The following are 'clippings' that relate to the history of the Nanton Golf Club. They were taken from Howie Armstrong's 'Divots and Duffers' column that was published intermittently in the Nanton News from 1978 until 1982.

Howie Armstrong 1978

by Howie Armstrong

Golf in its embryonic stage came to Nanton well over fifty years ago. Balls were batted about in the field between Marg Foster's present home and the West Avenue. There were no houses there, so no broken windows were reported.

About 1921 the first course was laid out, with G.W. Gill, Cornie Hiebert, Arnold Moir, George Legler and others doing the design and leg work.The first tee was beside the Nanton Creamery which originally stood on the old Rodeo Grounds in 1911 and was later moved to its present location by Burns and Company.

The first hole was near the present campsite so the first shot had to carry over Mosquito Creek. Then (as now) the ball often ended up in the drink. Nearly all the Nanton golfers used "floater" balls which they were able to retrieve with the use of a few bamboo poles thoughtfully provided by the grounds committee.

One day a Nanton fearsome foursome of Ken Pughe (later to become Dep. Minister of Labor in Alberta) his brother Cliff, Alister Walters (Mabel Coote's brother) and Charlie Marshall were teeing off and Ken, Alister and Charlie all drove into the creek. Cliff then drove well over, but hit a telephone pole and bounced back into the water to join his buddies.

Incidently Charlie is the only present club member who played on the first Nanton golf course.

The course then followed the creek opposite the present diposal plant on Ed Taylor's land (now Andy Munro's; all the way to the corner (near Rasmussens' home) and then back again. This was all original prairie grass fairways and greens (with jam tins for cups.)When the grass became too high the golf was over till haying time!

About 1930, Dean Stair (Crown Lumber Manager) and Dick Pearce (shoe repairman) designed a course across the road to the north. Jim Suitor obtained a clubhouse by talking the council out of the "Pest House". This used to sit near Andy Munro's home. Persons with a communicable disease were housed therein to succumb or recover depending on the effectiveness of the antibiotics of the day.

At the Foothills Tournament, it was here on the first tee (near the old rodeo entrants gate) that the first hole-in-one was officially recorded by none other than Roy Hallett.

The outdoor biffy sat just ahead and to the right of the tee in a depression by the fence. R.V. sliced a dandy right into the open door which rattled around a few times and dropped into the smallest hole. (there were three of them).

The ball was not recovered!

Although the rule book covers golpher holes, it does not provide for such exigency and Roy loudly protested the judges' assessment of a two-stroke penalty.

Sheep were used to keep the grass down. During a "friendly" game Bill Denoon, by waving a red flag was able to draw the attention of an unfriendly ram to George Legler's backside. The ram obliged with a heads-down charge. (George missed his putt!)

For several years the Ag Society didn't operate the rodeo so three of four different courses were used on the flat before moving up the hill to the east.

On the first hole of the original course you drove east over the old sheep stalls. E. E. Coutts tells of Skid Luther taking a salesman down for a game, lending him his clubs, and the salesman ended up getting right in the middle of one of the pens, wrapping Skid's good club around a post. Tossing it on the ground he inquired, "Skid, have you got another club?" (Skid's reply has been deleted).

The old tee boxes contained two pails, one for water and one for sand. From this you fashioned a tee, so that you could drive off the rubber or cocoa mats. After the original prairie wool, the first greens were made of sand which was always blowing away. After that the golfers used to gather up the old crank-case oil from the garages and soak the sand (and their clothes!)

It is interesting to watch one of the newer golfers, Doug Christie, step up to the present # 1 tee. His drive often ends up across that road in Andy Munro's field in the very place that they played golf 57 years ago!

More history notes next week.

Howie Armstrong 1982

It's interesting to note that the same creek and some of the land to be used in the Nanton Golf Club's expansion plans was used in the very first golf course in 1921. Prior to that, early enthusiasts batted balls around the field presently cornered by Cliff and Bea Fletcher's home.

In the 1921 layout, golfers made their first drive across the creek near the old creamery towards the campsite. Then they batted their way through the brome grass east to Rasmussens and back.

Howie Armstrong 1978

When the golf club originally moved to the town land one of the most active promotors was Dick Pearce, a local shoe repairman.

He was no shakes as a golfer, but he was a self-taught ventriloquist and when not engaging in a spirited dialogue with his club or golf ball, he would continually be giving a lively discription of the current golf match, as though he were in the British Open. (Anyone who has listened to Ted Robley "announcing" into the inverted head of his driver as a microphone, would get the idea!)

Anyway Mrs. Mae Suitor, having listened to Dick numerous occasions, received the mistaken impression that Pearce was a pretty good golfer, and asked him if he would give her a golf lesson. In the ensuing match, Mae beat the can off him.

Most older people will remember Ace Archibald, local Ford Dealer for many years. Ace played golf once a week, on Sundays, and always carried his bag of golf clubs over his shoulder.

His buddies decided that if Ace were so anxious to get exercise they should make it worth his while. Each week they would put a rock into his bag and the additional weight was so gradual that it went unnoticed by Ace. He didn't discover it till September when he was toting about twelve pounds of rocks around.

A golfer of the day, Mr. K.C. Craig, the local lawyer, developed the habit of staggering backwards when driving off the tee. When the Nanton club paid the Stavely club a visit, this habit proved his undoing. The first tee at Stavely was elevated about three feet and the subsequent fall ended his golf for that day on his very first swing.

When the golf course was moved to its present location, a tree-planting program was begun. Over 3700 trees and hedge plantings gradually transformed a former hay field into the beautiful park that we have today.

A clubhouse was built about sixteen years ago and then an above-ground aluminium sprinkler system was purchased. This was moved every week by volunteer labor. Next the pipes were laid underground. Last year these were largely replaced with modern trouble-free plastic pipes.

Soon after the building of the clubhouse the rapid growth of the club called for doubling the size of the building. At the same time, grass greens were built, making the Nanton Club one of the first in Southern Alberta to have a facility which matched the cities.

In these formative years when nearly all labor was volunteer, we would have to thank Jim Creighton and Jake Berger for having the foresight to help other willing believers in planning a modern golf course instead of just staying with what we had - sand greens and all.

Jim was stingy with the purse strings. In fact, he held the loose soles of his golf spikes on with rubber sealer rings years after they should have gone to the dump.

While Bob Roddie handled the treasury, Jake was busy enlisting the help of the farm members with their loaders, trucks etc., and from that point we've never looked back. For the price of one of Verna's home-cooked meals, Jake enlisted golf professional Ernie Tate to plan the new grass greens. When they were all ready, the nine holes were reversed, changing the new course to a hooker's nightmare and a slicer's dream.

Several years ago the membership approved the idea of the club enlarging the course to eighteen holes from the present nine. As in the past, they're planning for the future and with over eighty young golfers coming up, the future looks very bright indeed.

FIGHT CANCER

Howie Armstrong 1982

A recent news paper article outlines Calgary's plans to build more golf facilities. Most cities have municipally owned golf courses. The Calgary telephones book lists sixteen courses, six of them owned by the city.

They were built and are operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, and the expenses involved have equal priority with ball diamonds, swimming pools, skating rinks, etc.

In the Nanton School, golf is part of the phys-ed program and we are fortunate in having George Wright as instructor. Incidently, several of George's pupils can now beat the master!

To play any sport well requires self-discipline, and particularly in golf. Our young golfers found this out very quickly and we're very proud of the way they're developing as golfers and persons.

Nanton has been most fortunate in having a good golf course without much municipal capital outlay. The course is situated on town land, and the club has been almost totally self-supporting, with profits being used to improve the facilities.

This was made possible by the several hundred volunteers over the years who worked towards a goal. This of course is only typical of many projects that have been completed by the wonderful people living in Nanton and surrounding districts.

The Nanton Golf Club has a very large impact on the local economy. In 1977 the total club expenditure was over $42,000. This included about $18,000 in salaries and wages for ground and clubhouse personal (which also provided considerable employment for student summer work). A large part of the balance was spent with local business establishments.

Last year's total membership (347) included seventy adults from out of town. Added to this were about 2,500 green fees players, mostly from out of town.

Many of these people came here for tournaments, barbeques or for the Friday to Sunday weekends (staying at the local campsite). They quite often take in the local ball games, lacrosse games, swimming, rodeo, etc., and of course patronize our local stores and garages. The total amount of money these people leave in Nanton would be anybody's guess, but I'm sure it would be very considerable.

And lastly of course, is what