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NEWS

Fox Harb'r Resort

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Rolling and meticulously crafted landscapes, the sight and salt-tinged smell of the Northumberland Strait and a taste of the Fox Harb'r lifestyle ... that's what a group of journalists recently got to enjoy.

Events began Wednesday evening with a reception at the Marina Lodge and a dinner at the Cape Cliff Dining Room.

For those who have never had cause to pass through the gates of Fox Harb'r, it's not unlike the type of place that James Bond – perhaps Connery, but most definitely Moore – might visit.

Passing through the gate, you follow a gently curving road – Amazing Grace Boulevard – along a rippling sea of green until you arrive at pair of buildings – a spa and a club house – and you find yourself wondering if the owner of the late model Mercedes S-Class you've parked beside will be someone famous.

If you've come in through the service road, as I did, you'd be left to wonder if there really is a golf course nearby. Here you'll still see many interesting sights, including private aircraft, a vintage fire truck, and plant nursery – but then you'll have also unwittingly spoiled a few surprises for yourself if you happen to be part of a tour later.

Inside the club house you'll pass through a restaurant and go by an equipment store to enter a marble floored hall lined with famously owned golf clubs, signed golf gloves and framed back issues of *ReJoyce Magazine*. It may also indicate you've come in through the wrong door, but nevertheless...

The journalists were soon taken to a

presentation conducted by Kevin Toth, president of Fox Harb'r.

Toth shared the history of the resort, how its founder Ron Joyce bought the 1,100 acre plot of land before Joyce and Dave Thomas merged their respective Tim Hortons and Wendy's franchises.

Toth explained that Joyce instantly fell for the property and declared it was worthy of being a National Park.

It, eventually, instead became a championship level golf course designed by Graham Cooke to be a blend of North American and Scottish styles. It began winning awards nearly as soon as it opened in 2000 and in 2009 Tiger Woods set the course record at nine under par.

Wayne Gretzky has been a visitor; as have UK prime ministers Tony Blair and John Major, American presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, US General Colin Powell and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

Golf is just a small part of what the resort has to offer.

Toth explained plans to expand the resort's appeal as a wedding destination or as a corporate retreat and conference centre. He presented Fox Harb'r as a central point to tourist destinations along the North Shore with Wentworth, Joggins, the Tatamagouche Train Station Inn and the Hector Heritage Quay all being a not unreasonable distance away.

Back at the ranch, Toth explained the resort offers horseback riding with a professional based out of Truro. In fact, 30 acres have been set aside for eventual equestrian purposes.

Two fully stocked trout ponds are open to catch and release fly fishing – catch and release applying to everyone except Chef

Shane Robilliard, whose kitchen serves as the first Ocean Wise sustainable restaurant in Atlantic Canada.

The resort also offers clay shooting and Toth made mention of a small, restricted, pheasant hunting program.

The resort also offers a 5km trail – the Fox Trot – a junior Olympic-sized pool, an extensive marina, a greenhouse, jetport, vast wine cellar and what was recently confirmed to be the province's second largest vineyard.

Toth said when he was hired it became his job to “map out the future” and he has been working to a 17-year plan. Those plans include a relocated and revamped conference space, a large wellness facility and plans for a possible 250 homes built on the grounds, with approval for 800.

The day's tour included a quick stop to the facility's golf academy and visit with golf pro Devin DeBay.

He explained that Fox Harb'r has partnered with Nike and can create fully customized clubs “within five business days.” DeBay also explained a device the club has on hand, a FlightScope X2 3D Doppler ball tracker which he stated was “as expensive as my car.”

“Having all this tech just helps our students, members and guests dramatically,” DeBay said.

Toth explained that teaching is a “key component” of the facility's expansion and that he intends to “keep investing in technology helping our pros be better pros and better facilitators.”

Sixteen acres of the resort is currently dedicated to the academy and Toth said other clubs in North America “can only dream” of such a facility.

The tour continued – via golf cart – to

Fox Harb'r's jetport, with a quick tour of the Joyce jet and greeting from Steven Joyce, CEO of Fox Harb'r. The port allows anyone with access to a personal air craft to land at the facility, which lends a certain air of convenience, if not exclusivity. The resort recently formed a partnership with Maritime Air Charter Limited which will see guests touching down at Halifax International flown in directly to Fox Harb'r.

From the jetport, the tour moved along to Fox Harb'r's greenhouse and its curator Michael Stewart. He is responsible for the growth of all plant life on the grounds – with the exception of the grass. This includes the flowers that make up the gardens around the resort as well as the vegetables used in the kitchen.

Stewart explained that a benefit to the in-house greenhouse is that it allows the facility to circumvent the usual floral supply change. It also means they have exactly the plants they want rather than what's available on the market.

Stewart plants 1,200 lilies every four weeks.

From the greenhouse, we moved on to a tour of the housing options. Housing at Fox Harb'r is mostly in the Cape Cod style and Toth said the older homes used a post and beam style, while newer builds have moved towards an open concept style.

The richness of the surroundings continued inside the homes. Kitchens, while not quite Maritime spacious, were loaded with granite counter tops, there was plush carpeting, white brick and tile bathrooms that included deep, jet tubs and a bidet.

The post and beam style homes, meanwhile, were quite spacious with an upscale

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cabin meets English cottage feel.

Suites and town houses are available for rent, while town houses and custom homes are available to purchase.



SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP
10:30 A.M.

Ownership, unsurprisingly, has its perks and a resident membership – with its \$75,000 initiation – is rolled into the cost of the home.

The tour then moved along to a glimpse of Ron Joyce's waterfront home and the resort's lighthouse.

The caravan of carts then made its way through the course and along the Fox Trot trail, which follows the rocky coastline.

Part of the trail juts out into the sea, providing a perfectly panoramic backdrop.

Our tour – that is to say, my tour – ended at Willard's, the restaurant which I had mistakenly wandered into just hours before. Dinner – or lunch if you like – began with a salad of apple slices, lettuce, crumbly cheese and vinaigrette. The main course was fish and chips. Delicious!

As plates disappeared from the table, the rest of the group planned their afternoons – that included horseback riding, golf, and yachts. I, however, had an office to return to and so took leave of this rather exclusive place and the rather exclusive people within it.