

RUDDINGTON GRANGE

THE idea for a golf course at Ruddington Grange, near Nottingham was first thought of some thirty years ago.

The original Grange dating from the 1700s was bought by a local brewing magnate, together with some 110 acres of land. The new owner tore down the existing mansion and set about building a modern replacement. Costing a staggering £63,000 in the 1950s, this dream home boasted aluminium double glazed windows, under floor ducted heating, air conditioning and an indoor swimming pool. There was a separate building to accommodate twelve staff.

All this was just for a private house, but the owner, being a farsighted businessman, evolved the plans in such a way that the whole property could be easily converted into a country club.

Working on the building at the time was engineer Jack Johnson who, knowing the owner well, made a promise that he would be the next owner of Ruddington Grange. Jack's wish eventually became reality fifteen years ago when he acquired the estate. The brewery chief and his wife had died, leaving the property to their 14 year old daughter. Jack had to wait a further seven years until the daughter came of age before completion of the sale could take place and he could take up residence. During those years the Grange was looked after by a caretaker and gardener.

Now, after a further 15 years, Jack Johnson has commenced development of the Grange and estate. Alterations to the house and other accommodation have already begun and he has awarded a substantial contract for the construction of an 18 hole golf course to CDC Landscapes of Waldringfield near Ipswich. CDC are a diverse group who have previously built courses near their base, including Waldringfield Heath which they have recently

extended to 18 holes. John Small, a recent past President of the Nottinghamshire County Golf Union has been appointed manager. A fine golfer himself, he has been able to advise on various aspects of course design.

CDC's site manger is John Glasgow, who is working with one of the group's directors, Phil Pilgrem. They have been fortunate in that the estate had considerable areas of high quality turf and several fairways have been mown out with little need for reparation and only minimal need for spraying against weeds. Construction of the greens, which are sand and peat over a stone drainage carpet, is already complete with all of them being sown this year with a mixture of bent and fescue. Tee construction is also well advanced. Particular attention is being paid to the construction of the greens areas. While the original layout did not offer detailed greens drawings, CDC's arcitect Phil Pilgrem made comprehensive drawings for each site, which now embrace all the natural undulations, grassy hollows and tight bunkering - all the hazards appreciated by the skilled golfer and dreaded by the novice!

Great care has been taken to preserve all the mature trees, which contain some fine species and unusual varities, including Cedar Lebanon and Spanish Chestnut. There will need to be some very careful tree surgery this winter and some addtional trees planted to enure that the course has maximum definition.

There are two man-made lakes, both of which come into play and which will not only serve to supply water to the course, but are large enough to be stocked with game fish. The design for the lakes and drainage was of particular interest to Jack Johnson, whose specialty in civil engineering is hydrodynamics.

The construction of the Ruddington Grange course, a par 71 of 6,500 yards, has certainly not lacked detailed supervision. The result will be a pleasing parkland course which is certain to be a good test of golf, with an especially demanding finish in front of the imposing clubhouse. The club has already opened its doors for membership and the alterations to the clubhouse are expected to be completed in time for a Christmas opening. The golf course will not be in play before the autumn of 1988, although foregreens have been cut well away from the proper putting surfaces to ensure that members can get the feel of the course next spring.

Future plans for Ruddington Grange include the rehabilitation of the 60 stall stables as an equestrian centre, the construction of tennis and squash courts as well as other sporting facilities.

No doubt the club will become quickly established with over 800 applications for membership already received. Ruddington Grange Golf Club will be a fitting testament to farsightedness of the owner and the care which has gone into its construction.

