

A TASTE OF *Tasmania*

Over the course of two decades, the Apple Isle has emerged as a world-class golf holiday destination, with the quality of its courses matched by the incredible food, cool climate wines, award-winning whiskies and natural attractions

WORDS & COURSE PHOTOGRAPHY **BRENDAN JAMES**

Two years ago, Tasmania was named the world's best 'undiscovered' golf destination. The 200 judges for that award simply validated what Australian golfers have known for at least two decades.

Leading the way, of course, are the Barnbougle courses, Dunes and Lost Farm, as well as King Island's dynamic duo of Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes – all of which are ranked by Golf Australia magazine in the top-10 Courses in the nation.

But it is the rising quality of Tasmania's other layouts, Royal Hobart, Tasmania, Launceston and Ulverstone (just to name a few), which should entice you to extend your golfing holiday to Tassie from a few days to, perhaps, a few weeks.

No golfing trip to Tasmania would be complete without a round or two, or three, at Barnbougle Dunes or the neighbouring Barnbougle Lost Farm

– both of which have been ranked in the top-30 courses in the world that are found outside the United States.

The Dunes course put Tasmania on the international golfing map as soon as it opened in 2004. It was ranked Australia's No.1 Public Access Course by Golf Australia magazine for 13 years, before being pipped at the post by newcomer Cape Wickham in 2017.

Located four kilometres east of the small town of Bridport, about one hour's drive north east of Launceston, Dunes was designed by American Tom Doak in collaboration with Mike Clayton. It is a brilliant layout covering land that was deemed unsuitable for farming by its owner, Richard Sattler, which is exactly how some of the great links courses of Scotland came to being. In fact, treading this course early in the morning or late ▶



BARBBOUGLE LOST FARM

in the day, with every little bump and hollow exposed by the low hanging sun, is exhilarating. It makes you feel that if all golf was like this every one would be playing.

A round opens with a strong par-5 and par-4 combination but the real fun begins at the 271-metre par-4 4th, which is known as Homestead as the ruins of the original Barnbougle homestead lie beneath the dunes on this hole. The prevailing wind is into your face here but long hitters might be tempted into blasting a drive over a massive bunker on the right edge of the fairway in a bid to find the punchbowl green. It is a huge risk but the reward is an almost certain birdie if your drive is long enough.

The opening of Lost Farm in 2010 further transformed this six-kilometre stretch of Tassie coastline into a powerhouse golf destination. The contrast between the two courses – in terms of design and visual appeal – is what makes

Barnbougle such a fantastic golfing destination. You could play both courses numerous times over a week and never play the same shot twice.

Where the Dunes layout offers dramatic visuals at seemingly at every turn, Bill Coore's creation at Lost Farm offers spectacular holes where the design looks to challenge your strategic and shot-making skills.

One of the highlights of any round at Lost Farm is the quality of the par-3s, of which there are six that expand the layout to 20 holes. The diminutive 4th hole, which sits above the beach and overlooks the ocean, calls for a short iron (when the prevailing wind isn't too strong) to find the dramatically sloping putting surface wedged between three bunkers – one short, another left and a small one to the right. Playing this hole is worth the price of the green fee alone.

For many visitors, the gateway to Barnbougle is via Launceston, which also boasts Tasmania's

oldest 18-hole course at Launceston Golf Club.

This fine par-72 plays to a tick over 5,800 metres from the back pegs where the challenge lies in keeping your ball on the fairway between the long stretches of heavily tree-lined rough.

Launceston's opening hole, a gentle 242-metre par-4, offers no real indication of the challenge that lies ahead. The course bites back at the next – a sweeping dogleg right par-5 of 526 metres. A good drive to the corner of the dogleg must be followed by two accurate approach shots along the fairway, which is so narrow from this point that its gives the appearance of a chute between tall stands of pines and gum trees. The final approach must be precisely clubbed as a shot hit too strong or slightly wide of the putting surface will bound down a steep slope into thick Fescue grass rough.

Bunkers are the main hazard on the memorable par-3 13th, which is known as 'Spion Kop'. It is not overly long at 152 metres from the championship



LAUNCESTON GOLF CLUB



LAUNCESTON GOLF CLUB

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markers, but the key is to judge the prevailing left-to-right breeze from the shelter of the tee. Correct club selection is vital to carry the valley between tee and green, while avoiding the deep bunkers left, right and short of the putting surface. The safest bail out here is long and right of the slightly angled green.

While the design is interesting and challenging, your fondest memory of a round here might be the quality of the superb playing surfaces.

Little more than 10 minutes' drive to the west and you will find the Country Club Tasmania – a sprawling 300-acre resort boasting a casino, hotel and villa accommodation, restaurants and bars as well as a Peter Thomson and Mike Wolveridge designed par-71 golf course, which celebrated its 35th year in 2017.

The course stretches to 6,053 metres and offers a quality test. Gums and pines line relatively wide fairways, which are punctuated by water

hazards and strategically placed bunkers that will challenge even the best players. That said, the forward tees here present a more enjoyable experience for the golfer more skilled on filling an inside straight in the casino than carding birdies on the course.

The Thomson and Wolveridge trademark of providing players with a risk-and-reward option on many holes is apparent here. The pair designed the course placing a priority on course management. If you think your way around this course you will avoid the water that comes into play on 12 holes and the bunkers spread throughout.

Devonport is the gateway to the mainland, via the Spirit of Tasmania ferry services, and offers an excellent 18-hole layout, known locally as 'Woodrising'.

It is a great period of change for the Devonport Golf Club, which has merged with the Devonport ▶



COUNTRY CLUB TASMANIA

Bowls and Croquet Club as well as the Spreyton Bowls Club to become known as the Devonport Country Club.

Central to the combined \$8.5 million redevelopment will be a new two-level clubhouse, the addition of two croquet lawns, three bowling greens and extensive upgrades to the golf course.

In the meantime, the course remains open to visitors, who will be impressed by the layout that hosted a number of Tasmanian Opens and national amateur events.

Heading further west via the Bass Highway will lead you to one of Tasmania's most underrated layouts, Ulverstone Golf Club. This hidden gem is a 20-minute drive from Devonport and can be a little tricky to locate in the hills away from the town centre, so keep an eye out for the signs or program the GPS for Lobster Creek Rd.

Designed by the late Al Howard, Ulverstone is a wonderfully undulating course carved out of mature stands of eucalypts that has been rated in Australia's Top-100 Public Access Courses.

While many of the other courses mentioned

among these pages may be described as "heavily tree-lined", none come close to Ulverstone for sheer majesty in the size and number of trees that abound across the layout. This is hardly surprising considering the par-72 is surrounded by thick Tasmanian forest.

These massive trees and dense bush totally surround arguably the prettiest offering at Ulverstone – the 158-metre par-3 5th hole. The tee shot here must be played over the edge of a lake to an almost square-shaped green that is surrounded by a wall of trees. Correct club selection is the key here, especially when the wind is blowing across the tops of the trees as you feel sheltered on the ground below.

Howard's routing takes full advantage of the rolling topography, which means you are unlikely to face the same shot twice – in distance or lie – during a round.

After playing across the top of the Apple Isle, it was time to head south towards Hobart.

The state capital is easily reached within two and a half hours from Launceston via the Midland

Highway. However, for the purposes of this feature I took the scenic route, via the Highland Lakes Rd and the Great Western Tiers Conservation Area, to Bothwell – home of the Australasian Golf Museum and Australia's oldest golf course, Ratho Farm – in the picturesque Clyde River valley about an hours' drive north of Hobart.

Housed in the town's visitors centre, the museum is a must for any golf fan with interesting equipment exhibits, photographs and paintings as well as donated equipment from some of our best players including Peter Thomson, Ian Baker-Finch, Adam Scott, Mat Goggin, Graham Marsh and Tasmania's first golfing star Peter Toogood.

More importantly, the museum traces the history of the game including its introduction to Australia, on a property known as 'Ratho', just a few minutes' drive from the museum. Alexander Reid, a Scot, played on Ratho with featheries in the 1820s and three generations of Reids followed in their enjoyment of the links. The great-grandfather of golf tragic Greg Ramsay, who has been involved in several Tasmanian golf projects including Barnboughle Dunes, bought Ratho in 1936.

A round at Ratho Golf Links is a memorable one because it is as if time has stopped here. Sheep graze across the fairways and tees, while fences keep them from venturing onto the square greens found on most holes.

In recent years Ramsay has been working with designers Neil Crafter and Paul Mogford to restore the now 18-hole course to its true origins.

Ramsay now plans to tap into the creative mind of amateur designers by running a competition to redesign a loop of three holes of the Ratho Farm course. The three back nine holes near the edge of the property need to be re-routed to make them safer with the increased play of the course. For more details check out Ratho Farm's advertisement on page 95 of this issue or get a copy of the December issue of Golf Australia magazine, which will also provide guidance on how to design a golf hole.

Armchair architects will also be able to submit their 18-hole creations for a future redesign at Claremont Golf Club, about 20 minutes' drive north-west of the Hobart CBD. ►



ULVERSTONE GOLF CLUB



RATHO FARM

A residential development has seen the redesign of the 17th and 18th holes in recent times and there are plans to eventually rework the entire routing across the small parcel of land, to take greater advantage of the riverside location in terms of views and providing memorable golf shots.

Claremont lies on a peninsula and is surrounded on three sides by the Derwent River and offers wonderful views across the water to Mt Wellington.

The river comes into play for the first time at the 174-metre par-3 2nd. It is a demanding hole that is further complicated by a small river inlet that cuts across the hole between tee and green. The target is small and, when the wind blows off the Derwent from the right, the green can be almost impossible to hit.

If you have a problem keeping your shots on the straight and narrow and sliced drives are common-place, be cautious when playing Claremont's toughest hole – the 410-metre par-4 5th. The glistening waters of the Derwent are never far from the right edge of the doglegging fairway as it turns markedly from left to right and finishes at a smallish green guarded by a lone bunker.

Every golfer visiting Hobart should also include Kingston Beach Golf Club in their itinerary because it offers a wonderful mix of an enjoyable round of golf while treading in the footsteps of Tasmania golfing royalty.

Kingston Beach, about 15 minutes' drive south of the CBD, has an old world charm about it and you can sense that history as you walk into the heritage-listed stone and wood clubhouse. It is

here where the honour boards reveal the influence of two great Tasmanian golfing dynasties – the Nettlefolds and Toogoods.

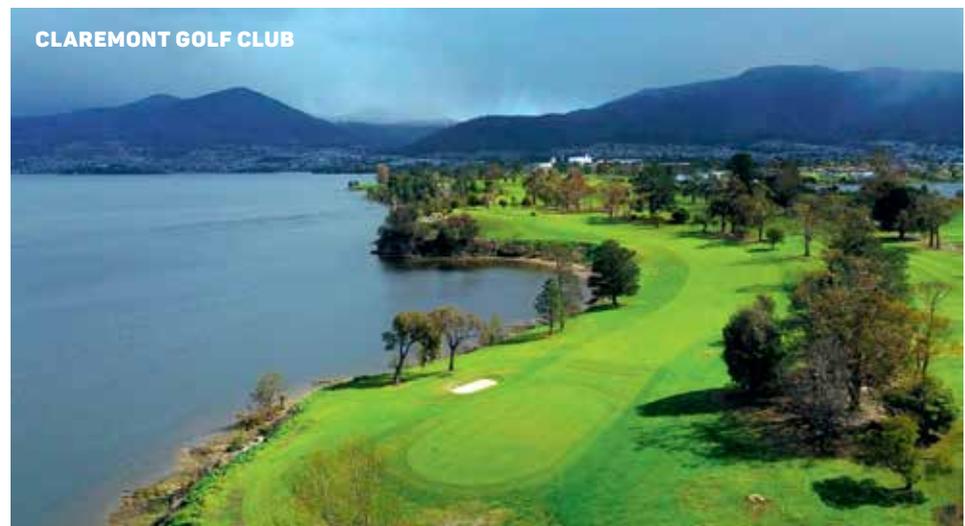
Robert Nettlefold founded the club in the 1920s and the club's popularity took off because of its picture postcard location beside the snaking Browns River. Nettlefold not only produced a very good golf course but his son, Len, became one of the best left-handers in the game before World War II. He remains the only 'leftie' to have won the Australian Amateur twice, firstly in 1926 and then 1928, while he was a member at Kingston Beach.

The Kingston Beach club professional in the 1930s was Alf Toogood, whose father finished fourth behind J.H Taylor in the 1894 Open

Championship at Royal St Georges. Toogood's two sons, Peter and John, grew up on the Kingston Beach course and continued the family love affair with the game of golf.

Peter Toogood won dozens of titles over an elite amateur career that spanned more than 30 years. He won club championships at a number of Tasmanian courses. He also won an Australian Amateur (beating his brother John in the final), was the leading amateur in the 1954 Open Championship and was on the Australian team that won the inaugural Eisenhower Trophy. And as you have read on previous pages, he has done some course design work in recent years.

The ability of this small Tasmanian club to ►





TASMANIA GOLF CLUB

produce such champion golfers is legendary but entirely understandable given the quality of the layout.

Browns River flowing into the Derwent River dominates the view beyond the green of the 311-metre par-4 2nd hole, one of the real highlights of a round here. The tee is perched high above the straight fairway, which is lined by thick scrub and trees to the left. A short iron is all that is needed to find the relatively flat green but don't overshoot the green, in an attempt to avoid the two bunkers short of the putting surface, as the river is not far away.

Hobart's highest nationally ranked course, Tasmania Golf Club, lies 30 minutes' drive away north-west of the Derwent River.

Course designer Al Howard, who worked alongside course superintendent Ian Grimsey, to create the par-72 in 1971 after the club had moved several times in its history dating back to the early 1900s. Laid out across the rolling terrain of Barilla Bluff, the course is surrounded on three sides by the waters of Barilla Bay, providing a location that is not only visually spectacular but gives rise to some memorable

and challenging holes.

Easily the best known of the holes at Tasmania is the 528-metre par-5 3rd hole. It is the most remarkable hole at Tasmania with beautiful views of Barilla Bay and the surrounding countryside. The hole follows the bay in a gradual curve to the left and offers the option for long hitters of shortening the hole by smashing their drive over the corner. The more you bite off the dogleg, the longer the drive must be. Don't bite off too much though as your ball will finish in the water or on the beach some 60 metres below your lookout on the tee. The hole has been enhanced with the trimming of scrub near the green which allows you to see the putting surface from way back on the tee. If the row of trees and scrub that remains between the left of the fairway and the water was removed it would, in my opinion, become one of the best par-5s in the country.

A tree removal program implemented in recent times has improved areas of the course markedly. The club has removed 300 eucalypts that were in poor condition or had died due to heat stress, which has opened up the playing lines on many holes. Across the highest points of the layout, ►



KINGSTON BEACH GOLF CLUB

WHERE TO STAY

COUNTRY CLUB TASMANIA

There are a variety of accommodation choices available at Country Club, from hotel rooms and five-star luxury suites to one-, two- and three-bedroom villas.

The resort has a stay and play package (for two people) including 18 holes, bucket of driving range balls, continental breakfast and one nights' four-star accommodation for \$275. www.countryclubtasmania.com.au

BARNBOUGLE

Stay onsite in one of Barnbougles lodging options including the 3.5 star Cottages at The Dunes, the four-bed Bunker Villas, the two-bedroom Ocean Villas and the luxury golf lodge at Lost Farm. Regardless of your group size and budget, Barnbougles has an accommodation option to suit your needs. www.barnbougles.com.au

RATHO FARM

The accommodation at Ratho Farm consists of several old farm buildings lovingly restored into boutique rooms. Equipped with modern features but still retaining elements of the original masonry and carpentry, the result is a beautiful fusion of old and new.

Ratho Farm can accommodate singles, twins, as well as entire families or groups in adjoining rooms. Each room has an en suite, a fridge, as well as tea and coffee making facilities.

www.rathofarm.com



out towards the edge of the bluff, views to the surrounding bay have opened up and, with it, greater exposure to the prevailing winds.

Tasmania's closest neighbour, Royal Hobart Golf Club, is also going through a period of significant, and much needed, change to its course.

Located less than 10 minutes' drive away at Seven Mile Beach, Royal Hobart had become overgrown with trees planted across the decades since the completion of the Vern Morcom design in 1956. The layout had reached the point where it hardly resembled the layout that hosted the 1971

Australian Open won by Jack Nicklaus.

Tree management has been at the forefront of the changes made during the past 18 months. Dense scrub has been eliminated from some key areas bordering several holes, while dozens of blackwoods that had encroached onto playing lines have also been cut down. Nearly all these trees had been planted to make the course more penal but ultimately the character and intent of Morcom's design was lost as a result. On some holes, the width of the fairway had been reduced over time by nearly 50 percent of their original width.

With these trees now gone, most of Royal Hobart's fairways are now significantly wider allowing different playing strategies of play for golfers of all standards. With more sun now reaching the playing surfaces during the day, the quality of the turf has also improved.

The next step for the club is to implement a new master plan from course designer Richard Chamberlain, which will not only improve some safety issues in a couple of spots across the course but it will aim to make the layout more strategically challenging.

KING ISLAND

You have no doubt heard of, and probably sampled, some of the amazing produce that comes from King Island – including award-winning cheeses to lobsters, abalone and delicious beef.

But, arguably, golf has become one of the island's main attractions in recent years.

Today, foodies and golfers compete for seats on flights to the island, which lies midway between the Victorian and Tasmanian coasts in Bass Strait.

The King Island Golf and Bowling Club was the first layout established back in 1932, having moved from grazing land near the island's biggest town, Currie. The course covers rolling links land, exposing all its holes to the violent antics of the Southern Ocean's 'Roaring Forties' winds.

The course has 12 greens as well as alternate tees for both nines. The opening two holes set the scene for an enjoyable round. The first drive is blind to a fairway angled away and off to a green set hard against the base of a long sand dune. It's not by any means the most difficult par-4 you will

play but it is a lot of fun.

The same can be said for the 2nd/11th, which plays along the ridge of the aforementioned sand dune. The fairway is wide enough but the player who attacks too hard here can find their ball bounding off the firm fairway into the rough and be left with a difficult shot into the smallish green, which slopes markedly from left-to-right and is cut into the edge of a high dune.

Maintained by a small but passionate crew of volunteers, King Island is a gem that lays claim to being the best nine-hole course in Australia. I ►

“TODAY, FOODIES AND GOLFERS COMPETE FOR SEATS ON FLIGHTS TO THE ISLAND, WHICH LIES MIDWAY BETWEEN THE VICTORIAN AND TASMANIAN COASTS IN BASS STRAIT.”





KING ISLAND GOLF AND BOWLING CLUB

“ MAINTAINED BY A SMALL BUT PASSIONATE CREW OF VOLUNTEERS, KING ISLAND IS A GEM THAT LAYS CLAIM TO BEING THE BEST NINE-HOLE COURSE IN AUSTRALIA. ”

couldn't argue with that.

There has been much greater appreciation of this little gem since the opening of the island's two new courses – Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes. To give you an idea of their quality, Cape Wickham is the No.1 Public Access Course in the nation, while Ocean Dunes sits at No.4 in the same list. Both layouts also feature in the top-10 of the Top-100 Courses ranking published by Golf Australia magazine in January this year.

Cape Wickham Links – an enjoyable 40-minute drive north of Currie – was the first to launch, officially opening for play in early 2016, just three years after construction work began. It has been on the world golfing radar ever since.

American course designer Mike DeVries, in collaboration with Melbourne golf book author Darius Oliver, were blessed to be able to work on a spectacular piece of oceanside land that seems

to have been created by Mother Nature for the purpose of playing golf.

Their creation offers golfers broad playing corridors and holes that provide fair strategies regardless of the wind strength and direction. A pod of fairway bunkers that is scarcely in play one day will move squarely into the frame the next. Lost balls will happen but in sleeves not boxes. Instead, the focus is on playability in the island's sometimes unpredictable weather and variety through multiple playing lines and numerous shot options. Make no mistake this is a fun course to play, not a penal one.

A highlight of a round here – in fact there are four of them – are the par-3s. The seaside one-shotters at the 3rd, 11th and 17th are obviously memorable but it might just be the inland 7th that is Wickham's best. The hole climbs slightly during its 137 metres to a green ▶



OCEAN DUNES



HOW TO GET TO KING ISLAND & WHERE TO STAY

AIR ADVENTURE AUSTRALIA

Air Adventure Australia has been operating outback air safaris to remote Australian destinations since 1977.

Air Adventure Golf Tours specialises in remote Tasmanian golf and have flown more than 3,000 golfers to play at Barnbougle and King Island. It's no surprise their four day / four round trip to both destinations is extremely popular.

Designed by golfers, for golfers, the tours make getting there easy. Golfers can carry their full set of clubs (in travel tube, which they provide) plus 10kg of extra luggage. They also supply full size Callaway cart bags at each venue so you can play out of a normal golf bag.

Based at Essendon Fields Airport, the parking and check in is simple.

The company's ultimate Tasmanian golf adventure, the Like A Pro Tour, includes four rounds – one each at Barnbougle Dunes, Lost Farm, Cape Wickham and Ocean Dunes – all in the one trip. At \$2,075 per person it includes everything except meals and drinks.

Flights to King Island take only 35 minutes from Essendon Field Airport, and Barnbougle's private airfield is a 45-minute flight from Essendon. Therefore, in the time it takes to just check-in at the major domestic airports you can be on the course at any of these top-four Australian courses. golf.airadventure.com.au



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OCEAN DUNES

SOUTHERN GOLF GETAWAYS

Southern Golf Getaways provide a hassle free fly, play and stay package.

The King Island golf specialists, organise the flights in their private aircraft, accommodation and transport so you can enjoy a trip that is specifically catered to your needs.

The company – flying from their base at Barwon Heads and picking up from Avalon, Moorabbin or Essendon Airports – offers flexible departure and pick-up times to fit around your schedule. Whether you would like to fly in for the day or play the triangle of courses at King Island and Barnbougale over a few days, the choice is yours.

www.southerngetaways.com.au

KING ISLAND HOTEL

The recently renovated King Island Hotel is located in Currie, five minutes' drive from Ocean Dunes.

The beautifully modern decorated rooms are available as twin, double or a mixture of both, plus two connecting rooms for larger groups or families.

www.oceandunes.com.au



CAPE WICKHAM LINKS

Cape Wickham Links has 16 ocean view accommodation units perched on the side of the opening hole, overlooking Victoria Cove and Cape Wickham Lighthouse.

Each room includes two king single beds, one double bed, with ensuite, TV, air conditioning and wifi. Complimentary continental breakfast is available to all guests. www.capewickham.com.au

BOOMERANG BY THE SEA

Centrally located in the township of Currie, Boomerang By The Sea overlooks the nine hole King Island links course. There are 16 units which all feature large sliding doors opening to a verandah offering ocean views. www.boomerangbythesea.com.au

“TO GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF THEIR QUALITY, CAPE WICKHAM IS THE NO.1 PUBLIC ACCESS COURSE IN THE NATION, WHILE OCEAN DUNES SITS AT NO.4 IN THE SAME LIST.”

angled from front left to back right with a giant swale capturing any shot coming up short or right. A hump short and left and a dune hugging the left edge provide the key contours and will allow canny shots to feed close to certain pin positions. It's a terrific par-3 that provides a great example of how the inland holes here are just as good, sometimes better, than the seaside holes.

Ocean Dunes hosted its first rounds a few months after Cape Wickham opened and it too has since received rave reviews. The Graeme Grant-designed layout, which is just a few minutes' drive north of Currie just before the airport turn off, covers dramatic golfing terrain with fairways that weave over and between huge sand dunes, and feature several holes on its two-kilometre stretch of ocean frontage.

It doesn't take long into a round for the excitement to grow at Ocean Dunes. Good quality short par-4s thrill all golfers and Ocean Dunes' 280-metre 2nd hole could be regarded, in time, as one of the finest short two-shotters in the country. It is a wide driving hole but the green only opens up to those players prepared to risk placing their driving near the right edge of the fairway and the 'Kelp Track', which weaves along the shoreline. The further left you go, the more difficult the second shot approach becomes as it

is a blind pitch over a bunker carved out of the face of a large dune. If your drive is too far left on a day when the flag is in the left half of the green, you will have no idea where the hole is as it will be hidden behind the dune. It is a pitch shot that is reminiscent of what golfers face on the famed 'Dell' hole at Lahinch in Ireland – it's blind, over a large dune to a wide, receptive green ... if the club and shot selection is spot on.

The shortest of the holes at Ocean Dunes will be its most talked about and is destined to be its most photographed. The 130-metre par-3 4th hole is played across an ocean inlet with rocky edges on both sides of the water. The tee is perched just above the waves, while the expansive putting surface is very wide and features a bunker cut into the middle of the front edge. This pinches the target to its narrowest and has the effect of almost creating two greens, left and right of the bunker. A crop of pigface lying between the rocks and the grass short of the green flowers pink in spring and summer, adding to the beauty of this spectacular one-shotter.

While the 4th hole will be reached with a short club on most days, there will be times when the elements will conspire to make this diminutive offering a real beast, which is what links golf is all about.



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