THE confidential GUIDE TO AUSTRALIA

BEFORE BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS ARCHITECT, THE AUTHOR WAS KNOWN FOR HIS OPINIONATED AND UNVARNISHED CRITIQUES OF GOLF COURSES

BY TOM DOAK









Clockwise from far left: Kingston Heath's 15th hole, No. 16 at National Golf Club, the 16th at Portsea. Previous spread: The 480-yard par-5 2nd at Royal Melbourne West.

IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO GET TO AUSTRALIA—more than 14 hours by air from Los Angeles—but today's trip is hardly as taxing as the six weeks' ocean voyage that Dr. Alister MacKenzie had to endure to make his landmark consulting visit to Royal Melbourne Golf Club in 1926. Because he went, so do you have to, if you are really intent on seeing all of the best courses in the world sometime in your life.

The sandy suburbs on the southeast side of Melbourne are home to a tremendous concentration of courses. Royal Melbourne's 36 holes touch boundaries with Victoria Golf Club and the public Sandringham; Commonwealth and Yarra Yarra share a boundary about three miles away; and within five miles lie Kingston Heath, Metropolitan, Woodlands and several other good layouts.

Farther south along the bay, there is a batch of newer courses, including Peninsula, and an even newer grouping of courses all the way to the tip of the Mornington Peninsula, including the public Dunes Golf Links, three 18s at the National, the Australian Golf Union's Moonah Links and the older Portsea Golf Club.

Altogether there are more than a dozen top-flight courses to play, and at least one you could play for the rest of your life. To help you sort out which ones to play, here are my opinions on the best of Australian golf.

Amstel Golf Club (Ranfurlie)

RANFURLY, VICTORIA

Michael Clayton and Bruce Grant, 2001

A new and better second course for an old Melbourne club at a remote location southwest of town. The property was only average—gently rolling and mostly wide open, with a few large trees to break it up—but the architects did a lot with it. Their Sandbelt-style bunkers are excellent, and the medium-size plateau greens ramp down to a flush approach so the run-up shot is always welcome.

amstel.org.au

Rating: 5 (July 2001)

The Australian Golf Club

SYDNEY

Totally remodeled by Jack Nicklaus, 1977

The fame of the Australian rests on its benchmark name and on the legacy of a MacKenzie layout, but mogul Kerry Packer convinced his friend Jack Nicklaus to completely renovate the course, and there is little left to recommend. It's a good, tough test of golf, but there are a lot of parallel, back-and-forth holes, and neither the greens nor the bunkering are any more inspired than the ponds that were dug.

australiangolfclub.com

Rating: 5 (March 1988)

Commonwealth Golf Club

SOUTH OAKLEIGH, VICTORIA

Sam Bennett, 1921; revisions by Charles Lane, Sloan Morpeth, Kevin Hartley

Once the hidden gem of Melbourne, this quiet club was armed with an outstanding array of holes. Small, tilted greens demand pinpoint approach shots from the correct half of the fairway. It was included in my original "Gourmet's Choice" selection because it was the only great Sandbelt course not touched by Dr. Alister MacKenzie; but I really felt it belonged in the list. Changes to holes such as the 1st (sacrificed because of the pace-of-play issues with having a driveable par 4 to start) and the par-3 7th (where a pond has been introduced) have taken it down a notch in my estimation, and the areas between holes have become choked by tree growth. But underneath it all there is still a course worth study.

commonwealthgolf.com.au

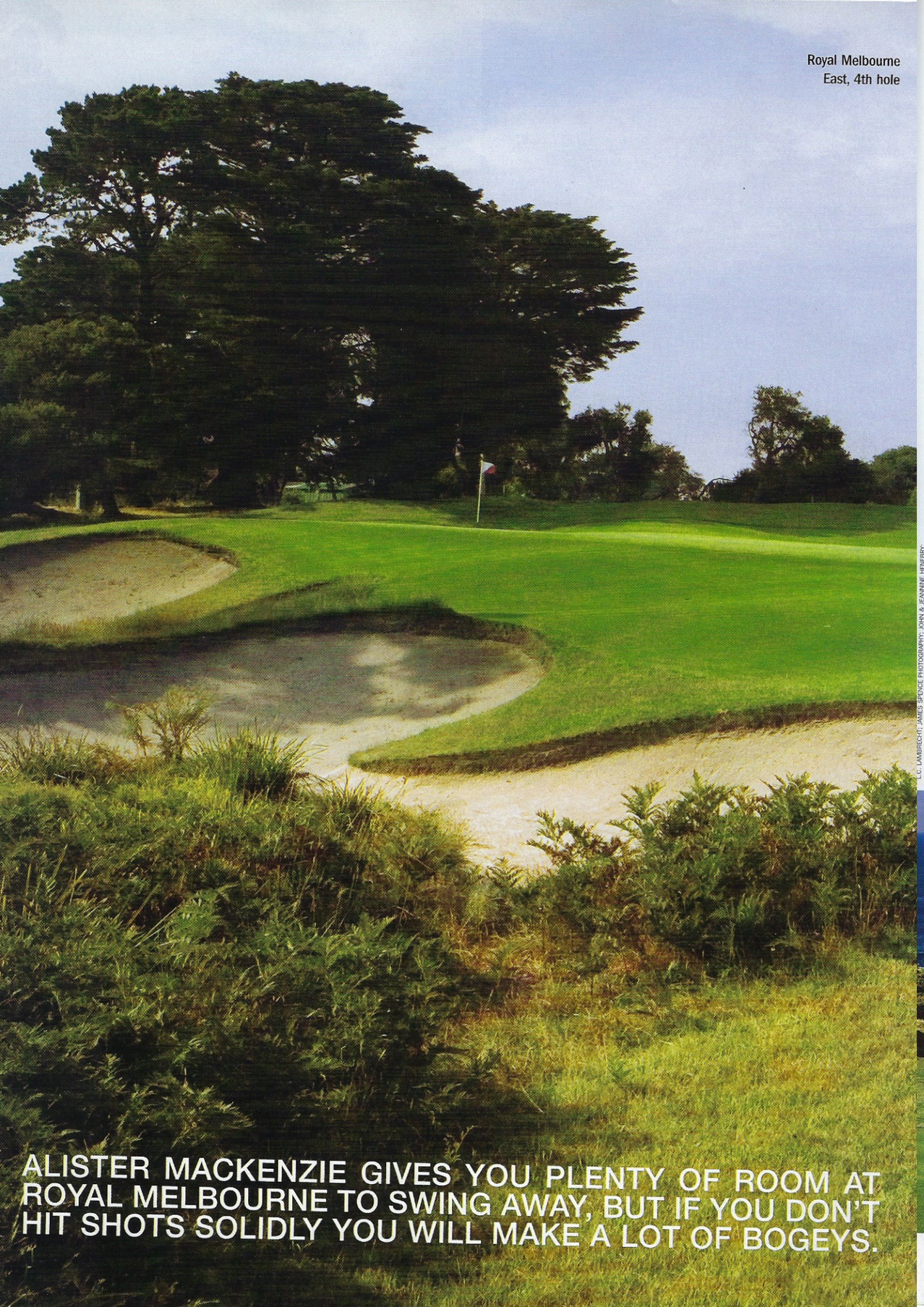
Rating: 7 (February 1999)

The Dunes Golf Links

RYE, VICTORIA

Tony Cashmore, 1995

A big, wild layout across a hilly, sandy site, the Dunes was the



Royal Melbourne
East, 4th hole

ALISTER MACKENZIE GIVES YOU PLENTY OF ROOM AT ROYAL MELBOURNE TO SWING AWAY, BUT IF YOU DON'T HIT SHOTS SOLIDLY YOU WILL MAKE A LOT OF BOGEYS.

fountainhead for the golf development of the Mornington Peninsula, and it's still a bargain to play. From tee to green it is rugged and dramatic, with nasty clusters of bunkers daring you to carry them to gain an advantage, and several possible blind shots. But the greens are artificially shaped platforms that don't have the same spirit to them, and a few bunkers are so severe that your best option would be a stroke-and-distance penalty. It's real golf, maybe even a throwback to the ruggedness of a hundred years ago, but the individual holes fall short of the mark.

thedunes.com.au

Rating: 5 (February 1999)

Huntingdale Golf Club

SOUTH OAKLEIGH, VICTORIA

Charles Alison and Sam Berriman, 1941; revisions by Jack Newton and Graeme Grant

In the original *Confidential Guide* I opined that the late David Inglis, the founder of the Australian Masters, must be a promotional genius if he could get a dull course like this ranked among the greatest in the world; we became friends because David took that as a compliment. In truth, nearly all the major tournament sites are overrated as golf courses, but Huntingdale helped prove the point when they started ripping up holes in the late 1990s to introduce some radical contouring into the mostly flat greens. I have not seen the changes, but as long as the back-and-forth routing through the trees is still the same, it can't matter much.

huntingdalegolf.com.au

Rating: 5 (March 1988)

Kingston Heath Golf Club

CHELTENHAM, MELBOURNE

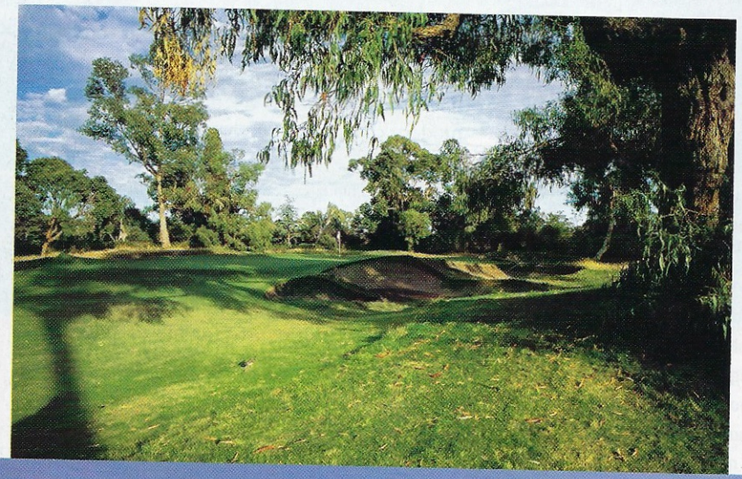
Des Soutar, 1925; bunkering by Alister MacKenzie and Vern Morcom; modifications by Peter Thomson, Graeme Grant, Michael Clayton

Just as the grand scale of Royal Melbourne is comparable to Pine Valley, Kingston Heath is very similar to Merion East as their respective continents' finest examples of architecture on a small acreage. Confined to just 125 acres on a fairly flat piece of ground, Kingston Heath nevertheless is clearly Melbourne's second-best course, and one of the top 30 or 40 in the world.

The routing plan is so intricate that you suspect you'll have to play a hole twice somewhere to get out of a tight corner, yet the plantings of ti-trees and dense shrubs prevent any sudden attack of agoraphobia and double as an excellent background for the intricate bunkering that really sets this course apart. Only the stupendous short 15th is a MacKenzie green, but others were modified by the longtime curator, Graeme Grant, adding much character in the process.

kingstonheath.com.au

Rating: 9 (August 2003)





There is variety of landscapes in Australia, from the sea at New South Wales' 5th to the trees at Woodlands' 7th (above).

C.C. LAMBRECHT; JAMES SPENCE PHOTOGRAPHY; JOHN & JEANNINE HENEBRY;

Kooyonga Golf Club

SEATON, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Cargie Rymill, 1923; revisions by Neil Crafter, Graeme Grant

This is Adelaide's second-best course, and a viable candidate for the country's top 10. The sandy layout has an unusual routing with back-to-back par-3 holes at the 14th and 15th.

kooyongagolf.com.au Rating: 6 (March 1988)

Metropolitan Golf Club

SOUTH OAKLEIGH, VICTORIA

J. B. MacKenzie, 1908; eight holes relocated by Dick Wilson

A fine club that has all the facilities to serve as a championship site, including a wonderfully maintained golf course, but to my mind it suffers in comparison to its neighbors because of the flatness of the property. The back nine is mostly Wilson's, a change forced upon the club when the local council decided to build a school on part of their property, but the bunkering and greens between the two halves are hard to tell apart. It's long, tough and fair, but lacking in memorable holes.

metropolitangolf.com.au Rating: 6 (March 1988)

Moonah Links (Open)

RYE, VICTORIA

Peter Thomson and Michael Wolveridge, 2003

Thomson calls this "the Leviathan," demonstrating in one swoop his un-golf-pro-like command of the English language as well as his total befuddlement at how to keep modern golfers at bay. His solution here was to stretch the course to more than 7,700 yards in a windy environment, and to build deep and penal fairway bunkers spread out in a manner where few pros will ever find them. It's neither a bad piece of land nor a bad routing, but it proves convincingly that golf at the scale of modern championship play is just no fun for you and me.

moonahlinks.com.au Rating: 5 (February 2003)

The National Golf Club (Moonah)

CAPE SCHANCK, VICTORIA

Greg Norman and Bob Harrison, 2000

This is a difficult course for me to assess fairly because I had done a layout for the same site in trying to get the job. (Unfortunately, I'm neither Australian nor the winner of the Open Championship, so the two design commissions went to Norman and to Peter Thomson.) I was certain the site should produce one of the world's top 100 courses, but there is not quite the great variety of holes for that, and the undulating beauty of the property, which I liken to St. Andrews with a view, has been obscured by bands of rough between the fairways. Especially at the finish, the designers put championship difficulty ahead of the enjoyment of the members.

nationalgolf.com.au Rating: 7 (July 2001)

New South Wales Golf Club

LA PEROUSE, NEW SOUTH WALES

Alister MacKenzie, 1928; revisions by Eric Apperly, Greg Norman

Occupying the oldest real estate in Australia—the very point around which Captain Cook sailed into the harbor to found Botany Bay Colony across the water—New South Wales is a rugged test of golf in a rugged setting. The land is a series of choppy ridges creating some dramatic elevation changes,



Barnbougle Dunes

For Americans, Tasmania symbolizes the ultimate remote destination; even if most Americans don't know exactly where it is, the name alone represents a place as far as one could imagine getting away. So it came as a surprise that our new course in Tasmania is accessible from Australia's major population centers, especially Melbourne—a one-hour flight and just over an hour's drive from the airport.

An island state 300 miles off the southeast tip of the continent, Tasmania is shaped like a triangle about 150 miles across; a significant part is still wilderness. There are 23 national parks, used for camping and hiking; upscale ecotourism and wineries have flourished recently, but hardly anyone took golf clubs.

Barnbougle Dunes is intended to change that. It is the brainchild of Greg Ramsay, who spent time in Scotland after college and became enamored with links golf. He knew there were miles of undeveloped dunes in Tasmania, and he talked a potato farmer named Richard Sattler, whose land was along the northern coast, into letting him put together a syndicate to develop 18 holes on his useless land; he then talked myself and Michael Clayton, a former European Tour player from Australia, into getting involved.

After Greg's financing fell through, Sattler built the project anyway, with the help of a few investors and the state government, which was most encouraging about a potential tourist attraction.

For all its great layouts, Australia has not had a true "destination" golf course—all the best courses are in the major cities—and it never had a true links. Barnbougle is a first in both categories. The front nine wanders through massive dunes, with some of the fairways near sea level and dunes 30 to 60 feet tall on the borders; several holes on the back nine run along the tops of broader dunes providing good views of Bridport Bay and a strand of beachfront. At the 18th hole, a sliced tee shot into the wind will wind up on the beach, where you can climb down and play your second shot back to the fairway!

Above all, we hope that Australians and visitors to the country will support the concept of "destination golf" in Australia, so that other great sites such as this will be developed in the future. —*T.D*


Moonah Links, No. 17

and much of the area between holes is covered in bottle brush, a native shrub that grows as thick as Scottish gorse (though thankfully without the prickly parts).

Ironically, the most famous hole, the par-3 6th with its tee on the rocks playing back to the headland that is Australia's answer to Cypress Point, is not MacKenzie's doing—local amateur Eric Apperly fine-tuned the design in the late 1930s and after the war, and all the short holes are his additions.

nswgolfclub.com.au **Rating: 8 (December 1998)**

Portsea Golf Club

PORTSEA, VICTORIA

Original nine holes by Jock Young, 1924; additions and revisions by Alex Russell, Gus Jackson, Jack Howard and Sloan Morpeth, Bruce Grant and Michael Clayton

An excellent older course near the tip of the Mornington Peninsula that evolved from nine holes to 10 to 14 to 18 over a long stretch of years. It is a compact layout over hilly but sandy ground, but there is an excellent variety of rolling and flat holes, long and short, and so forth. The recent removal of trees and reworking of bunkers have really taken it to another level, and the breezy, relaxed atmosphere reminds me a bit of my home club, Crystal Downs.

portseagolf.com.au **Rating: 6 (July 2001)**

Royal Adelaide Golf Club

SEATON, S. AUSTRALIA

Present course founded 1904; revisions by Dan Soutar, Alister MacKenzie, Peter Thomson and Michael Wolveridge

Dr. MacKeznie's layout around a sandy crater was the first consulting job of his whirlwind tour of Australia. That three-day visit to suggest changes established the course firmly in the country's top five, and makes Adelaide an important third stop on any golf tour Down Under. The best holes include the driveable par-4 3rd with nasty native rough to both sides; the par-4 11th with a Pine Valley-ish second shot to a green set in the crater; and the long par-4 14th, which swings to the right around a nest of bunkers.

royaladelaidegolf.com.au **Rating: 8 (March 1988)**

THE DOAK SCALE

0 A course so contrived and unnatural that it may poison your mind, one I cannot recommend under any circumstances. Reserved for courses that wasted ridiculous sums of money in their construction, and probably shouldn't have been built in the first place.

1 A very basic golf course, with clear architectural malpractice and/or poor maintenance. Avoid even if you're desperate for a game.

2 A mediocre golf course with little or no architectural interest, but nothing really horrible. As my friend Dave Richards summed up: "Play it in a scramble, and drink a lot of beer."

3 About the level of the average golf course in the world. (Since I don't go out of my way to see average courses, my scale is deliberately skewed to split hairs among the good, the better and the best.)

4 A modestly interesting course, with a couple of distinctive holes among the 18, or at least some scenic interest and decent golf. Also reserved for some very good courses that are much too short and narrow to provide sufficient challenge for accomplished golfers.

5 Well above the average golf course, but the middle of my scale. A good course to choose if you're in the vicinity and looking for a game, but don't spend another day away from home to see it, unless your home is in Alaska.

6 A very good course, definitely worth a game if you're in town, but not necessarily worth a special trip to see. It shouldn't disappoint you.

7 An excellent course, worth checking out if you get anywhere within 100 miles. You can expect to find soundly designed, interesting holes, good course conditioning and a pretty setting, if not necessarily anything unique to the world of golf.

8 One of the very best courses in its region (although there are more 8s in some places, and none in others), and worth a special trip to see. Could have some drawbacks, but these will clearly be spelled out, and it will make up for them with something really special in addition to the generally excellent layout.

9 An outstanding course—certainly one of the best in the world—with no weaknesses in regard to condition, length or poor holes. You should see this course sometime in your life.

10 Nearly perfect; if you skipped even one hole, you would miss something worth seeing. If you haven't seen all the courses in this category, you don't know how good golf architecture can get. Call your travel agent—immediately.


Royal Melbourne East, 16th hole

Royal Melbourne Golf Club

BLACK ROCK, VICTORIA

Alister MacKenzie and Alex Russell, 1926

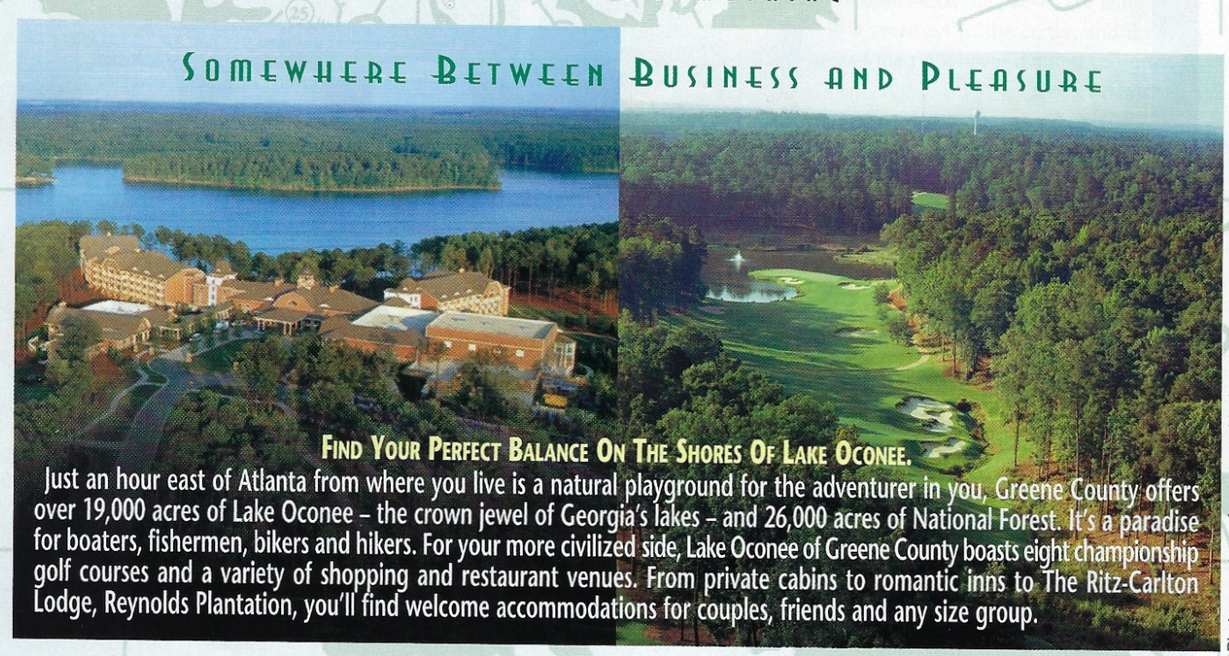
When I am pressed to identify the "Best Golf Course in the World," I always beg off, saying that there are too many great courses to pick just one. But if asked which is the ideal golf course, I can narrow the candidates to two: Royal Melbourne and St. Andrews' Old Course. That's why I believe that everyone interested in great golf courses must visit Australia sometime in his or her life.

Royal Melbourne is the masterpiece of Dr. Alister MacKenzie, who never bragged about it like his other courses because he never saw it finished. He came to Melbourne in October 1926 on the recommendation of the R&A, taking a fee of 1,000 pounds Sterling but agreeing to pay a 50 percent commission for any other consulting work the club located for him during his trip. Seven weeks later, MacKenzie left Australia having consulted on 19 courses, so not only did Royal Melbourne receive his best work, they actually turned a profit on his visit.

Two of those 19 courses are the West and East courses at Royal Melbourne, though there is some controversy about whether one should rate the two courses separately, or just the Composite course played for championships. To me, the point is moot: The West is a 10 on the Doak Scale and the Composite is slightly better.

There is also some controversy locally about the whirlwind nature of Dr. MacKenzie's visit and how much credit he really deserves for all of his Australian work. When he arrived in Melbourne the club assigned one of its members, the Australian Amateur champion Alex Russell, to work *(continued on page 98)*

L.C. LAMBRECHT



Photos courtesy of www.reynoldsplantation.com

Exploring Melbourne

WHERE TO STAY

Melbourne is a great and vibrant city, though not particularly a late-night party town. You will surely want to spend two to three days in the city, probably staying in one of the many new hotels near the Yarra River on the south edge of downtown, near the Victorian Arts Center. It's the coolest place in town on long summer evenings, and it's within walking distance of the Australian Open tennis facilities or the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Most of the golf courses, though, are southeast of town, a 30 minute drive—longer in the morning rush—so you might want to stay near the courses for part of your trip. The best deal in town may be the rooms for rent in the clubhouse at Victoria Golf Club; otherwise, small but nice motels in and around Dingley are the most centrally located for Royal Melbourne and Kingston Heath.

If you include the Mornington Peninsula in your itinerary, there is a wide range of accommodations there, from full-on resorts at Cape Schanck and Moonah Links to homes for weekly rental. Summer is the busy time and it is wise to book ahead: On my last trip I almost wound up sleeping in the car.

WHAT TO DO

Melbourne is a sports-mad town and to get a feel for the city you should try to attend one of its many sporting events. Depending on the season, you can watch Australian football, which was born in Melbourne, cricket, international rugby, swim meets or the Australian Open tennis.

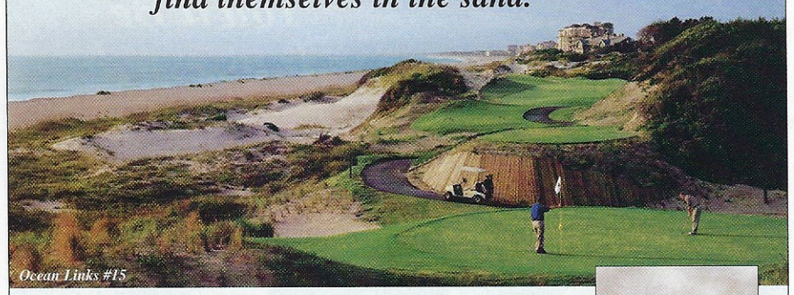
The centerpiece of Melbourne dining is the variety of first-generation ethnic cuisine, particularly Greek and Indian. First-time visitors should leave a bit of time to understand the nature of this island continent. Healesville Sanctuary, 90 miles northeast of Melbourne, is a world-class venue for an up-close view of Australian wildlife, including koalas, wombats, platypus and the Tasmanian devil. Phillip Island, southeast of the city and about an hour east of the Mornington Peninsula, is a very touristy locale to watch the migration of little penguins at dusk, but the birds are sensational and kids will love it.

Melbourne is also a fascinating city for architecture, with new buildings mingling alongside Victorian-era edifices and cathedrals. The bank of the Yarra River is particularly fascinating, with the mod Federation Square on one side and Flinders Street Station across the street.

—T.D.



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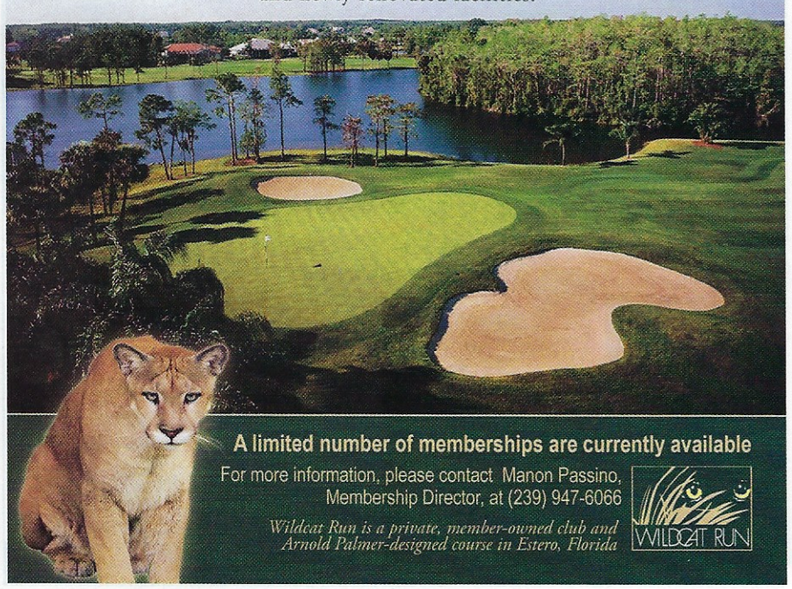
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WILDCAT RUN

(continued from page 54)

with MacKenzie and to follow up his recommendations after the architect left the country; they also assigned their superintendent, Mick Morcom, to work closely with MacKenzie in constructing the changes to the course.

The three men got along famously, and during his six weeks in Melbourne,

IF ASKED THE IDEAL COURSE, I CAN NARROW THE LIST TO TWO: ROYAL MELBOURNE AND THE OLD COURSE.

MacKenzie instructed them on his design philosophy and his ideas about natural-looking golf course construction. They only worked on the course a little bit—building, I believe, the par-3 5th on the West course while MacKenzie was on site—but by the time he left, Russell and Morcom were as capable of continuing his work as any partners the Doctor ever had. When the West course was finished, the two men went on to build the East course in the MacKenzie style, even though only a handful of the holes had been contemplated by the Doctor himself.

Unless you are a tour pro, the visitor to Melbourne will likely be confined to playing the West and East courses as the members do, so I will describe them in that configuration. The Composite course was put together from holes of both courses in 1959, when the club wanted to charge admission to the Canada Cup and realized it could not, because both courses crossed public roads. So they selected the best 18 holes out of 21 within the central property. It's a doozy of a layout, including six of the very best holes from the East course, but the sequencing of the holes was changed for the Presidents Cup in 2000 so it would be very confusing to describe it here.

The West course starts with one of the widest fairways in golf—83 yards across back in 1988 when I played it for the first time. However the hole is also 430 yards long, so for the club member it takes two very solid shots to get home in regulation. This combination of width and length is the first attribute of Dr. MacKenzie's design: He gives you plenty of room to swing away, but if you don't hit shots solidly you will be making a lot of bogeys.

The 2nd hole is a very short par 5 playing back parallel with the 1st hole and points out the newly perceived weakness of Royal Melbourne's design. The average member can't carry a sprawling fairway bunker on the right and must play to the left, then back around another long and deep bunker guarding the last 50 yards of the left side up to the green; but today's longer hitters bomb it 70 yards over the bunker and hit a medium iron to the green.

With the East 17th fairway behind the tee, there is no way to lengthen the hole, so this is the first of four short par 5s that are really good two-shotters for the best players of today. It is true that very low scores can be had in competition, yet when the wind blows and the course gets firm the course can bite back even the best of golfers, and it is still just ideal for everyone else.

EVERYONE INTERESTED IN ARCHITECTURE MUST VISIT AUSTRALIA AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES.

The next three holes play around a large central hill, and here is where Dr. MacKenzie's genius for routing delivered a brilliant solution. The short par-4 3rd plays along the side of a hill, with a sharp little swale in front of the green usually rewarding the player who keeps his drive out to the right of the dogleg left.

The long 4th hole is the key to the routing, driving up and over towering fairway bunkers in the top of the hill, leaving room for two holes on the East course on the left while creating two of the most dramatic shots in golf—the second shot is impressive, played from a downhill lie along the

RARIFIED LAKES.

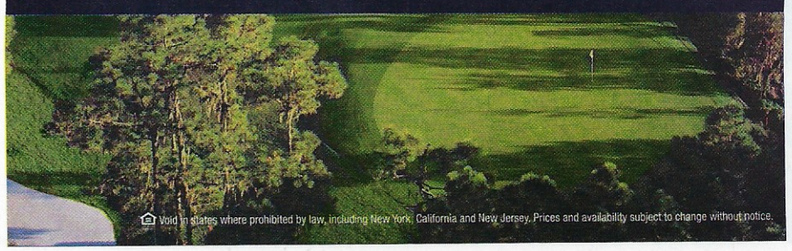
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edge of a drop-off to the right, to a green guarded by a massive bunker at the left front. Then you are positioned right by the 5th tee to play one of the game's best picture-postcard par 3s, with sand and scrub to both sides of the green and a frightening tilt from back to front.

I could go on describing every hole because they are all worth mention, but the highlights of the West course are the dog-leg par-4 6th, 11th, 17th and 18th, the long par-3 16th (one of four holes across the road that are not used for the Composite course—the other two not used are the West's 8th and 9th), and the short par-4 10th, which is in a class of its own.

The East course includes seven holes within the central paddock, the first four and last two of which are included in the Composite course. After the 4th, the East crosses a main boulevard and then a residential street a bit farther out, and the road crossings and a bit flatter property are what keep the East course from being recognized as a top course in its own right.

Still many Australians rank it among the country's top five, and it earns a 6 on the Doak Scale. But it is when you come back into the main paddock and lay eyes on the par-3 16th East that you begin to appreciate the strength of Royal Melbourne. This might be the most stunning par 3 on the whole property (if not the whole city, in a city chock full of great short holes), but it is left out of the Composite course because there were too many holes and they had to walk around one somewhere!

Rating: West: 10 East: 6

royalmelbourne.com.au (March 2004)

Royal Sydney Golf Club (Championship)

ROSE BAY, NEW SOUTH WALES

S.R. Robbie, 1896; revisions by Alister MacKenzie, Peter Thomson and Michael Wolveridge, Ross Watson

This parkland course in Sydney's toniest suburb has been described as occupying the most expensive real estate of any course in the world, although I suspect Los Angeles Country Club and Steve Wynn's new course on the Las Vegas Strip might argue the point. The clubhouse is near the harbor but the course plays inland up a long, narrow valley. There are a lot of bunkers, but they don't give the flavor of the Melbourne Sandbelt; a host of designers in recent years have moved around the bunkers to try to put a little more life into the golf, but still the only holes I remember fondly are the short par-4 opening hole and the tough par-4 finisher, which plays up to an imposing clubhouse.

rsgc.com.au Rating: 6 (December 2003)

Sandringham Golf Club

SANDRINGHAM, VICTORIA

Alister MacKenzie and Alex Russell, 1929

This public layout, directly across the street from Royal Melbourne, inherited some holes from the original Royal Melbourne layout and gained some new ones when Dr. MacKenzie was in the neighborhood. Some beautiful (but dilapidated) greenside bunkering was built by Mick Morcom, but there is no fairway bunkering whatsoever—the course also lacks the native grasses and plants between the holes that make its neighbors so beautiful. The uphill par-4 14th is the best hole on the property.

sandringhamgolf.org.au Rating: 3 (March 1993)



Victoria Golf Club

CHELTENHAM, VICTORIA

Alister MacKenzie, 1927; revisions by Peter Thomson and Michael Wolveridge, Michael Clayton and Bruce Grant

In Australian circles this is generally considered third best of the Sandbelt layouts, partly because of the involvement of Peter Thomson, who was a longtime member. But for many years it was overrated because the original bunkering had been obliterated. Recently, the club is making a resurgence by restoring the bunkers to some 1930s photographs, but as of yet the change is not strong enough to overshadow either greater strategic interest of Commonwealth or the great par-3 holes of Woodlands and Yarra Yarra.

victoriagolf.com.au Rating: 7 (August 2003)

Woodlands Golf Club

MORDIALLOC, VICTORIA

Rowley Banks and Mick Morcom, 1913; revisions by S. Bennett, C. Plant, J. Scott, Morcom

Had Dr. MacKenzie set foot at Woodlands, I suspect it would outrank Metropolitan and Victoria as the third-best course in the Sandbelt, but any course without the famous pedigree suffers in international renown. Instead, Woodlands' quality owes everything to MacKenzie's understudy Mick Morcom, the Royal Melbourne superintendent who followed through on the construction of many of the courses MacKenzie visited during his two months in Australia. Woodlands' bunkers and small greens are some of Morcom's best work.

The par-3 holes rival Melbourne's best—and thereby some of the best in the world—but I found most interesting the short par-4 3rd and 4th holes, each slightly under 300 yards, and the 550-yard 15th. On all three, the approach shot should be a short one, but the greens are so small and firm and hemmed in by trouble at the sides that the wise player will opt to play a running approach instead of a pitch. I can't remember the last time I saw a hole in America that really cried out for a run-up shot—and here are three on one course!

woodslandsgolf.com.au Rating: 7 (February 1999)

Yarra Yarra Golf Club

BENTLEIGH EAST, VICTORIA

Alex Russell with Mick and Vern Morcom, 1929

I have received much mail from this club insisting that the design of their 18 holes is entirely Alex Russell's, laid out a few months after Dr. MacKenzie left the Antipodes, and I have no real evidence to the contrary. Yet Yarra Yarra's par-3 11th hole, with its wicked green, is more reminiscent of MacKenzie than many of the holes he actually constructed!

Perhaps he just taught his disciples well. The four short holes at Yarra Yarra are about as good as you could hope to find anywhere, and the par-4 5th, with a giant bunker-infested knob short left of the green, is one of my favorite holes in golf. However, the club has traveled in retrograde in recent years, flattening a couple of the coolest greens and having trouble with the neighbors over the many right-hand boundaries on the course. In fact, dealing with O.B. right may have been Alex Russell's weakness as a designer; Royal Melbourne East has several similar problems.

yarrayarragolf.com.au Rating: 6 (March 1993)

