

## BOTHWELL AND ITS GOLF COURSE



**Ratho 2022. Reg Watson photo**

Bothwell is a wonderful village. It is set on the road to the rugged and beautiful highlands of Tasmania. It is also one of the State's most historic. To get to Bothwell, either coming from the north or south, you cut across at Melton Mowbray from the Midlands Highway. If you wish to traverse the highlands you can come south from Deloraine.

Bothwell today is visited by many tourists particularly during the summer months that come to enjoy its beauty and historic attractions. It is also the gateway for excellent trout fishing and hunting. The village developed on the banks of the Clyde River which was named previously by hunters as *Fat Doe River*. The land on which it now is located was first discovered in 1807 by twenty year old Thomas Laycock, a lieutenant in the New South Wales Corp. It was in November 1820 with the arrival of a number of free settlers from Scotland which prompted the Lt-Governor, William Sorell to explore the Clyde River area for settlement. The year following, Bothwell had previously being referred to as the Upper Clyde. The two principle streets were also named, Patrick after Captain Patrick Wood of *Dennistoun* and Alexander after Alexander Reid of *Ratho*. Other early settlers who took up grants were Edward Nicholas and Charles and Horatio *Rowcroft*.

Development was slow. In 1825 only three dwellings existed in the town although it had been laid out by Thomas Scott with excellent wide streets. However by the 1860s, it had grown to a neat, prosperous country village and was proclaimed as such (a town) on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1866. The Bothwell District Directory of 1867 reveals many of the residents who made their homes in the town and surrounding countryside at that period of time.

There are numerous interesting historic buildings, including the *Crown Inn* (now a B&B), churches such as, St Michael and All Angels, St Luke's and St Andrews. Among other historic buildings are, Fort Wentworth, Thorpe Water Mill Mill, Nant and its

Mill (now a distillery), Castle Hotel (1829) and many more. Out from the village are the historic houses of *Sherwood* (where Martin Cash raided) and Montacute.

It was Alexander Raid who played a prominent part in the history and development of the village. He settled at *Ratho* in 1822 and introduced golf into Tasmania. Its course is reputed to be the oldest in the nation. Highlighting this heritage is the Australasian Golf Museum located in Bothwell village. The museum tells the story of how golf evolved in Scotland from a crude game to being an international sport.

The museum illustrates the early settlers in the area which became Australia's first golfing community with the nearby *Ratho Golf Links*. The evolution of the game is explained when exploring the museum through the different areas as defined by the changing golf ball.

The museum displays an array of golf clubs and putters from over the years, plus highlighting with photographs the history of golf such as when it came to Australia. There is also information regarding the Reids in Scotland prior coming to Tasmania and the establishment of the golf club at Bothwell. Trophies, bags and buggies are highlighted as are too, well-known, if not famous golf professionals and competitors, such as the Barclay sisters from 1931, Lindy Goggin, Obette Lefebure, Joe Kirkwood, Ossie Pickworth, Norman van Nida, Bruce Devlin, Kel Nagle and many more.

A major art of the display consists of memorabilia from the private collection of Peter Toogood, a well-known Tasmanian amateur golfer of world class. Peter hit the perfect golf stroke when he was only eight years old. He won the first of his ten Tasmanian amateur championships aged eighteen and went on to become one of the world's most successful amateur golfers.

The museum is situated in the heart of the village in Market Place in a modern airy, bright premise to which is attached the Bothwell Information Centre. One of the museum's objectives naturally enough is to preserve and present to the public a comprehensive, interesting and unique collection of golfing memorabilia thus celebrating the game of golf. It is open to the public daily from the hours of 10am until 4pm.

The original golf course still survives at *Ratho Farm*, once home to the Reids. Ratho Farm is now owned by Greg Ramsay where he is assisted by General Manager, Michael Costello. The President and Green Keeper of the *Ratho* 18-hole Golf Club is Glen Richards.

Mrs Mary Reid, wife of Alex, kept a journal telling how she lived those early days. She stopped on her way to settle at Bothwell at the *Royal Oak*, a hotel north of Kempton where they spent the night, "*most comfortably*" before being ushered into "*a room with a nicely sanded floor.*"

Alexander Reid in addition to *Ratho's* 1400 acres received a further grant of 600 acres which he called *Humbie* after his birthplace. In 1828 he made further improvements to *Ratho*, "*one stone dwelling house 40 feet long by 30 feet wide having a back court yard 20 feet wide containing a store room, milk house, back kitchen and an outer building behind, all of stone and all shingled and the outhouses paved with flagstones*".

One of the Reid's daughters was Jane who kept a wonderful diary of life at *Ratho* and at *Bothwell*. Jane when only 14 years of age married Lieutenant William Williams aged 25 years. He was then the visiting magistrate at *Bothwell*. When 19 years old she returned to live at *Ratho* when the Reid family decided to return to England and Scotland for a few years. They stayed until 1842 when they returned. Alexander died in 1858, wife Mary in 1867. Jane after her husband died remained a widow for 63 years, until her death on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1897.

Three generations of Reids owned *Ratho* until it changed hands in 1936. Today it is owned by the Ramsay family.

Modern *Ratho* is not only a working with a rich history, but it also contains the-golf course. It also handles boutique accommodation which consists of several old farm buildings that have been restored. There are two convict cottages, "*The Bakery*" and the "*Verandah Cottage*".

Close by is the old *Nant* homestead and the water mill (now the *Nant Distillery*) and *Nant Cottage*, which was once home to two Irish political exiles, John Mitchel and John Martin (1851-1853). It was Edward Nicholas with family who settled at the homestead in September 1821 and received a grant from Governor Sorell of 1800 acres. The Nicholas family were from south Wales and named their property "*Nant*" meaning in Welsh, a valley.

There have been tremendous changes of *Bothwell* and it surrounds over its near two hundred years history. Yet, it retains its tranquillity with an atmosphere of timelessness. The golf fairways are kept short by grazing sheep with fences round the greens keeping them away from the putting surface. If you hit one of these fences (which averages it is said twice a round) you allowed another shot without penalty.