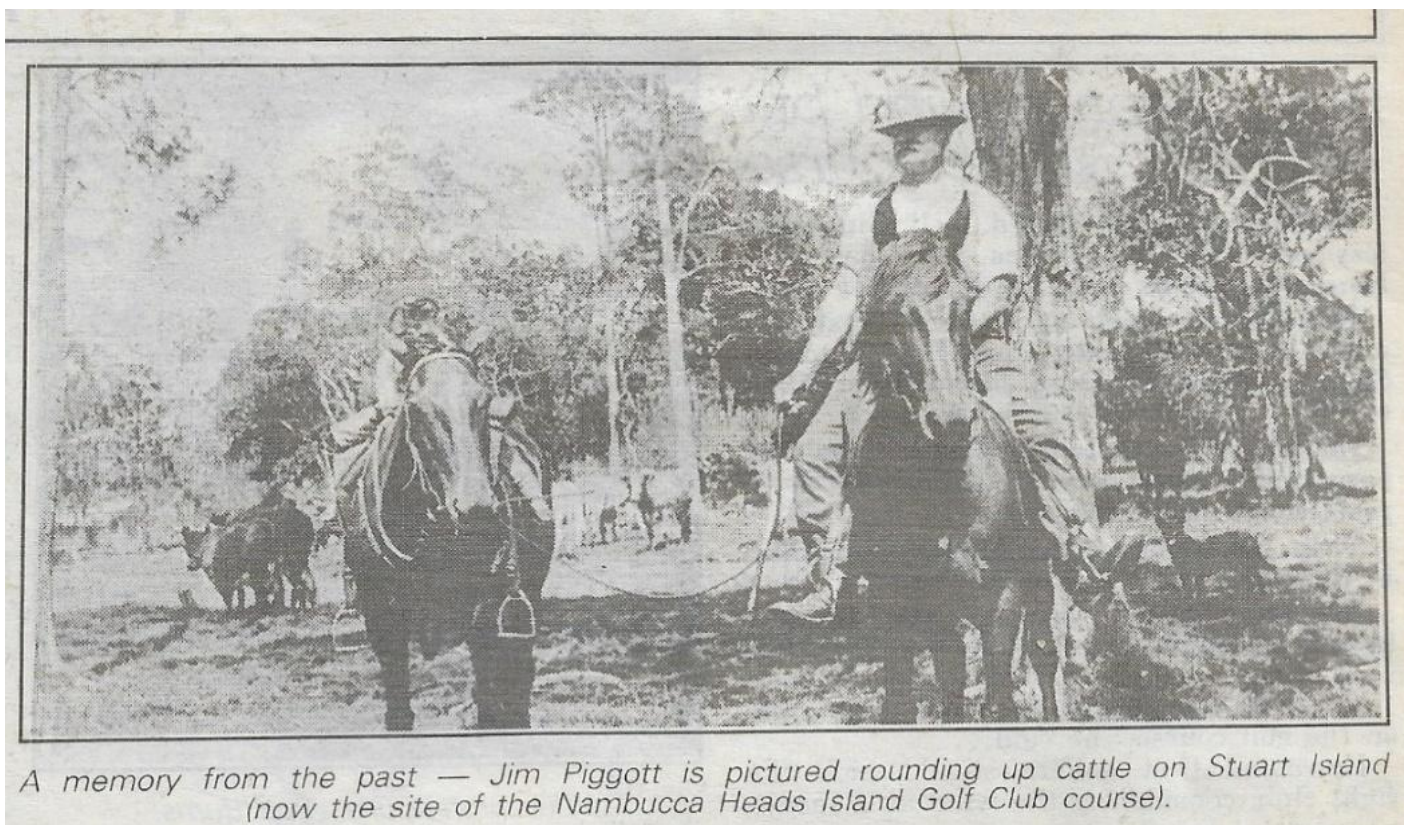
It is centrally situated as a site for the North Coast route, accessible to the Main North Coast Road by a concrete wall and sandy beach of only a couple of hundred yards, and within three-quarters of a mile from the picturesque town and far-famed pleasure resort — Nambucca Heads.

It's our good luck that this did not go any further, or we may not be enjoying the golf course we have today.



The 9th tee as it stands in 2026 – a long par four rated the hardest on the course.

After World War 2 it was decided to set about building a golf course on picturesque Stuart Island, at the time under a grazing lease to Cecil Piggott. The entire area of 80 acres was leased.



Access to The Island was by a stone causeway, at a much lower elevation than the present concrete surface.

Mr. Piggott made an agreement with the golf club allowing use of The Island and in 1952 the Lands Department subsequently declared the island a recreation reserve.

The golf club was granted a 30-year lease which would expire in November 1982. However, it was not until 1989 that the Lands Department granted a further 20-year lease under the Trusteeship of the Nambucca Shire Council.

The 1st tee was on the northern end of The Island across the creek, which then had a log bridge walkway. The log walkway was still in existence for a number of years, even after the old clubhouse burnt down. An amount of one hundred pounds was paid in insurance for the old building and the new building erected on its present site.

June 25, 1948

Nambucca Heads Golf Club's new nine-hole course on Stuart Island very favourably impressed those club members and visitors who took part in the first day's play there last Saturday week.

Though there is still considerable work to be done, the course is quite playable, due largely to the voluntary work of enthusiastic members headed by the president (Mr K Busteed) and the secretary (Mr EA Harley), the *Nambucca News* reported.

Those who played on the new links agree that it is admirably situated and is capable of tremendous development. Its picturesque location on a large, well-grassed island in the Nambucca River; and only three-quarters of a mile from the Nambucca Heads Post Office.

On one side is the main river channel, on the other a wide shallow backwater separates it from the Pacific Highway on the mainland. The course occupies almost the entire island. The fairways are bordered by scattered oak trees and there are enough natural hazards to make it a very interesting links.

Total distance of the course was 5,124 yards, and a par 68. The original course comprised parts of the existing 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 11th, 12th, 14th and 16th holes. The original clubhouse was a shed erected at The Island end of the causeway.

Cattle still grazed on The Island and a horse-drawn mower kept the grass down.

In the late 1940s and early '50s the players numbered about thirty. The greens were fenced against the invasion of cattle and lost balls in dense rough were frequent.

A greens mower was later acquired and a single fairway mower was drawn by an old jeep.

The club sought the assistance of the NSW Golf Association on a unique local rule. It reads as follows:



Ruling of NSW Golf Association 1952

Balls coming to rest in hoof marks may be lifted and dropped without penalty

This rule also applied to cow pats!

In 1950 the members set themselves a program to acquire a tractor and build a clubhouse the following year.

Plans for a simple hall-type clubhouse were prepared, its dimensions were 50ft x 25ft with a 10ft ceiling. It had a ridge roof and gable ends, outside unsewered toilets and rainwater tanks. The present site is one of three proposed, the others being respectively in the centre of The Island, and at the boat ramp the other side of the creek.

One hundred pounds was obtained from the ES & A Bank and the club was on its way.

Ken Busteed, the first President, resigned, and Fred Willis was appointed. Willis remembers that Ken Busteed had been the first member to take out a twenty-five pound debenture in the club.



The sum of three hundred and twenty pounds was raised in debentures and Cecil Woodman, the ES & A Bank manager, was approached for an advance of five hundred pounds. He agreed with some reluctance, as no security was offered.

However, with the co-operation of Col Graham (builder) together with Alex and Max Graham (mill owners) the building was completed at a cost of fifteen hundred pounds, without using bank finance. This included extension of power supply from Bellwood Park at a cost of 160 pounds.

Access to the course was by a log walkway across the creek. The Associates requested more planks be added to make it safer.

“We remember a certain well-meaning gentleman who offered to carry a lady player’s golf bag across the walkway after a long 27-hole, Open Day. The result is not hard to guess.”

This original Island clubhouse is incorporated in the present structure, but has seen many changes, additions and improvements - in fact it is difficult to remember now which is the original and which is not.



LEFT: Foundation Member Jack Roberts shows his grace and style near the new clubhouse.



The first Club Championship was conducted in 1953 and won by Alan Evans.



Alice Barnett, 1957 Ladies Champion

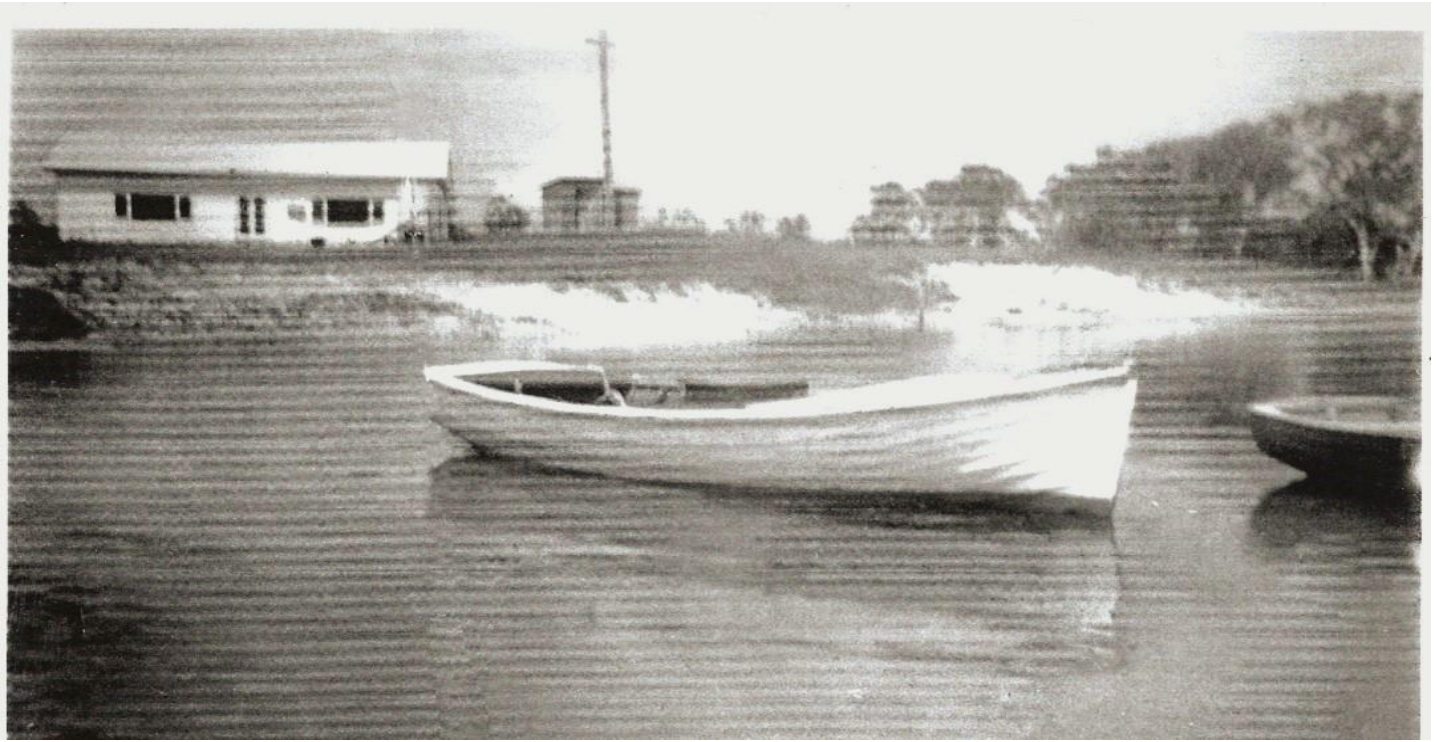


Connie Driver, 1958 – seven-time Ladies Champion



MURRAY VIEWS NO. 27. VICTORIA HOTEL, NAMBUCCA HEADS, N.S.W.

Victoria Hotel, circa 1950s. Now the site of a Woolworths supermarket, just up the hill from the present Nambucca Heads Island Golf Course.



Circa 1962. Valla Smith-Cohen's last launch, a rowboat. Also pictured is the golf club's second clubhouse (which is part of the present clubhouse), and the toilet block.

An ever-present threat at the new site



LEFT: Flood in the current 10th green area in 1957.

The floods and cyclones of the early '50s were some of the worst experienced by the club and left fairway and greens completely covered in silt and unplayable for months.

Voluntary work was an absolute necessity and this was done willingly by those early golfers, whose love of the game inspired them to great efforts.

Real progress was made when the Burns brothers, Cecil and Sid, set about building the greens at no expense to the club. Both were made Life Members and deservedly so.

Cecil was subsequently responsible for nurturing and planting hundreds of trees around the course and the construction of the barbecue area at the north-eastern end of the clubhouse (Sid Burns Senior was, we believe, the first greenkeeper).

Regrettably, financial problems beset the club and the honesty box system of collecting green fees did not prove very successful. An attempt to raise income with a 'sixpenny' poker machine failed to even cover the license fee of the machine.

Towards 1960 it was resolved to apply for a Liquor License. Alex Graham agreed to become the licensee. However it was not until 1962 that the license was finally granted. John Scholer, the Club Secretary and later Life Member, held the first license.

Fred Willis resigned the Presidency and Alan Evans began his term of office which covered the years 1962-68. He and Fred Willis were subsequently made Life Members.



The view from 9th tee area looking towards the clubhouse. Note the billy goat track across a hazard. Circa 1960s.

The course had a number of design changes during its earlier years, with the nine-hole layout being reconfigured a number of times. Two scorecards, from 1960 and 1961, show many alterations. Note: The club got its first phone line in 1960. The back of the card notes the club's phone number was '79'.

NAMBUCCA HEADS GOLF CLUB 25/4/60

HANDICAP

PLAYER M. Spencer 19

Holes	Yards	Par	H'cap	Strokes Player	X Won Lost O Half	Marker	Holes	Yards	Par	H'cap	Strokes Player	X Won Lost O Half	Marker
1	325	4	11	6		5	10	325	4	12	5		6
2	310	4	13	6		6	11	310	4	14	8		6
3	411	4	1	5		5	12	411	4	2	4		5
4	318	4	9	5		4	13	318	4	10	3		3
5	118	3	17	5		11	14	118	3	18	5		5
6	332	4	5	11		11	15	332	4	6	5		4
7	322	4	7	3		3	16	322	4	8	3		3
8	145	3	15	4		5	17	145	3	16	4		5
9	247	3	3	11		11	18	247	3	4	1		3
out	2528	33		42		110	in	2528	33		36		40
ADD SCORE FOR FIRST 9 HOLES								2528	33		12		10
GROSS TOTAL								5056	66		60		80
Date <u>25/4/60</u>							Deduct Handicap				8		14
Marker's Signature <u>[Signature]</u>							NET TOTAL				72		66

----- This Card measures six inches -----

NAMBUCCA HEADS GOLF CLUB 1961

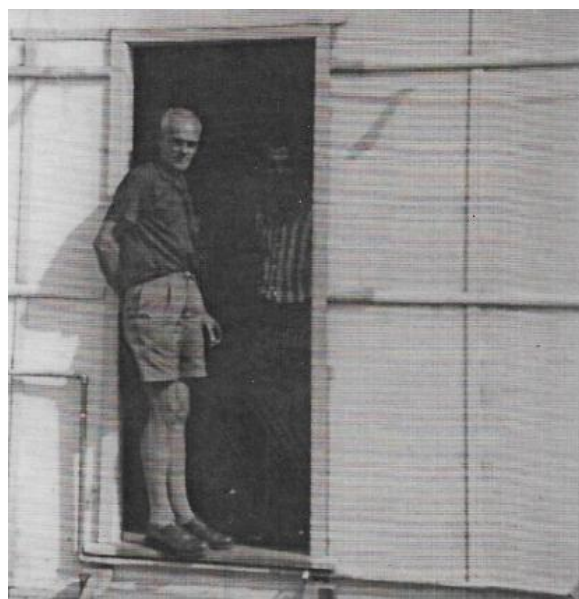
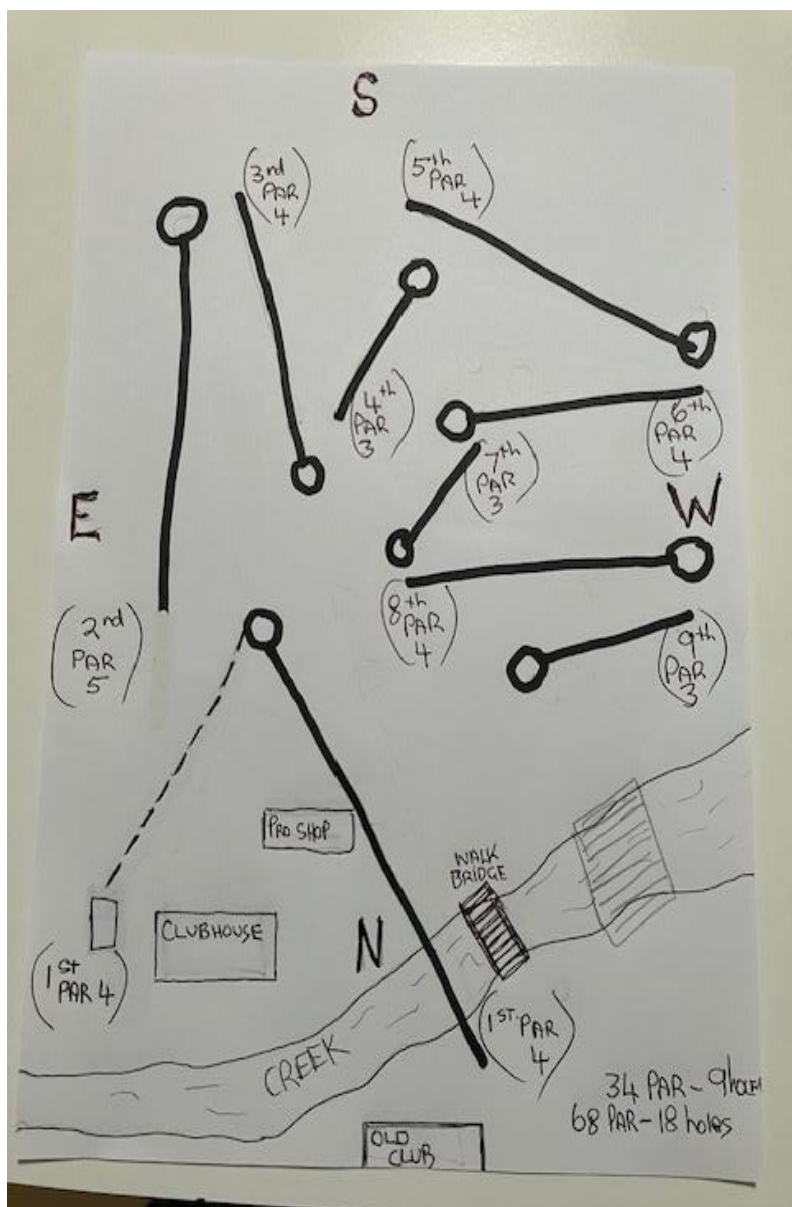
HANDICAP

PLAYER L. Tillin 1961

Holes	Yards	Par	H'cap	Strokes Player	X Won Lost O Half	Marker	Holes	Yards	Par	H'cap	Strokes Player	X Won Lost O Half	Marker	
1	384	4	5	4	3	5	2	10	384	4	6	4	3	6
2	582	5	1	7	1	7	11	582	5	2	7	1	7	
3	334	4	11	6	1	5	12	334	4	12	6		5	
4	152	3	15	4	1	3	13	152	3	16	3	2	4	
5	337	4	7	5	2	5	14	337	4	8	4	3	4	
6	339	4	9	5	2	5	15	339	4	10	4	3	5	
7	167	3	13	4	1	3	16	167	3	14	3	2	3	
8	358	4	3	5	2	6	17	358	4	4	5	2	6	
9	122	3	17	4	1	4	18	122	3	18	5	0	4	
out	2275	34			16	43	in	2275	34			16	16	
ADD SCORE FOR FIRST 9 HOLES								2275	34		16		18	
GROSS TOTAL								4550	68		30		34	
Date <u>6/10/61</u>							Deduct Handicap							
Marker's Signature <u>[Signature]</u>							NET TOTAL							

Note the course was 500 yards longer in 1960 compared to 1961, according to the scorecards.

Below is a sketch of the 1961 layout when the first tee was north of the creek, with a log walkway to the fairway. The tee was moved to its current position when the new clubhouse was completed in 1962.



ABOVE: Doug Nicholas standing at what was then the front door of the clubhouse.

1966

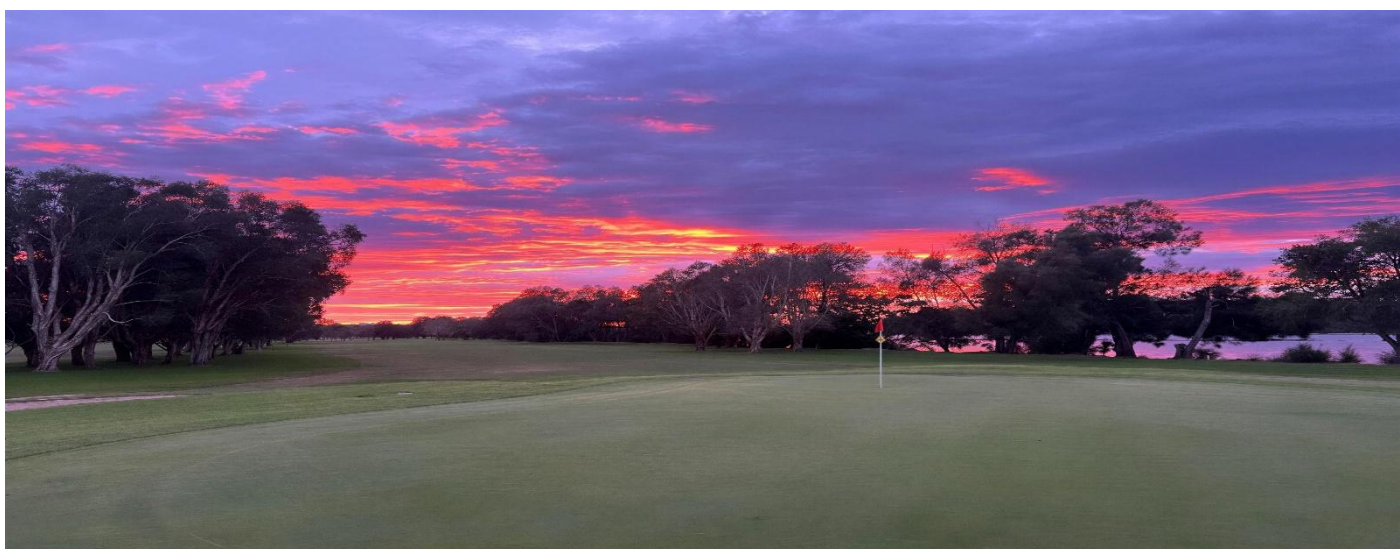
The club appointed its first Secretary Manager, Doug Nicholas.

Doug not only attended to the needs of the club but spent many hours on course maintenance.

Club records reveal he often worked in excess of 70 hours per week. Doug was Secretary Manager from 1966 to 1972.

1967

Mrs Daisy Young becomes the first Associate to receive Life Membership.



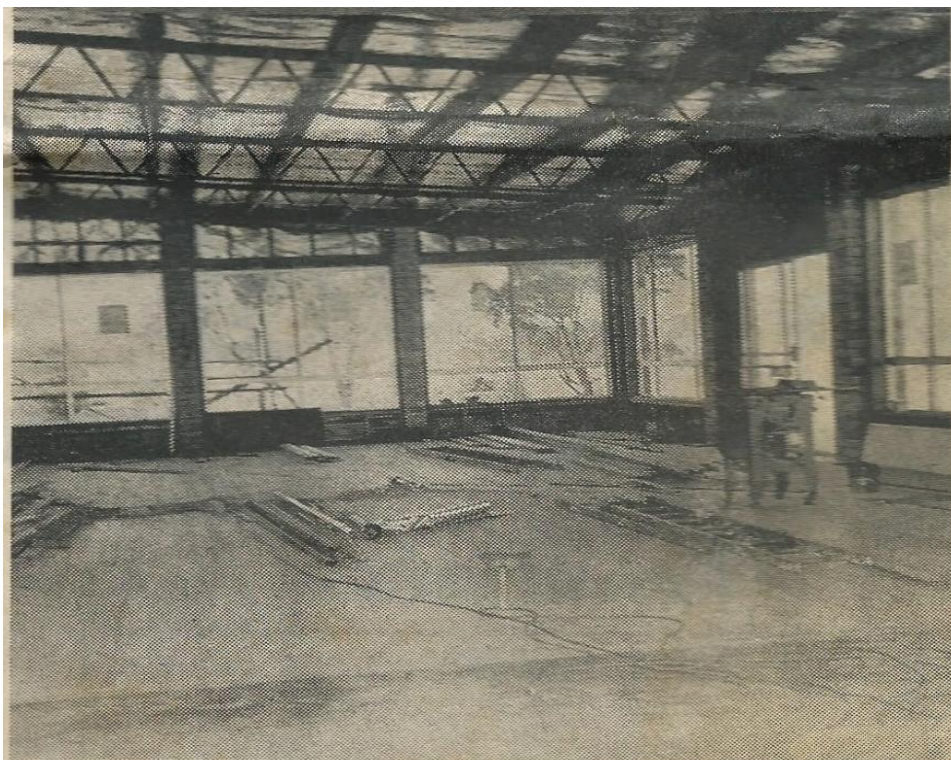
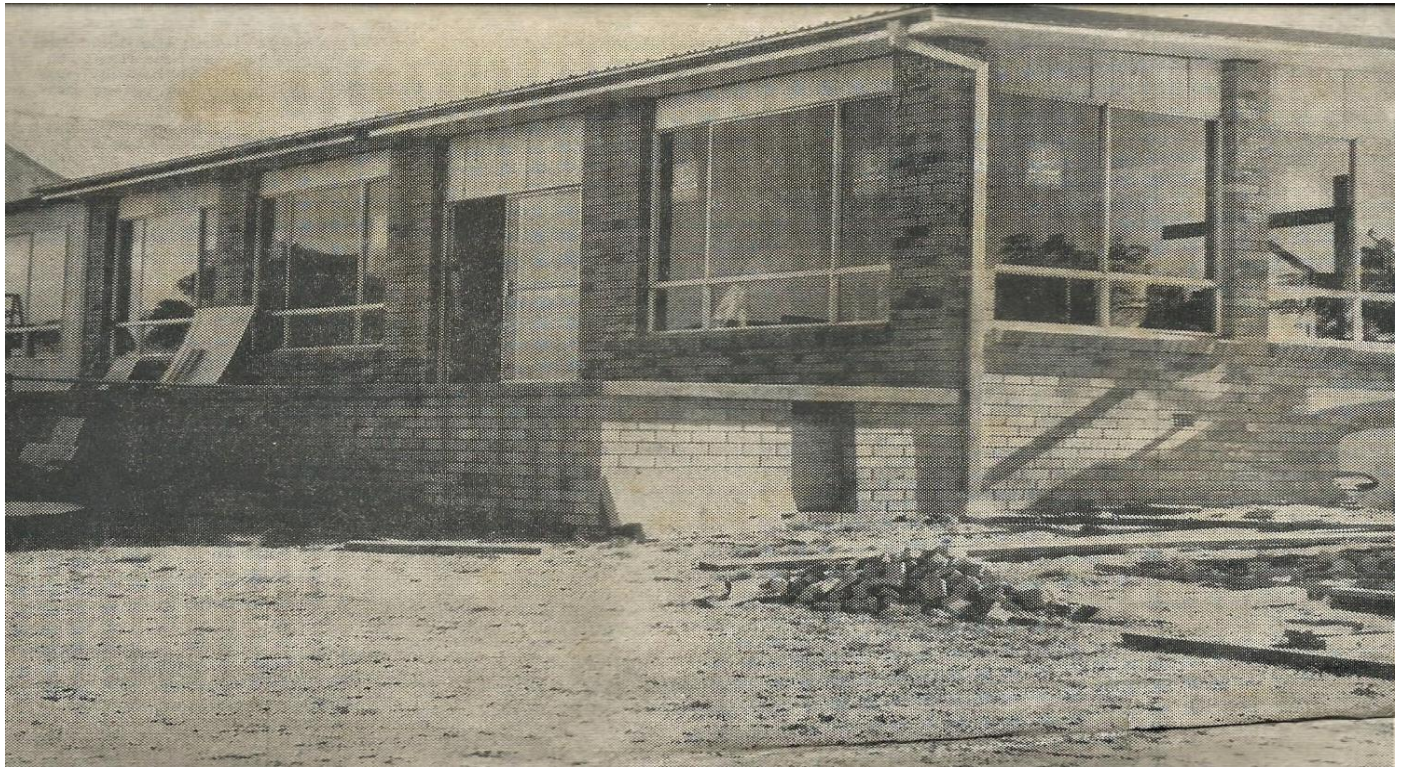
The 2nd green as it is in 2026 – a tricky par 5 where many a ‘Moose’ (score of 10) has been recorded.

1971

Fees are raised to \$15 for Members and \$7.50 for Associates.

Fred Willis is made a Life Member. The first Orange Grove visit is organised by Geoff Kelly. Orange Grove, a reciprocal club near Liverpool, brought 35 players to Nambucca Heads by coach.

Extensions are made to the clubhouse, but with a warning from the Treasurer, "unessential spending must be curbed".



*TOP: The new brick and fibro Party Room being added to the Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club. The patio facing the river can also be seen.
ABOVE: Inside the party room looking out.*

The first Guide Dogs Appeal Golf Day was held. Ray Townend, the organiser, was also responsible for much work in beautification of the grounds.

The clubhouse is carpeted by the Associates out of funds raised from catering weddings, balls etc.

According to noted bird watcher, Neville Crompton, 147 types of bird life have been identified on The Island at various times.

The club becomes a co-operative. H Waugh becomes a Life Member. The first Secretary Manager, Doug Nicholas, resigns.

The first move towards assessing the feasibility of an 18-hole course is made following a suggestion from Morrie Miles. Peter Jackman offers to make inquiries about employing a golf architect but reports this will cost a great deal of money.

Bill Spry, Hon Secretary, reports that council and the Public Works Department will not agree to any filling in of backwater on The Island.

An 18-hole course is deemed not possible and even 12 holes would be congested. Accordingly, alternative sites for a golf course are investigated, including a 150-acre area stretching from Swimming Creek to Hyland Park.

In addition to the club's four, 5-cent, and nine, 10-cent, poker machines, a 2-cent machine is installed with proceeds directed to Guide Dogs.

As the club and course progressed so too did demands on finance increase. Severe floods at times added to the problems.

Don Ellis was appointed Secretary Manager and had to report a serious loss of revenue due to flooding.

The squash courts are built at a cost of \$10,000.

1974

At 8.45pm on 10 June the Committee Meeting is adjourned because of rising flood waters. The flood coincided with King Tides, and damage to the course is extensive. Silt covered much of the course and as a result of salt water 'burn-off' it is many months before fairways recover and turn green.



Salt burn (as seen above) can be the cruel aftermath of flooding on the coast, adding layers of challenge to plant regrowth.

Darrell Shields is appointed Greenkeeper and is subsequently responsible for many changes and improvements to the golf course.

Darrell recalls the state of the course when he accepted the job.

“When I took over it was completely covered with mud.

The only part that wasn’t affected by floodwater was the clubhouse area.

And the next year we had it all again.

I remember the rain starting on Mothers’ Day and the arrival of unusually high tides in June and July.

And in 1976 ... another flood.

Actually, 1976 was the worst because it was in winter time and there was no growth.

It took about a month for the course to even dry out, as we waited for good westerly winds to aid the process.

We had working bees come in to pull all the mud off the greens, some had two to three inches of mud on them.

Since that time, large drains have been added to help drain the course faster.

Though the drains do not prevent major floods, they can provide valuable assistance in removing water and therefore reduce any possible damage to the course.”



Darrell and staff

Meanwhile, the club welcomed its 500th Member, Mrs D Elliott, inviting her to dinner and presenting her with flowers.

The Ballroom extension and new Associates Room is opened.

1975

Price of beer raised to 32 cents for a middy and 41 cents for a schooner. Life Membership conferred on Ron Greenshields.

1976

Mrs Marj Ellis is employed in full time clerical duties. Alterations to the course cost \$2,800 and the President's allowance is raised to \$5 per week.

1977

The first talk of bunkers emerges. Associates supply carpet around the dance floor and padded chairs for dining area.

1978

Mike Ryan and Ken Summerville suggest three sand bunkers and a new 8th green. Purchase of land around clubhouse is initiated. Raising of causeway is considered urgent and further negotiations are held with council.

1979

Machinery purchase is prioritised and bunker construction is deferred. \$110,000 is expended on alterations to the clubhouse and new furnishings. The first Melbourne Cup Day Concert is staged by the Associates and is a great success.



Roll forward to 2026 – The Island is a magnificent layout, ranked one of the best on the NSW North Coast.

1980

8th green is reconstructed. Bunkers now in play on 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th with new tees on 3rd, 5th and 8th. Plans are drawn up for a Pro Shop.

1981

Bunker on 2nd is recommended for removal or fill-in!

1982

The club becomes a Public Company. Bill Gordon is elected Captain and the inaugural meeting of the Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club Ltd is convened.

1983

RD Passmore was elected President and Ian Vidler elected Captain. Mr Passmore remained in office until 1995. Ian Vidler takes on presidency of the Mid North Coast District Golf Association and Ray Colahan becomes Club Captain. Life Membership is bestowed on Bill Gordon and Mrs Joan Gough.

The members vote in favour of proceeding with an 18-hole course. In May 1983, Associates President Val Ryan approached Miss Pat Borthwick (a former Australian champion) for advice on changing the existing 9 tees to 18 tees to add interest to the course. Her advice proved invaluable then, and subsequently when the revised course came into being. A committee was formed comprising Miss Borthwick, Val Ryan and Nealis Davis. With the help of John Starr, a surveyor, the work was completed by the end of that year.

1986

A new greenkeepers' shed was built at a cost of \$30,000.



1987

Mrs M Ellis is appointed Secretary Manager.

Bob Burns (pictured left) becomes the first club professional and the club gains its first Pro Shop.

Bob was the son of Sid and Jackie, prominent club members.

He trained under Bill McWilliams at Beverly Park, Sydney.

Paul Simons and Col Lynch are also elected to the Board and both men later put in many hours of voluntary work in connection with the proposed new course.

Approximately \$250,000 is spent on a new dining room, kitchen and catering equipment.

1989

The club pays \$10,000 to council toward the upgrade of the access road through Bellwood Park. The new lease is secured. The development application is approved by council and construction of the 18 holes begins, Ross Watson designer.

Jean Philipson becomes the first woman elected to the board. The Associates officially become 'Lady Members'. The club records a record net operation profit of \$110,623.

Work begins on 18-hole layout



Somewhat surprisingly, the first mention of an 18-hole course was made in 1972.

Alternative sites to The Island were investigated on and off over the years, notably an area of land at Swimming Creek, another along the highway towards Macksville and a further site on the Farrington Estate.

None of these proved viable.

Golf architects were engaged from time to time and at the 1985 AGM a vote was taken to decide whether the project should go ahead. The motion was carried.

In 1989 it was planned to phase in three new holes per year over the next three years.

John Allen & Associates were employed to submit a development application (DA) to council, though this required an archaeological survey which was done by Mrs Elizabeth Rich. The DA was subsequently approved.





A course construction committee was formed, consisting of Paul Simons (Chairman and Construction Supervisor), Ian Vidler (Club Captain), Col Lunch, Ken Summerville, Trevor Eichmann and Bob Burns (Club Professional).

The board agreed to accept the Course Plan (an adoption of Ross Watson's first design) and to push ahead.

The idea of phasing in three new holes per year was rejected and a loan was secured from the State Bank for \$400,000 to proceed with the new nine holes. It was a formidable sum and commitment at the time.

Heavy machinery was a common sight on the course over the next year or so.

Dams, which subsequently added beauty and interest to the course, were dug, and fill for the course was obtained from these works. The club was dogged, mainly in the early construction stages, by the 'big wet' and was fortunate to get Merv Hayward to oversee the work. Merv was a golf course construction expert with a long list of credits to his name. The 18-hole course was completed at a cost of \$476,000 and was first played at its full length on 2 May 1992.





Camera roll, the new 9 takes shape







Construction was a massive undertaking.





The 14th hole, an 111-metre par 3 for the ladies.

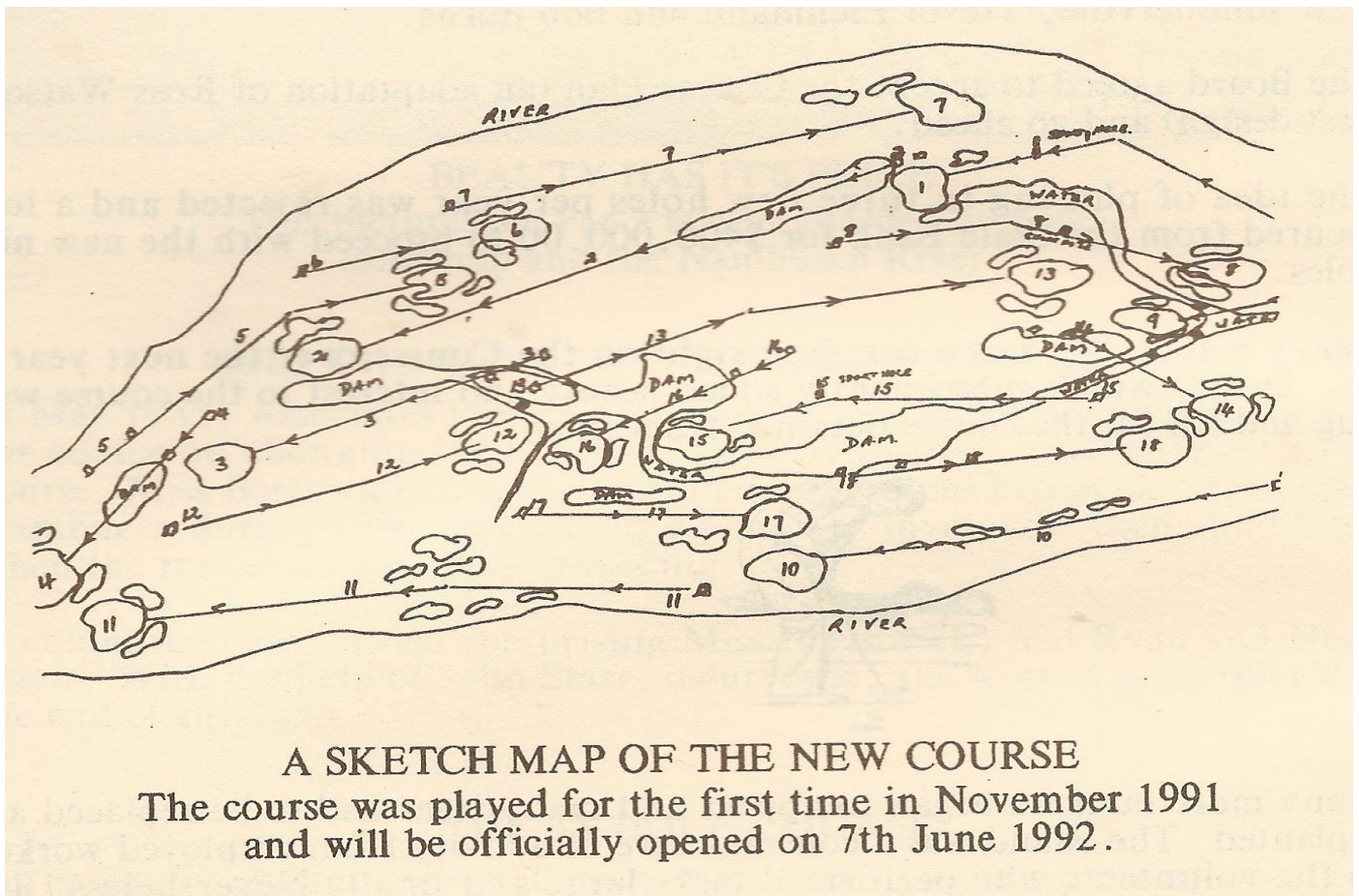
4BBB LI MIXED LI 4/SOMEST LI AGILE LI AMBRI LI

PLAYER *Members First Comp Played 2/5/92* COMP./No. HANDICAP

PLAYER *Lady Mem. " " 6/5/92* COMP./No. HANDICAP

HOLE	MEMBER			LADY MEMBER			PLAYER	MARKER			HOLE	MEMBER			LADY MEMBER			PLAYER																																																								
	METRES	PAR	INDEX	METRES	PAR	INDEX		METRES	PAR	INDEX		METRES	PAR	INDEX	METRES	PAR	INDEX																																																									
1	326	4	3/23	301	4	3					10	357	4	6/24	348	5	16																																																									
2	490	5	8/26	464	5	5					11	482	5	10/28	473	5	4																																																									
3	300	4	15	279	4	11					12	292	4	16	287	4	13																																																									
4	130	3	17	96	3	18					13	457	5	14	451	5	6																																																									
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MATCHPLAY HANDICAP <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Hole</th> <th>1</th><th>2</th><th>3</th><th>4</th><th>5</th><th>6</th><th>7</th><th>8</th><th>9</th><th>10</th><th>11</th><th>12</th><th>13</th><th>14</th><th>15</th><th>16</th><th>17</th><th>18</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Member</td> <td>10</td><td>8</td><td>12</td><td>3</td><td>14</td><td>8</td><td>10</td><td>7</td><td>10</td><td>5</td><td>11</td><td>2</td><td>18</td><td>7</td><td>13</td><td>4</td><td>17</td><td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WOMEN</td> <td>8</td><td>4</td><td>12</td><td>18</td><td>10</td><td>14</td><td>2</td><td>1</td><td>16</td><td>5</td><td>1</td><td>11</td><td>3</td><td>17</td><td>15</td><td>13</td><td>7</td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>																		Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Member	10	8	12	3	14	8	10	7	10	5	11	2	18	7	13	4	17	8	WOMEN	8	4	12	18	10	14	2	1	16	5	1	11	3	17	15	13	7	
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DEDUCT HANDICAP NET TOTAL																																																																										
MARKER'S SIGNATURE <i>Official Opening of 18 Hole</i> PLAYER'S SIGNATURE <i>Golf Course 7/6/92</i> VISITOR'S CLUB DATING: MEMBERS NSWGA & Lady Members NSWGA 67																																																																										
LOCAL RULES (To be used in conjunction with Rules) 1. OUT OF BOUNDS: Silver bank unless defined by white posts. 2. STAKED TREES: When a tree marked by the stake interferes with a player's stroke, the ball must be lifted and dropped within one club length of the nearest point where the ball came to rest and not nearer the hole. 3. IMMOVABLE OBSTRUCTIONS: Stakes and markers defining hazards are treated as immovable obstructions (Rule 31-2). 4. FENCED AREA: 4/13 and 5/14th is to be treated as G.U.R. and play is to be continued. 5. BALL HITTING OVERHEAD WIRES & PO MUST BE REPLAYED																																																																										

The first Lady Members competition on the 18-hole course was held on 6 May 1992. Note that what is today the back nine was the front nine back in the day. But the compulsory replay without penalty applied to a ball hitting the overhead power lines just as it does in 2026.



Official opening of 18-hole course on 7 June 1992

Celebrations as the new layout came into play stretched all the way to Bowra Street at the top of town.

For the turf nerds, the fairways were grassed with a mix of common and blue couch, with areas of kikuyu and carpet grass.

The greens were Penncross Bent, providing an excellent surface.

Today's greens are still predominantly Penncross with some selected Poa Annua. The fairways are Santa Anna couch.





Board of Directors 1992

(From left, front) R Edmonds, R Butters, R Passmore, P Simons, M Ellis,
(back) K Summerville, R Lang, M Miles, T Eichmann and J Philipson



Phil Stewart, who was a high school teacher at Macksville, designed the club logo which is distinctive compared to the oft used crossed golf sticks used by many others. Legend has it the unique design was anointed – incorrectly - to be a pelican's foot. Those who can't be trifled with explain that what appears to be an inverted flagstick represents the causeway crossing the blue of the Nambucca River to reach the green grass of Stuart Island. The yellow top half of the ball is said to represent the sun and the lower white half is a nod to a traditional golf ball.



In the early days of the new 18-hole layout a popular activity for members was the 'River Drive' – a contest to see if anyone could launch a ball from the first tee and make landfall on the other side of the estuary. Interest in this competition surged when it coincided with barbecues for participants and onlookers. Inevitably, this came to a sudden halt when some likely lads were holding their own version of the event and chose a fisherman in a tinny as a more achievable target. The fisho pulled anchor and went to the local constabulary to bitterly complain. And that's the story behind the current sign which notes hitting balls into the river is forbidden.



1993

The club undertook a project to drill for water but no suitable sources were found.

1995

Saw many changes with a new Secretary Manager, office staff, caterers and club professional as resident pro Bob Burns retires. This coincided with prolonged periods of extremely wet weather, causing the closure of the causeway on many occasions. The lack of access to the clubhouse and course gave a net operating loss for the year of \$103,712.



1997: Christmas lunch (above) served 240 diners.

LEFT: Scott Mayo, club professional from 1998 to 2003.



Scott Mayo teaching in front of his new pro shop under construction. It was completed in late 1998.

1998

131 days of rain for the year, \$50,000 spent on poker machines upgrade, \$50,000 spent on the riverfront deck and air conditioning (stage one) and \$57,000 spent on new course machinery.

Notable Club Champions

The Burns Brigade

The name Burns is synonymous with Nambucca Golf Club, starting with Sid Senior who is believed to be the club's first green keeper. Sid Snr had two boys, Cecil and Sid Junior. Cecil and Sid were golfing opposites, Cecil a lefty with a well-worn set of clubs but a great eye and fine touch. Sid won the club championship five times from 1958 to 1964. His wife, Jackie, won the Ladies Championship in 1961 but only after Alice Barnett nee Burns (Sid's sister) had won three of the previous four. Then it was Cecil's son Brian's turn. Over a period from 1967 to 2013 his name appears on the championship honour board 20 times.

In the middle of his reign, Sid's son Robert (Bobby) won four times before turning professional.



Brian Burns



Ian Vidler

Ian Vidler

Club champion eleven times: 1970, '72, '74, '75, '84, '86, '89, '94, '95, '97, '98

Club Captain 2003, '04, '07, '08, '09

A school teacher, Vidler joined the club in 1967, winning five Championships before moving to Gunnedah in 1975 where he retained a Country Membership at The Island.

Vidler represented the club at open days, pennants, Teams Cups, Country Week in Sydney (winning in 1973), Heron Cup and Jacaranda Cup in Grafton. He was a member of the Mid North Coast side which played against the NSW team at Nambucca.

Nambucca's pennant team of a time included Sid Burns, brother Cecil Burns, Brian Burns, Russell Burns (the latter two Cecil's sons) and Vidler, who became known as the adopted Burns.

Vidler returned to Nambucca in 1982, winning a further seven championships from 1984 till 1998. An enthusiastic volunteer for all levels of golf and a dedicated worker for his club.

He was nominated for Life Membership in 2018.



Ashton Herbert (pictured above) won the club's Junior Championship four straight times, 2022-'25, in a period when the club struggled for junior members – but you can play only what is front of you.

Anne Wilson

Women's Champion (inset) an amazing 12 times: 1983, '84, '85, '95, '96, '97, '98, '99, 2000, '01, '02, '03



The 7th hole today is a long par three with water short, long, left and right.



Photo, April 1999: (From left) Linc Urquhart, Glen Sipple, Darrell Shields, Paul Summerville and new superintendent Bruce Kelsey

1999

Greenkeeper Darrell Shields ('Cobber') retires after 25 years of service.

Below is a speech given by Keith Messervey at a gathering to wish Darrell farewell from Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club and share some of his achievements over his 25 years as Head Greenkeeper.

DARRELL SHIELDS 30th APRIL 1999.

Members and guests, welcome to the Island Golf Club. It is pleasing to see so many present on this historic occasion, a day which should be remembered in the annals of this Club for on this 30th day of April 1999 we mark the occasion of the retirement after 25 years of our Course Superintendent or Head Greenkeeper Darrell Shields known to most of you as "Cobber".

The Board have decided that there will be an official function later in the year on a date TBA after the return of Darrell and his cohorts from holiday. Today is informal but I would like to say a few words as Chairman of the Green Committee.

I've been a member of this Club for 11 years with the last 4 years on Green Committee working closely with Darrell and his team. It has been a most rewarding time for me.

This Club exists because of the Golf Course. A course which is widely regarded as one of the best in this part of NSW with greens the envy of many. This I believe is due to the efforts of one man above all others. That man is Darrell Shields.

Yes it required a team effort but Darrell took the decisions and shouldered the responsibility. He is very much a hands-on, do-as-I-do leader not do-as-I-say. That the course is regarded as a gem is reinforced by the number of accolades coming from visitors who seem to appreciate what we have here even more than we do.

The Course is still under construction and probably always will be for that is the nature of golf courses, but Darrell has delivered us a course of which we can be proud. It has inherent problems. When extended to 18 holes under a limited budget short cuts were taken, inferior materials and poor construction practices were used which has resulted in increased maintenance costs now. All this he has taken in his stride but of course not without complaint.

He did not always receive 100% backing from the Board nor the Members. In return he always gave 100%. Having taken the job he could be relied upon to give it his best shot because that's the way he is. Always conscious of the need to cut costs he has kept waste to a minimum. Being capable and unable to say no he was often called upon to do work not expected of a greenkeeper.

I thank him for being indulgent when confronted with Green Committee ideas and for assistance given to finish jobs when they proved more than volunteers could handle. This sometimes meant a change to his work plans.

He has an awesome record. Not many could claim never to have lost a green over 25 years. Rarely has he had to take a green out of play for remedial works.

Sadly fellow members we come to the end of an era. But, all is not lost. Over those 25 years Darrell has trained at least 6 apprentices. He was able to train them in all aspects of the job including machinery maintenance and they achieved excellent results. It may come as a surprise to some that 4 of those 6 make up the present team. So Darrell's influence will continue. He knows the job will be in capable hands.

I came to the job knowing nothing of the complexities of greenkeeping. I have learned enough to know it can be thankless and unrewarding. But not for me. Under Darrell's direction I have learned a little about the usefulness of an absolutely vital piece of greenkeeping equipment. Yes, some of you of course will know I am talking about the chipping hoe. You can do a lot with a chipping hoe.

Members, the Green Staff and Green Committee have pooled their resources to purchase for the Club a modern equivalent so that we can present this particular chipping hoe to Darrell. It happens to be the very implement that Darrell used to instruct each and every one of his apprentices and it seems appropriate that it take its place amongst his prized possessions. I have reason to believe that Jeanette will insist it be taken on their forthcoming trip for as I said you really can do a lot with a chipping hoe. I'll read what's on the card. "Presented to Cobber to mark the end of an era on 30th April 1999, with great respect from the team at the Island Golf Club". It goes on with what appears to be a list of instructions which I don't propose to read.

I believe that Darrell's hallmark qualities are his complete knowledge of local conditions and his dedication to the job. It has been said that on hot summer evenings he has turned to Jeanette and said "I can hear those greens calling for a drink". Sure enough on checking he has found the automatic watering system has malfunctioned and he has saved the day by hand watering. If I had anything to do with giving out life memberships of this Club Darrell Shields would be on top of my list.

Jeanette. What part has she played in all this? Darrell could not have accomplished what he has without co-operation at home. Members we owe them both a debt of gratitude. Will you please give 3 cheers for Darrell and Jeanette?

May your retirement be long and happy with plenty of time for playing the game of golf and plenty of time for fishing. Enjoy your holiday.

SINCERE THANKS TO KEITH MESSERVEY FOR PROVIDING
US WITH A COPY OF HIS SPEECH.
C. Marshall

2001

The club dealt with four different caterers over the year, two severe floods incurring repair costs of \$30,000 and to top it off three break-ins to the clubhouse. We also had an ACCC investigation to sort out. All this gave the club a loss of \$66,843 for the year. On the sunny side, a successful Pro-am was hosted.

2003

New Pro Steve Barnes started in September, serving through to 2017.



2005 Nambucca Valley Jazz Group on the deck on Sunday afternoons.

2007

Forty-three days of heavy rain.

This, along with the introduction of no smoking in registered clubs and hotels, had a detrimental impact on revenue, especially the poker machine area.

The club hosted its 12th WOG (Veterans Week of Golf) and this event continues to be a success to the modern day. The board had been negotiating to obtain a course rental reduction but is informed that rather than a reduction there are plans to increase the rental to \$22,000 per year in 2010.



It looks majestic but this is the 8th tee popping its head above flood waters.

2008

Another wet start, with 57 days of rain and three flood events over a four-month period.

Better weather followed along with some good news that the Board's continuing efforts to obtain a lease rental reduction had been accepted and a yearly fee of \$7,500 had been finalised.

2009

Attention swung back to golf. Both the Srixon Challenge and Top Gun shootout were introduced and proved very popular. On the business front were two major projects. The first being the installation of a 40-kilowatt solar energy system, the second the construction of a cart shed

2010

Down came the rain, the wettest on record, with a massive flood closing the course and causeway from June 12. Out came the sun to coincide with the completion of the solar energy venture, which by the way, was self-funded through rebates. More renovations were made to the clubhouse.



2011

The cart shed was completed at a cost of \$26,000. This was somewhat negated by flood grants amounting to \$15,000.

2012

More rain, two natural disaster flood events for the year. Retaining block walls were incorporated into the reconstruction of tees on the 6th, 10th, & 18th. Preliminary meetings began regarding another possible Native Title Claim on the course.

2014

More floods, of course! February this time and remaining wet through to May. Another unwanted incident was an armed robbery in the clubhouse.

2015

Road works on Riverside Drive severely limited club access for three months.

The Secretary Manager was dismissed for fraud in excess of \$120,000. Council and Australian Tax Office (ATO) payments had also not been met by the S/Mgr. Loan arrangements had to be put in place. A figure of \$95,000 was recovered from insurance in 2017.

Council refused a request to reduce water rates and also denied responsibility for Access Bridge repairs amounting to \$80,000.



Regular player and local legend Trevor Peck pulled off the shot of the century in 2026 when his tee shot on the short 13th somehow found its way inside the small outhouse.

Thankfully, he was able to take relief.

With a little help from our friends

The lean years of 2017 to 2022 saw volunteers save the club from financial overload.

In November 2017 the Board was faced with many challenges which were tackled in three stages.

The first was to raise \$100,000 to avoid closing the doors. Donations from members, a members' raffle, and the sale of some long-term memberships and poker machine entitlements, kept the club afloat.

The second stage was to move the club to a position where it could return a surplus. The net result of a \$20,000 shortfall was achieved by utilising a large number of volunteer bar staff. Most external contracts were either terminated or renegotiated. Short term debts were paid and a taxation bill was deferred. By June 2019 the club started to reap the benefits of all the hard work by the members, the Board and the dedicated effort of many volunteers.

Stage three was to move the club towards a financial surplus for the foreseeable future. The biggest move toward guiding the club back into a secure position was the appointment of a Secretary Manager.

An unofficial fourth stage was recognising the inevitability of flood. When this happens, the club understood it must react quickly to minimise the drain on finances.

Extracts from annual reports over these years

2017-18 Volunteer members took on jobs such as manning the bar alongside permanent staff, working on maintaining the golf course and most importantly raising funds through many and varied (legal) avenues.

Veronica Lamb joined Julie Garvie to become the heart of the administrative office. Brendan Graham completed his first years Course Curator amid rave reviews of the improvements made to the course.

COURSE RECORD

LESTER PETERSON

Wednesday, May 02, 2018

82 - Lester Peterson (Bardwell Valley Golf Club)

Start time 8:50 AM Hole 10

Round 2

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
Metre	354	477	283	459	140	326	175	152	374	2740
Par	4	5	4	5	3	4	3	3	4	35
Score	3	6	3	4	4	3	3	2	5	33

Marker's signature

Marker	5	5	3	5	4	4	4	2	6	
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Men's NSW Senior Amateur Championship

Wednesday, 21 Mar 2018

The Island Golf Club

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	Total
325	489	302	123	331	151	385	315	120	2541	5281
4	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	34	69
5	5	4	2	3	3	4	4	2	32	65

Player's signature

5	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	3		
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Gross	HCP	Nett
65	0	65

The Men's NSW Senior Amateur Championships was played at Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club in May 2018. The winner was Lester Peterson from Bardwell Valley Golf Club in Sydney. In the second of three rounds, his score of 65 set the new course record and gave him a strong lead over the field. His round included 8 birdies.

2018

Steve Barnes departed as the Club Professional and Paul Habgood (pictured left) became the new professional. Habgood was the head professional at Kempsey Golf Club from 1998 -2002, then head professional at Toowoomba Golf Club from 2002-2017.

Lady golfers reported a total of 68 members and regular fields of 40 players each Wednesday.

From the Annual Report of Treasurer Andy Johnston the following points were made:

Debts for the year were approximately \$54,000 to the Tax Office and \$435,000 to the Commonwealth Bank.

There is a need to raise cash turnover by \$100,000.

Projected loss for 2018-2019 is \$60,000.

There is a definite need to continue voluntary work.





2019

Saw substantial improvement to the club's financial position due to stringent cost control. The previous year's deficit of \$20,000 was replaced with a surplus. Special mention must be given to all the many and varied volunteers, especially the 'Return and Earn' gang who raised \$10,000 with their bottle collection campaign.

The biggest move toward a stable financial position was the employment of Johnathon Zirkler (pictured left) as Secretary-Manager.

During the year renovations were made to the men's toilet area and a new air conditioner was installed on the club's roof. The women members also made substantial financial contributions toward improvements to the bunkers on 18, refurbishing the office/administration areas and updating the computer systems.

Brendan Graham, his staff and volunteers, continued improvements to the 6th and 17th fairways to breakdown the salt content in the soils.

Kerry McCoy decided not to stand for re-election as Captain after 10 years on the Board. His service included one year as

President, two as Vice-Captain and seven as Captain. Kerry was posthumously made a Life Member one year later. New head greenkeeper Greg Jager was appointed to the team with long-term plans and improvements.

Coronavirus and strange happenings

The COVID-19 pandemic hit home as it did worldwide.

The first confirmed case in New South Wales was identified on 19 January 2020 in Sydney where three travellers returning from Wuhan, Hubei, China, tested positive. On 18 March, Minister for Health Brad Hazzard signed an Order under the emergency powers of the Public Health Act 2010 supporting measures announced by Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

COVID-19 had a severe impact on all Australians, including golfers. All entertainment venues were closed to patrons, with only takeaway service allowed. This meant clubhouses were shut, pro shops restricted to one customer at a time, even gathering in the car park after a game was an offence. But the game was considered to be exercise and so was allowed to continue, with restrictions.

COVID-19 golf rules (27 May 2020) - Australian Golf Union

- Games to be played in 2s
- One person per cart
- Flagstick must be left in hole
- Rakes are removed from bunkers, preferred lies in bunkers; and
- Do not shake hands after games.

This had a massive impact on the club's financial standing and special mention must be given to the efforts and guidance given by Johnathon Zirkler. Restrictions began being lifted, all but slightly, on Friday 29 January 2021.



The club's Division 3 pennant side was successful in bringing home the first Mid North Coast men's title in more than a decade – possibly quite longer. The grand final was played at Woolgoolga Golf Course, now named as Safety Beach. The Island's women also secured a pennant in 2021 making it a champagne year.

Pictured above are players Geoff McCann, Craig Haworth, Chris Knight, Andy Mackinnon, Glen Crow and Paul Ryan. Al O'Brien and Dave Rosser were also part of the squad.

Pictured at left: Pennant team captain Andy Mackinnon is congratulated by club President Geoff Harris.



2021

At the tail end of the pandemic all were looking at getting back to golf as we knew it. Severe flooding throughout the Eastern Seaboard soon fixed that. The club's ground staff probably had their toughest year ever as the flood waters created havoc and restoration was a monumental task. Special thanks is given to neighbouring golf clubs for the support with both greens staff and machinery.

Earthmoving company principal Brad Fortescue was a major contributor giving both his time and equipment to help with the clean-up.

2022

The repair work to the course from the previous year's extreme conditions continued through 2022 with all ground staff putting the shoulder to the wheel.

Off-course, The Island Golf Club began assisting Nambucca Bowling and Recreational Club by providing staff and management expertise under a labour hire agreement while the Bowlo restructured its operations. The arrangement was entered into to maintain the operations of the Bowling Club within the local community. This also allowed both clubs combined to increase their buying power while considerable savings were made in other areas.

2023

Figures for the year showed revenue grew to \$3.1m, an increase of \$600k.

Two major projects were completed - new carpet was laid throughout the clubhouse and a new wooden entry



bridge to the car park was installed. Restaurant and bar turnover increased significantly.

On course, many trees were trimmed or removed, making for a safer and more user-friendly layout. A new addition to the Pro Shop was Grant Rickwood, an experienced pro and instructor. His recruitment gave Habgood some precious time away from the counter.

Habgood's daughter Darcy turned professional and began playing tournaments in the United States.

Darcy Habgood playing in Adelaide (image: GolfNSW)

The number of volunteers topped 50, providing a great assistance to all sections of the club.

Nambucca Bowling Club settled into its new operating structure and was again trading strongly, enabling a consulting agreement between The Island and the Bowlo for General Manager Services only.

Macksville Country (Golf) Club asked for a similar management agreement with Nambucca to provide assistance. This resulted in a 44 per cent increase in Macksville's revenue in the first four months.

Operations at Macksville continued progressing well and all facets of its business saw large increases in turnover. On the golfing front, total rounds played for the year was just on 25,000 - an indication of the high regard held for The Island's championship layout.

Re-sowing of the first fairway was underway, a much anticipated project for all players.

Major works planned for the year included replacement of all leased course machinery.

2024

Yet another local club, Bellingen Golf Club, asked for a similar management agreement with Nambucca to provide assistance.

A revised restaurant facility began operating at Bellingen and this was staffed and run by Nambucca on a labour hire arrangement.

In August The Island club began a trial of electronic scoring by members. This was done through a mobile phone app and was welcomed in some circles and scorned in others.

The innovation made collation of results faster and reduced the number of printed scorecards being used, providing a cost saving.



2025

The year opened with hot and humid conditions. In May a devastating run of heavy rain events forced the closure of the course for almost a month. The clubhouse also was shut for a week as access over the causeway was not possible.

Fairways, tee boxes and greens emerged from the havoc in a thick coat of silt, course furniture and practice net mats were swept away, the club's carpark was undermined and sand from the bunkers was thought to be swirling in the river or out to sea in parts unknown.

The damage bill was expected to come in at more than \$300,000 - a crippling hit on a small club which is ranked as arguably the best layout on the Mid North Coast.

Head greenkeeper Greg Jager was a first responder in trying to save the signature bent grass greens. Members and staff rallied at working bees, while Brad Fortescue from Fortade scraped silt from the fairways in a positrack for two days' solid (and at no cost to the club). Not all heroes wear capes.

Island Board member and club publicist Chris Knight – a longtime former Executive Editor who plied his trade at diverse titles from *The Daily Telegraph* to the *Nambucca Guardian News* with a lengthy stint at Fairfax – summed the situation well.

The months of nagging rain had the normally well-draining course at saturation point, Knight observed. The 380mm-plus downpour over five days which ensued saw the Nambucca River water with nowhere to go but up.

"The rain on the course was problematic and mixed with what fell upstream led to the inundation. The water was more than a metre deep in some places," club General Manager Johnathon Zirkler said.

"There is a golf course down there somewhere under the swollen Nambucca River.

"The silt was more widespread than the March 2021 flood when we had more than 700mm of rain in three days."

The upshot of the rain bomb which cruelled the Macksville and Nambucca Heads' communities saw the greens on 3, 4, 8, 10, 15 and 16 go under on The Island.

Seven of the 18 fairways required scraping. The cart paths were unnavigable, and the mud was more than calf-deep in places as the flood waters receded.

"Almost all of the tee markers, flags, course seats and sand and garbage bin furniture have been lost," Mr Zirkler said.

"We have previously had some success in receiving assistance through NSW Government disaster recovery grants, Golf NSW grants and by helping ourselves through both the generosity of the membership and by exploring creative business opportunities."

At the Annual General Meeting in November a list of Government grants totalling \$71,000 was tabled. It was also noted a bequest of \$200,000 was left to the club by Steven Hill, a fondly remembered past member.

At year's end, the club had a golfing membership of just on 450 and social membership of 1,400.

Marching on to the present day

Over 100 magnificent turbulent years – a journey littered with joy, champions and setbacks – it's been a tale of recurrent themes.

Dancing on the edge financially, flood, and relocation and thoughts thereof.

In 2026, the Nambucca Heads Island Golf Club and Macksville Country Club continue to explore options of largely abandoning their current digs and establishing a 27-hole championship course at a greenfield site somewhere in the Nambucca Valley. It may come to something, or to naught.

Meanwhile, a celebratory 100-year dinner is planned at The Island Restaurant on 27 June, with two-time US Open player Paul Gow as guest speaker.

Coincidentally, the Coffs Harbour and Grafton golf clubs are also marking their centenaries in 2026.

From the very beginnings of the Nambucca Golf Club in the 1920s there have always been those members, men and women, who have spent countless hours and in many cases years performing voluntary work for the club.

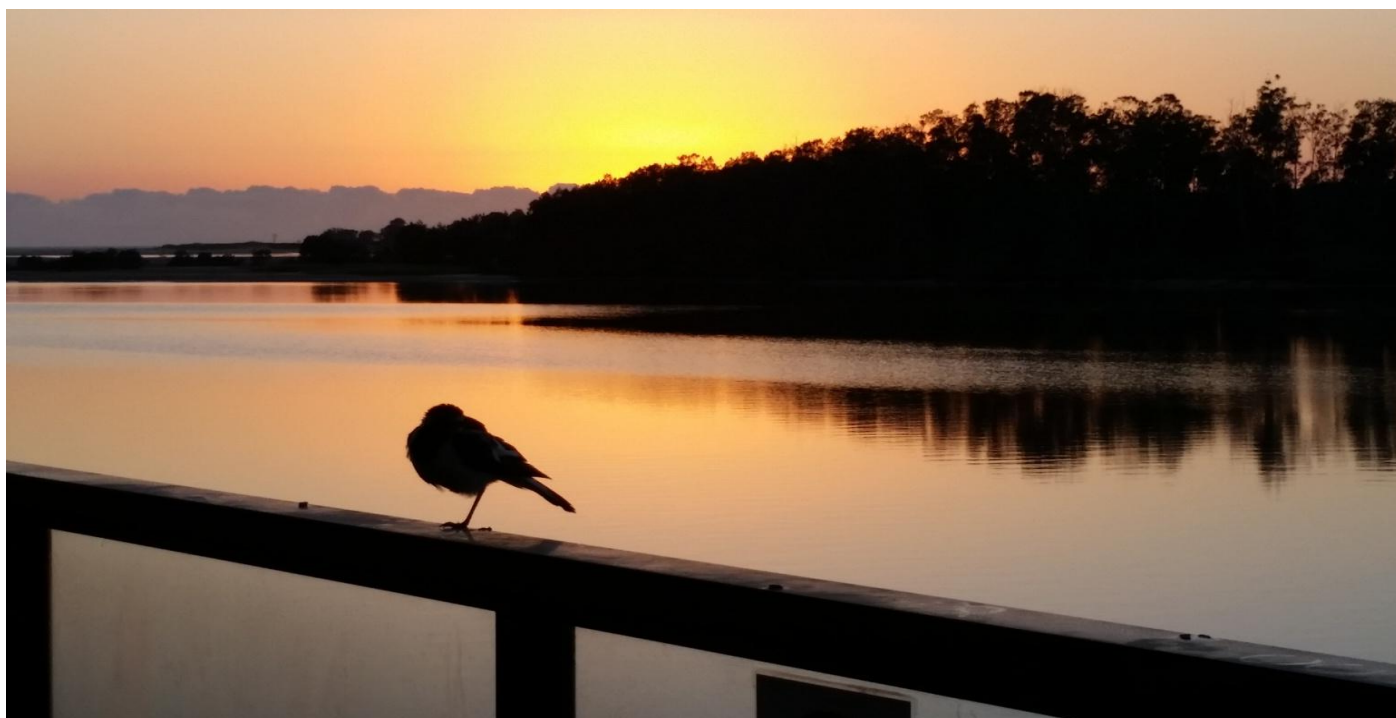
Clearing scrub, mowing rough, running golf events and social evenings – there's always been a need. And willing hands.

When the club found its new island home after the war, rank-and-file members pitched in to make it as playable as possible as soon as possible, even if there were still cattle roaming the course.

These volunteers have always strived for the betterment of the club and are the backbone.

In recent years the toils of the 'Steptoe and Son Brigade' has provided funds for course improvement through bottle and can recycling projects.

This is but one example of small but valuable deeds which cut to the heart of the club's true strength.



Board of Directors 2026

(From left) General Manager Johnathon Zirkler and board members Director of Golf Henny Oldenhove, President Geoff Harris, Nathan Ison, Treasurer Gary Scott, Chris Knight and Greens Chairman Geoff Brooks.
Inset: Lyn Parkes.

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(ask your fellow members to sign below)