



# THE MELBOURNE SANDBELT

*Tom Doak's*

## BOLD

*Statement at  
Yarra Yarra CG*

**THE GENIUS OF ROYAL  
MELBOURNE WEST**

**HUNTINGDALE'S  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
LEGACY**

REDESIGNING  
THE **2ND** AT  
VICTORIA GC

**WELCOME BACK  
RORY!**

WINTER 2025



THE ROYAL MELBOURNE GOLF CLUB



# WELCOME GOLFERS

Winter on the Sandbelt has its own kind of magic. The air is crisp, the fairways are firm and the golf is pure.

In this issue, we celebrate some big news: Rory McIlroy is coming to the Sandbelt. With his commitment to the Australian Open for 2025 and 2026, we thought it was the perfect time to look back at Huntingdale's rich tournament history and the courses that have made this region world famous.

We also take a closer look at what makes The Royal Melbourne Golf Club's West Course so special, the redesign of the 2nd at The Victoria Golf Club, and the bold architectural choices at Yarra Yarra Golf Club.

We check in on The Metropolitan Golf Club, now fully reopened after a major redesign, revisit the coming together of Peninsula and Kingswood to form one of the Sandbelt's modern standouts, and showcase Kingston Heath's beautifully crafted short course - a thoughtful addition to an already worldclass layout.

There's also a look back at Peter Thomson's profound connection to the Melbourne Sandbelt region and a first look at Commonwealth's new caddie logo and apparel - a modern take on a classic symbol that pays tribute to tradition with a fresh edge.

Wherever you're reading from, we hope this issue gives you a fresh appreciation for the courses, characters, and stories that make the Melbourne Sandbelt unlike anywhere else in the world.

We hope to see you soon!

*The Melbourne Sandbelt*

**PLAN YOUR TRIP**

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**PROUDLY CREATED BY**

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**McILROY**  
**CONFIRMS**  
**FOR 2025 AUSTRALIAN OPEN**

*Rory McIlroy*



**AUSTRALIAN  
OPEN MEN**  
MELBOURNE

**4-7 DECEMBER 2025** THE ROYAL MELBOURNE GOLF CLUB

**MELBOURNE**  
EVERY BIT DIFFERENT

**GOLF**  
AUSTRALIA

challenger  
**PGA TOUR**  
AUSTRALASIA

**DP WORLD**  
**TOUR**



# A GOLF HOLE THAT ASKS QUESTIONS

BY MARTIN BLAKE



***Some golf holes look and feel the same as the one that you have just played, or the one before that. Others, you won't forget quickly, and the 10th at Yarra Yarra sits firmly in the latter genre.***

People have been talking about it – and arguing about it – ever since Tom Doak's restoration of the Sandbelt club was unveiled in 2020-21.

It's possible to find opinion – often from better players – that it's a classic, short par-4. Others are not quite so charitable, including a few of the Yarra Yarra members.

Either way, architect and former touring professional Mike Clayton thinks it is a good thing to have the discussion. He loves the reworked Yarra Yarra with its open vistas and its famously quick and true greens.

Clayton advocates for bold architecture and there is no doubt that this offering by American Tom Doak and his design partner Brian Slawnik, who had the task of improving a golf course that is approaching 100 years old, fits that category.

It's only 306-metres and plays downhill; driveable for longer hitters and a wedged second for many. The green is raised by almost two metres above the surrounding land, tilts from front-to-back and is fiendishly narrow with downward-facing lips at the edge so that balls that are not hit quite on the correct line are rejected.

Played downwind, it is difficult to hold the green. These balls can run 20-metres away and the player is left with another putt up the slope, or a tricky 'flop' shot back to a putting surface that begins to look deceptively receptive.

Many have compared it with the iconic fourth at Woodlands in the Sandbelt, and the short 13th at The Lakes in Sydney.

Memorable is the word that comes to mind. Difficult, is another. Eagle is a possibility and birdie is achievable, but so is double or even triple bogey. Which in some ways, is the signature of the hole.

"Every course should have a controversial hole," says Clayton. "It's not that hard to hit a drive down the middle there and wedge

it on to the green. But because it's such a short hole, it needs to be demanding.

"It's like the fourth at Woodlands or the third at Kingston Heath. It's like all the great short holes. The better the drive, the less demand there is on the pitch. But if you hit a poor drive and you end up with a bad angle, it gets increasingly difficult."

The 10th green at Yarra Yarra for some years was sited farther back, toward a storage dam, slightly longer and with the water in play. Clayton says this should never have happened, and Doak's restoration returned it to where the original architect, the great Alex Russell, arguably this country's finest ever, had drawn it when he signed off on the work.

Yarra Yarra President Michael Reidy said the club's board was hellbent on sticking with its original ideas of Doak and Slawnik as architects rather than making change on the basis of any individual's feeling, including board members. That's why Yarra Yarra has a Course Integrity Group and also why the restoration has earned widespread acclaim.

Clayton believes that the critics of the 10th



Yarra Yarra  
Hole 10  
*McDonald*



hole are resistant to unconventional architecture, citing the short par-4 third hole at Dr Alister Mackenzie's famed Augusta National as an example of work that challenges the norm and eschews the boring.

"If you built that (Augusta's third) now, everyone would go nuts. So many of the great, short holes are controversial. The 10th at Yarra is a good example of the third at Augusta. If you bounce it one or two metres to the right or left of where you need to, it runs off the green.

"But the people who criticise the 10th at Yarra, they'd give their arm or leg to play at Augusta. Golfers have this idea that everything should be fair. But the reality is that if you make everything fair, you're just sanitising it."

Yarra Yarra's longtime Head Professional Andrew Bertram said the 10th made golfers think. "The Melbourne Sandbelt is home to many great short par 4s, with 10 West at Royal Melbourne, the 15th at Victoria and the 3rd at Kingston Heath coming to mind. All of these holes challenge the better player to make a clear decision. Which of the dozen ways to play the hole will I choose?

"The 10th at Yarra Yarra falls into this category, a clear decision is required and generally the driver is not the best option un-

less executed perfectly. If your driver finishes on the green it gives the opportunity of eagle, miss the green right and par is a challenge."

"The challenge of the 10th is like many great short par 4s, you need to be committed to your course of action and for most players this is to leave yourself a full wedge to the green from the left half of the fairway. You then need to fly the ball onto the middle of the green with a well struck shot. Trying to bounce a shot onto the green is full of danger."

Yarra Yarra is booming and the club is rightfully proud that it has climbed back to No. 16 on the latest Golf Australia magazine course rankings.

"What we've achieved at Yarra Yarra and the applause that's come our way is based on the fact that we have stayed disciplined to a course architect and to honouring the McKenzie-Russell way as renewed through Doak and Slawnick," says Michael Reidy.

We may never reach a consensus about the greatness or otherwise of the 10th hole - but that is part of the beauty of this game. The debate itself is healthy; it's why we all love golf.

# COMMONWEALTH REVEALS NEW CADDIE LOGO, HONOURING CLUB HISTORY



## A TIMELESS SYMBOL FINDS NEW LIFE IN A MODERN IDENTITY.

Commonwealth Golf Club is proud to honour its rich history while stepping into the future. This year, the club has introduced a striking new Caddie Logo, drawn directly from one of its most cherished artistic treasures - the stained-glass windows in the clubhouse dining room.

## A LEGACY IN GLASS

Since 1929, two beautiful stained-glass windows have graced the clubhouse thanks to a generous gift from foundation member Willie Wheildon. Created by Brooks, Robinson & Co. and designed by artist Wheildon, these windows are more than just decor - they're pieces of club history. Like all artists employed over the years by the firm, Wheildon had been trained in England, first in Warwick and Birmingham



"THE TIME WILL COME TO MAN, MARK WELL  
WHEN FATE WILL DARKLY SCHEME  
A SLENDER LINE TWIXT HEAVEN AND HELL  
WHILST PUTTING ON THE GREEN"

before his recruitment to Brooks, Robinson in 1905. He worked at the company until 1938 and died in 1941.

Many windows made by him, but never identified by a signature of either the artist or firm on the glass, are showcased in Churches across the State.

One window, in particular, features a charming depiction of a young caddy, rendered with detail and craftsmanship. This image has served as the direct inspiration for the club's new logo.

## INTRODUCING THE CADDIE LOGO

The new Caddie logo is a fresh take on Commonwealth's iconic stained-glass figure - a respectful nod to the traditions and values that have shaped the game over generations.

## NEW COMMONWEALTH MERCHANDISE NOW AVAILABLE

To celebrate the launch, the Pro Shop is now stocked with a fresh line of branded merchandise featuring the Caddie Logo, including:

- Classic polos and outerwear
- Stylish caps and headwear
- Golf towels and tote bags
- Collector's items and accessories

Whether you're on the course or off, these new pieces let you carry a piece of Commonwealth GC tradition with you.

## TIMELESS. MODERN. UNIQUELY COMMONWEALTH.

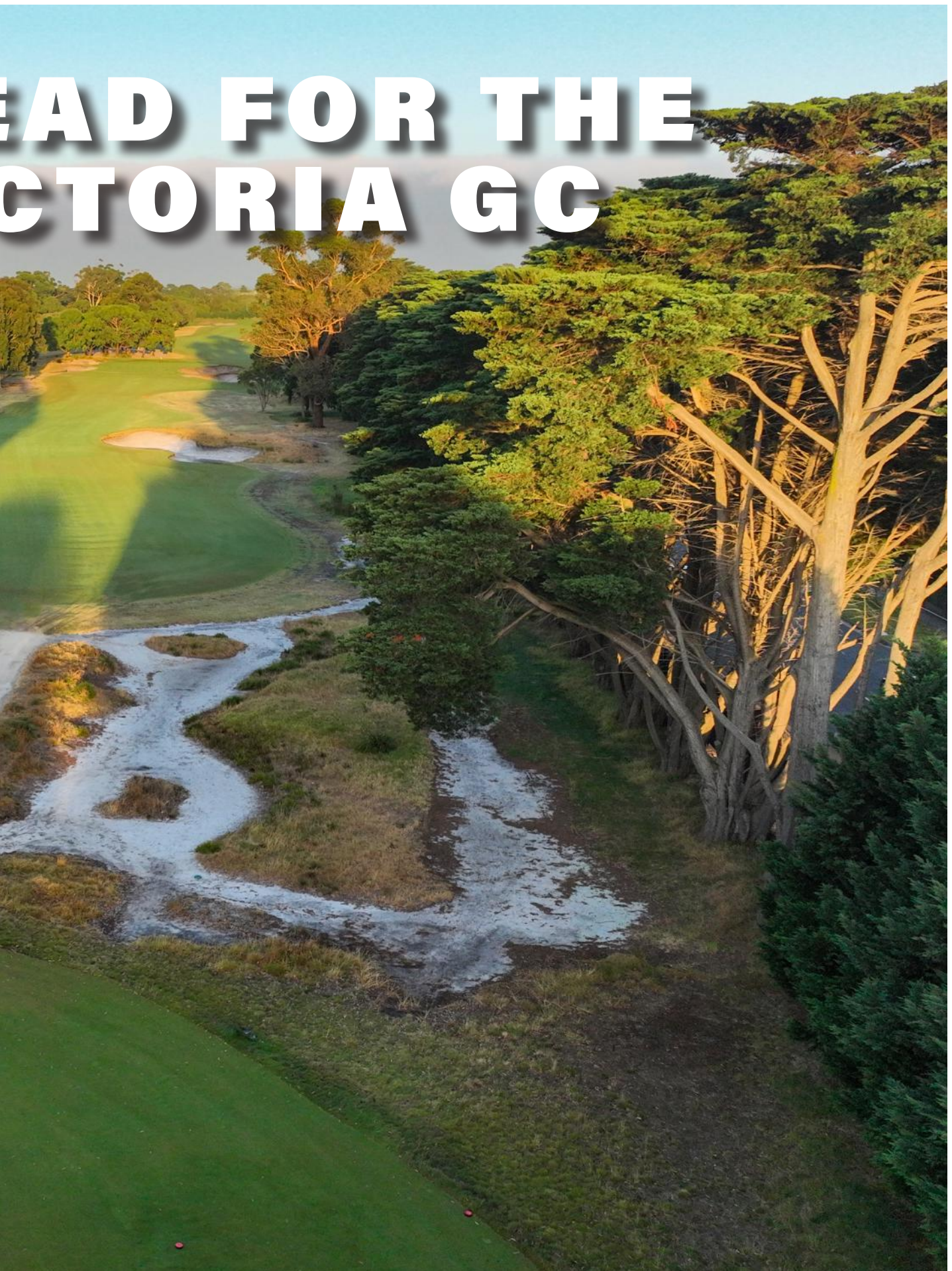
The stained-glass windows will always be a part of the clubhouse. Now, thanks to the new logo and merchandise, their legacy will live on in new ways, for new generations.



# WHAT'S AHEAD 2ND AT VICTORIA



# HEAD FOR THE VICTORIA GC





*Convert rough to a combination of sand and heathland plants and grasses*

*Widen fairway*

*Proposed new back 3rd tee*

***The 2nd green at Victoria has long been one of the most distinctive on the Sandbelt. Defined by a ridge that runs through the middle of the putting surface, it offers a unique strategic test and a visual point of difference early in the round.***

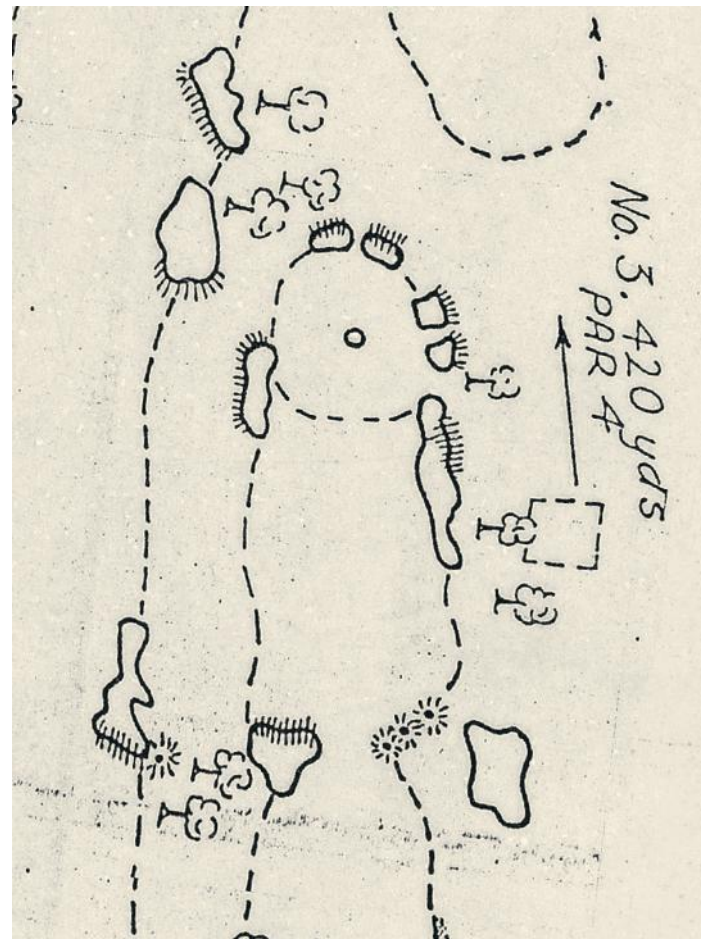
When the green was re-grassed in 2018, it also presented the opportunity to introduce a few additional pin positions - most notably along the right side, including the challenging back-right spot. This new position works particularly well with the fairway strategy, rewarding those who take on the left-side bunker from the tee and find the ideal angle in.

As part of the proposed 2025 works, there is renewed interest in reintroducing one or both of the rear greenside bunkers, which feature prominently in early historical references - including a 1931 sketch and 1933 aerial photograph. While the existing hollows are well-liked, the reintroduction of a back-left bunker is under consideration. Retaining some of the hollow and short grass on the right side would preserve playability while increasing the challenge for pins in the back half of the green.

This subtle change would also help differentiate the hole from others in close proximity, such as the 3rd and 5th.

Another potential enhancement is to the area short-right of the green - once shaded by a large willow tree. There are plans to convert this area of rough into native heathland, continuing the club's broader environmental direction. Leaving a section of exposed sand would create a natural buffer between the fairway and the heath, improving both visuals and playability. Historic drawings even suggest this area may once have featured a sand scrape or bunker.

Taken together, these proposed refinements aim to elevate the strategic and visual appeal of an already beloved hole - ensuring the 2nd continues to stand out for all the right reasons.





**EXISTING VIEW**



**PROPOSED VIEW**



The West Course at Royal Melbourne is one of the most respected layouts in world golf — and it's not hard to see why. The land rolls naturally, the bunkering is bold and deliberate, and the whole place feels as though it's grown out of the Sandbelt rather than been built on it.

There's a rugged simplicity to the course. Native grasses frame each hole, the fairways twist across undulating ground, and the bunkers cut sharply into fairways and greens. The look is classic Sandbelt — raw but refined, and full of options.

The greens are the course's real calling card. They've long been rated the best in Australia, not just for their condition, but for the way they're built. Large and flowing, they reward the right angle in and punish anyone out of position. The further you are from the ideal line off the tee, the tougher your shot gets.

Royal Melbourne's history stretches back to 1891, with Royal status granted by Queen Victoria in 1895. The club moved to its current Sandringham site in 1901 and has hosted countless major amateur and professional events since.

In 1926, Dr. Alister MacKenzie was brought in to design the new course at Black Rock. What he left behind was the West Course — now considered one of his greatest works, up there with Augusta National and Cypress Point.

MacKenzie's design works with the land, not against it. His bunkering is dramatic, his greens echo the shape of the landscape, and his emphasis on angles and shot-making still holds up today. The West isn't about power — it's about thinking your way around.

Playing the West is an experience in subtlety. Holes that seem straightforward off the tee reveal their complexity as you approach the green. It asks questions, then punishes the wrong answers. There's no trickery — just pure, strategic golf where the best line is rarely the obvious one.

It's this quiet brilliance that continues to draw admiration from architects, professionals, and club golfers alike. Royal Melbourne doesn't shout for attention. It doesn't need to. It remains the benchmark — not just for Australian golf, but for what great design can look and feel like, even a century on.



**WHY THE ROYAL  
MELBOURNE  
CLUB'S WEST  
COURSE STAYS  
THE STANDARD**

# NATURAL GENIUS



**ROYAL  
E GOLF  
ST  
ILL SETS  
ARD**

*Rendering by Mike Cocking*



The Royal Melbourne Golf Club - Hole 5 West



***The Metropolitan Golf Club on Melbourne's Sandbelt is once again fully open for play - and it's an awesome new experience in a traditional style.***

With all 19 holes remodelled by Paul Mogford of Crafter+Mogford, following almost two years of staged closure, the Club is welcoming back Members and guests, corporate clients, and interstate and international guests.

The course is famed around the world for its meticulous fairways and unique bunkers cutting decisively into the putting surfaces and astounding viewers on television in the World Matchplay and the World Cup. It's a unique feature. One of the key elements of the latest works was the replenishment of the green profiles to yield firm surfaces which best characterises Metropolitan.

The giants of world golf have played at the Metropolitan course in suburban Oakleigh for more than a century and relished the impeccable fairways. Way back to Walter Hagen, Jimmy Demaret and Gene Sarazen, who won the Australian Open, they sang its praises and the beauty.

Like all great works of golfing art, it was time for enhancements designed with the express goal of *'Making Metro more Metro than it has ever been'*.

It has been largely brought about by disruption to the course in the early 1960's - a consequence of the compulsory acquisition of land which saw the loss of most of the back nine holes.

American architect Dick Wilson was charged with the difficult task of laying out similar calibre holes, to those on the first nine advised by Dr. Alister MacKenzie. Wilson had less conducive land which, for the most part, was lower-lying and less sandy in nature.

Wilson's differing architectural approach to that of MacKenzie, who visited in 1926, brought about a disparity between the two nines. In subsequent years, a number

of course architects have remodelled a hole or green, considered by many to contribute further to this disparity.

Paul Mogford wrote, "Throughout our early conversations with the Club it was our contention that the course contained a number of outstanding holes - most of which occurred on the front nine, being the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. While the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> holes also stood out on the back nine - the balance of holes needed varying degrees of modification and or improvement.

As one respected golf architecture pod-caster said recently "Metropolitan is now much more cohesive... there's this design



and aesthetic cohesion between the holes on the first and second nines... Metropolitan hasn't had one systematic overhaul for a very, very long time, maybe even in their history... one of the things that members will really like is that they've had one big go to work on the entire course and have some consistency across the entire layout... it seems cohesive and it flows really well, that's a plus of doing a big project like this."

Commissioned in 2014, Crafter+Mogford prepared their Course Enhancement Plan (CEP) which would guide the future redevelopment of the course and its practice facilities. The plan also outlined their philosophies towards creating a sustaina-

ble and indigenous landscape, one which is true to the original vegetation that existed pre settlement.

While the CEP identifies many more minor changes, or embellishment, on the highly regarded MacKenzie holes there were some significant changes interspersed on holes 3, 6 and 9, particularly historical in nature.

Across the entire course there has been a general expansion of greens to create corners for more challenging pin locations and to emphasize the strategic values of each hole remodelling of bunkers, particularly greenside.



# A NEW ERA AT THE METROPOLITAN GOLF CLUB

Now re-opened for visitors, you can share the experience those greats of the past relished. And those who followed like Nicklaus, Palmer, Player, Ballesteros, Els, Crenshaw, Dame Laura Davies, Ray Floyd, Phil Mickelson, Trevino, Karrie Webb and many more. Gazing from the large windows in the new clubhouse overlooking the 18<sup>th</sup> green one can visualise the agony and the ecstasy of tournaments past.

Where Greg Norman three putted in the final round to lose two Australian Opens and Peter Thomson, just 22, won his first Australian Open in 1951 and proceed to win five British Opens.

To experience Metropolitan and the vista from the Clubhouse to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> greens and beyond has any golfer itching to get out there and trace the footsteps of those legends of the game.

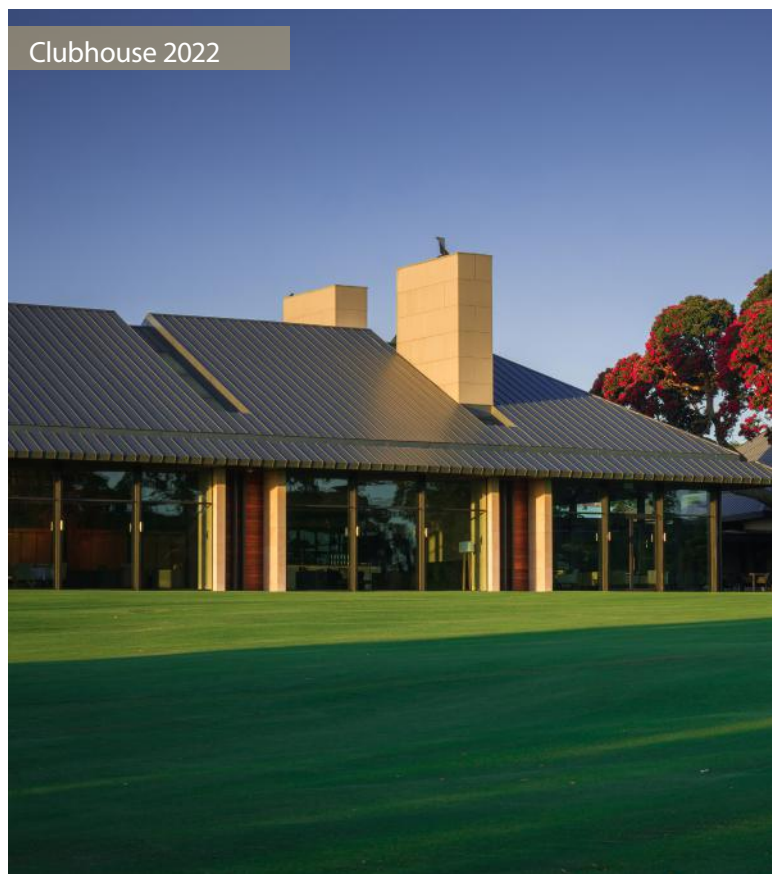
You could re-live the frustration of the thousands of Aussies who joined “Arnie’s Army” in 1978 and witnessed his 20-metre putt on the last hit the back of the hole and jumped out just as the band started to play “For He’s A Jolly .....” Hundreds of balloons were released at the same time.

Arnold Palmer had lost the Victorian Open by one shot and Guy Wolstenholme and the 18<sup>th</sup> green had won again. And the great man later sought out the course superintendent to congratulate him on producing such a magnificent championship golf course. That’s class.

Gene Sarazen



Clubhouse 2022

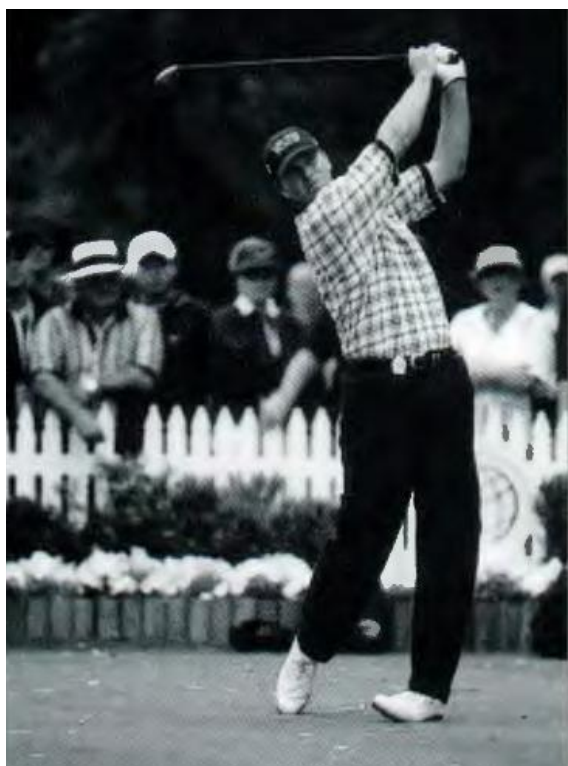




Peter Thomson victorious in 1951



Jack Newton - Australian Open Champion 1979



Steve Stricker 2001 World Matchplay Champion at The Metropolitan Golf Club



Brad Faxon - 1993 Australian Open Champion, The Metropolitan Golf Club 1993

An aerial photograph of a golf course, showing a lush green fairway with several large, irregular sand bunkers. The bunkers are filled with light-colored sand and have dark shadows cast across them. The surrounding area is filled with dense green trees and foliage, with a path or road visible in the upper left corner. The overall scene is bright and sunny, with strong shadows indicating a high sun position.

## **THE METROPOLITAN GOLF CLUB & CRAFTER+MOGFORD:**

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE COURSE ENHANCEMENT PLAN**

- Bring balance & cohesion to the two nine holes of golf – to ‘Make Metro more Metro than it has ever been’.
- Imbue the back nine with the best architectural attributes of the front nine.
- Redress elements of Dick Wilson & other course changes inconsistent with MacKenzie ideals - embodied in the best holes at Metro.
- Continue to develop a cohesive set of ‘sandbelt’ yet ‘Metro’ style bunkers.
- Increase the strategic interest & challenge of each golf hole.
- Increase challenge of the championship course without unduly impacting regular member play.
- Introduce a classic short par 4, or half par, hole(s) to the course.
- Create a sustainable landscape which increases the ecological values of the site through greater diversity of indigenous flora and fauna.
- Landscape to transition from exotic/native plantings to an indigenous heathland consistent with the ecological vegetation classifications of the site.
- Sandy-heath roughs & carries.



# THE FURROWS AT KINGSTON HEATH

## *A MODERN CLASSIC IN THE SANDBELT*

The Furrows at Kingston Heath Golf Club, opened on April 22, 2023. this nine-hole par-three course is a stunning addition to Melbourne's famed Sandbelt, seamlessly blending thoughtful design with accessibility and charm.

### **A VISION BY OCM GOLF**

The Furrows was brought to life by the acclaimed design firm OCM Golf, comprised of Geoff Ogilvy, Mike Cocking, and Ashley Mead. The course is set on a 10-acre plot known as "Madden Land," formerly used as a market garden and overflow parking during major events. OCM's mission was clear: To create a course that is as enjoyable for beginners as it is stimulating for seasoned golfers.





Drawing inspiration from the main course at Kingston Heath and iconic holes from around the world, The Furrows is a celebration of strategic shot-making. The holes range from 50 to 140 meters, requiring creativity, precision, and a keen sense of terrain.

### **A THOUGHTFUL LAYOUT**

The course features an intuitive routing of four holes out, one across and four holes back with many crossovers. One of the standout features is a shared green between the third and sixth holes - a design element that adds an unexpected twist and complexity to play.

In keeping with the Sandbelt tradition, The Furrows showcases distinctive bunkering. The sandy hazards are not only visually striking but also strategically placed to challenge decision making and reward thoughtful play.

### **CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

During construction, the team encoun-

tered varying sand depths, necessitating the removal and replacement of sand to shape the terrain effectively.

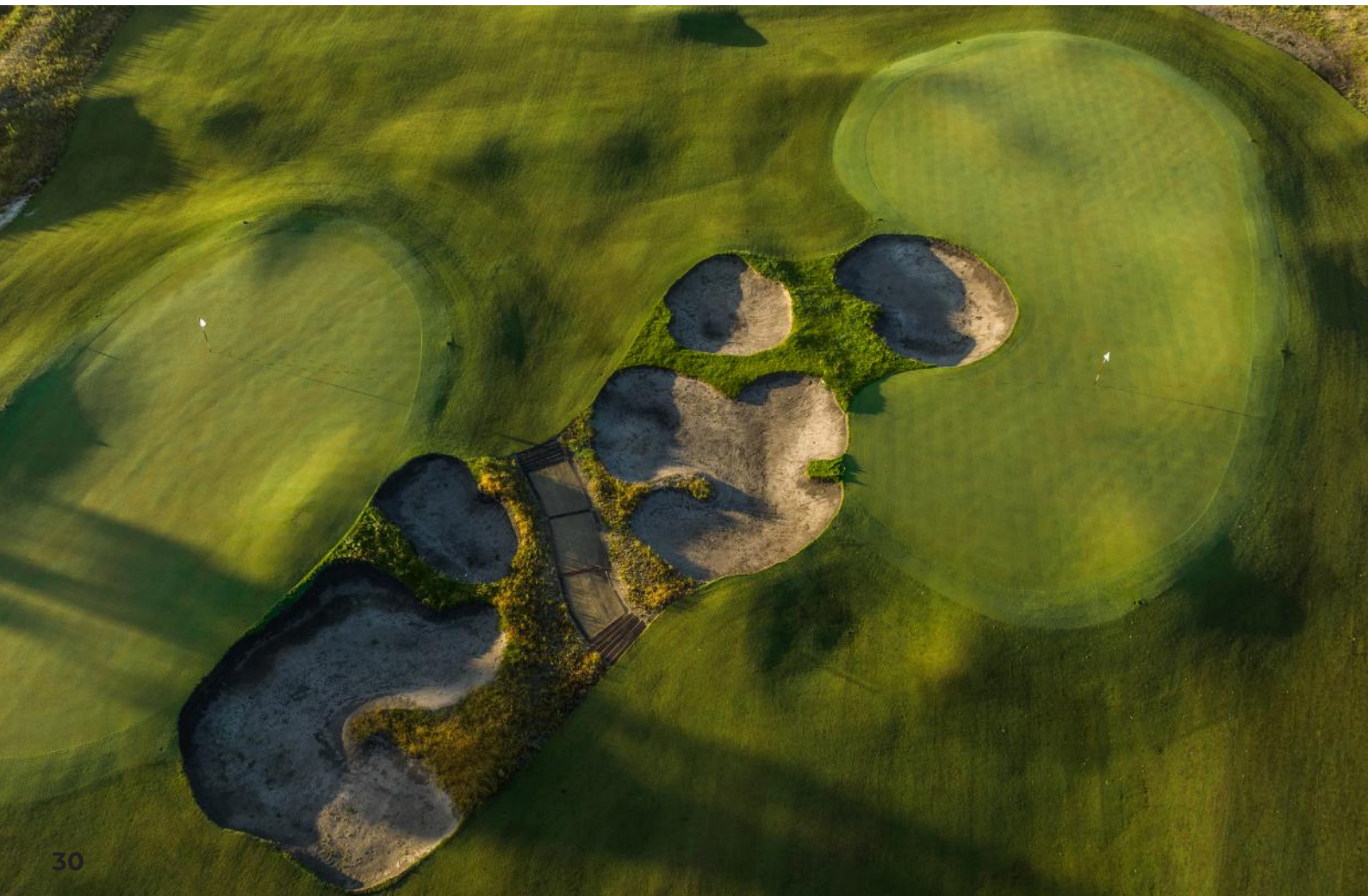
The course was seeded with Pure Distinction bentgrass and landscaped with over 50,000 native plants and grasses, promoting ecological sustainability, the result is a course that feels both wild and refined, embracing the essence of its environment.

### **ACCESSIBILITY AND EXPERIENCE**

The Furrows is primarily available to Kingston Heath members and their guests. However, golfers from reciprocal clubs or those with prior arrangements may also enjoy access, making it a fantastic destination for golf lovers.

The course's design, charm, and attention to detail make it more than just a short course - it's a modern take on traditional golf values, offering an experience in under two hours.

**FIND OUT MORE HERE**





JAGUAR



BRYSON INDUSTRIES LTD.

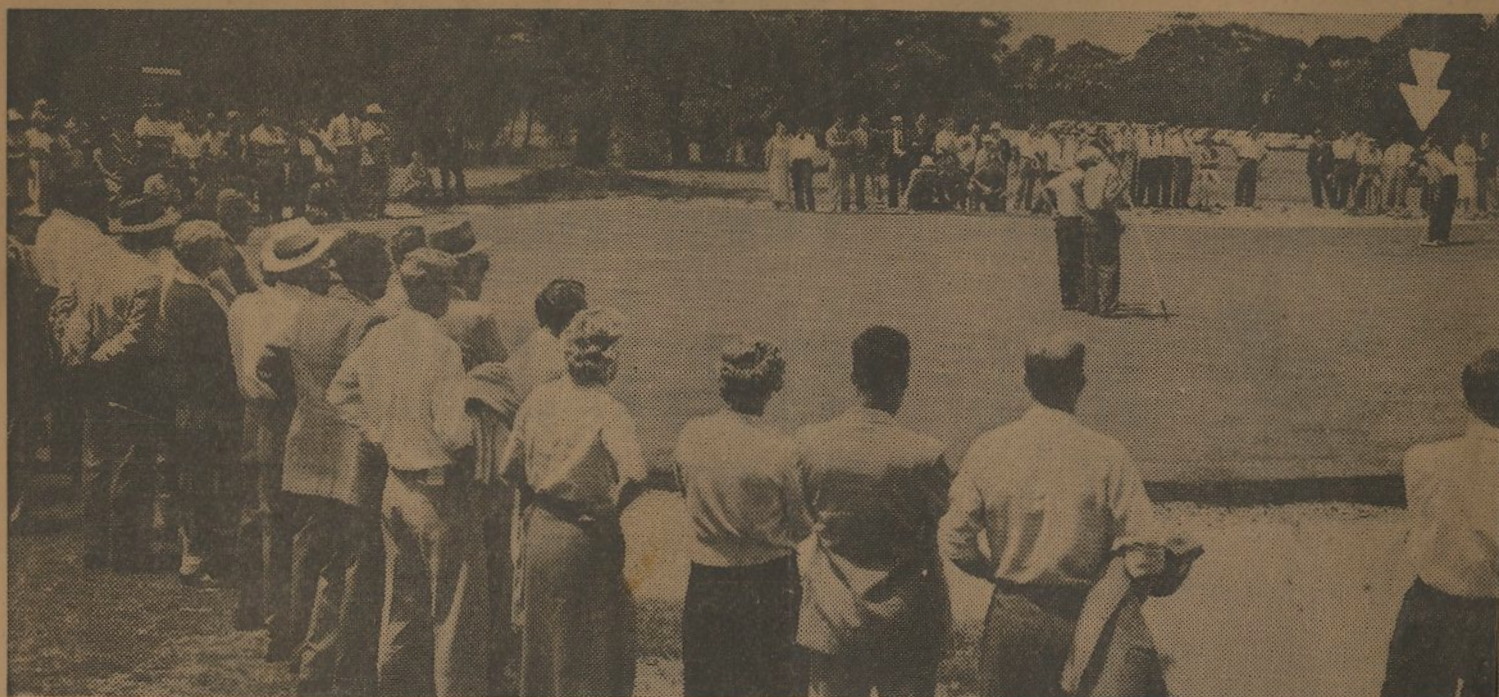
182-192 Exhibition St., Melb. FB 2141

The



MELBOURNE.

# THE 18th — THOMSON LOS



GALLERY surrounding the 18th green at Huntingdale. Thomson (arrow) putting in the final of the Australian professional championship.

## Thomson's lead cut by Player

By J. M. DILLON

Great shot-making by the star players of Australia and South Africa — Peter Thomson and Gary Player — marked today's final of the Australian professional championship at Huntingdale.

It was a superb display that thrilled the gallery and a grim fight between a slugging, dour little man and a cool, calculating golfing machine.

Thomson did the first nine in 35 against par 37 to be 3-up. Player came home in a brilliant 34 to be only two down after 18. By the 22nd hole in the afternoon Player was only one down.

Thomson did the morning round in 70 against par 73 and standard scratch 75. Player took 72. First 18 figures were:— Thomson out 543, 434,

Player hooked his second to a bunker, and recovered over-strongly — and holed a 15-footer for a birdie at the eighth.

"I've knocked one in at last," murmured Thomson, as he walked off the eighth.

Player sliced his second to the ninth into a deep pit, recovered 23-ft. short, and holed the putt for a half.

after his tee shot, took his approach too thinly and sent the ball scuttling through the green to a bunker from which he recovered too strongly and lost the hole.

### HELD THE PACE

They started the afternoon session more brilliantly than in the morning.

Each got a perfect four



PLAYER FIGHTS BACK — With this bold shot, Player fought back to level the 18th green in two, forcing Thomson to a third putt.

## EIGHT VATC

# THIS ONE IN PRO. FINAL



Huntingdale this afternoon to watch Peter Thom-  
Australian professional championship. He missed

# HUNTINGDALE'S CHAMPIONSHIP LEGACY

Leading jockey W. Williamson will decide tonight or  
tomorrow whether he will fit the Royal Symbol, one  
of the top horses in the world, in the Eclipse Stakes  
at Caulfield. The race will be the first of the season  
in case Williamson can take it.

*Huntingdale Golf Club's legacy as a stand alone 18 hole  
course in Australian golf is marked by its consistent role in  
hosting the most significant tournaments (over 40) by any  
course in Australia and attracting top-tier talent from around  
the world. Here is a timeline of the significant tournaments  
held over the years.*

shot from a fairway bunker Gary Player reached  
then two-putted for a win.

**RACES FOR**

Williamson said to-  
day that he felt "pretty  
good" about his injured  
foot was respond-  
ing well to treatment.  
"All the swelling has  
gone down," he said.  
"I don't know whether I  
will be able to ride to-  
night or first thing to-  
morrow." Williamson  
said he was one of the  
four jockeys involved  
in the smash in the Raw-  
don Stakes last Saturday.  
Royal Symbol finished  
third to Baroda Beam and  
Araleum in the Bendigo  
Cup yesterday but many  
keen judges declared that  
he was unlucky to have  
been beaten.  
Royal Symbol's trainer,  
George Daniel, said today  
he would wait until he  
knew whether the horse  
was fit to race.

Theo Lewis, however, is  
desperate for a jockey for  
his horse, Saturday Sel-  
don, in the Bendigo Cup  
when you have a horse  
that is so good, he said,  
you must have a jockey  
for him, but that's  
the problem. With R. Hutchinson, P.  
Hutchinson, J. Gil-  
christ, and J. Preston, J. Gil-  
christ, the jockey who  
won the jockey pen-  
nion in Melbourne is the  
worst it has been for years.

## ANOTHER?

Lewis said he had made  
no interstate inquiries in  
his search for a jockey for  
Harry Lime.

The horse was ridden by  
G. Bougoure when he failed  
in the Bendigo Cup yes-  
terday.

jockey. His trainer, John  
Mitchell, asked Neville  
Selvon to come from  
Sydney to ride the horse  
but he refused.  
"I said today that  
nobody would ride the  
horse but he might try  
and see," said Selvon.  
"I don't know whether  
he will come down."  
"I will have to have a  
good look at the horse from  
the inside," he said.  
The lightweight Royal  
Halo is the only other  
Eclipse Stakes runner  
without a jockey at pre-  
sent.

## Table tennis match scores 33

Summer table tennis  
"A" pennant matches last  
night resulted:—

## 1946

### **The Huntingdale Purse**

Huntingdale Golf club decided to hold a 72 hole professional tournament in August 1946. This was the first of many professional golf tournaments.

## 1948

### **Victorian Close Championship**

The inaugural Victorian Close Championship took place at Huntingdale in 1948, with Ossie Pickworth securing the title.

## 1957

### **Australian Professional Championship**

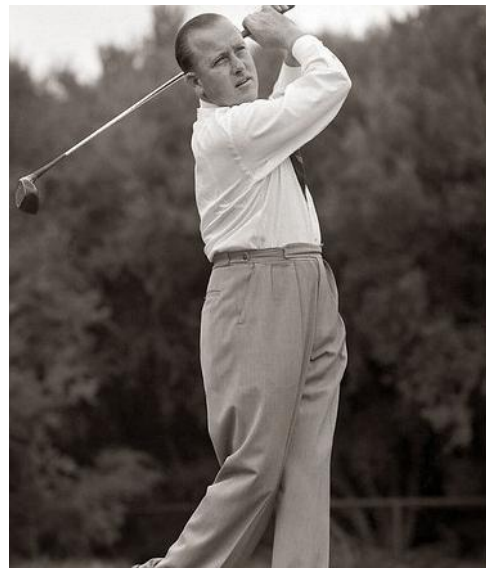
Held at Huntingdale Golf Course - Peter Thomson lost to South Africa's Gary Player in the match play final.



## 1948

### **Ampol Tournament**

The April 1948 edition of the Ampol Tournament was held at Huntingdale Golf Club. Winner: Ossie Pickworth



## 1959-1960

### **Coles Tournament**

**1959 Winner:** Peter Thomson

**1960 Winner:** Len Woodward

Sponsored by Coles Stores, this tournament was held at Huntingdale for two consecutive years.

## 1962

### **Victorian Open**

Bruce Devlin

# 1968

## Victorian Open

Peter Thomson



# 2015

## Australian Masters Returns to Huntingdale

The tournament returned to its original venue, with Peter Senior clinching his third Masters title at the age of 56.



# 1974

## Victorian Open

John Davis

# 1979-2008

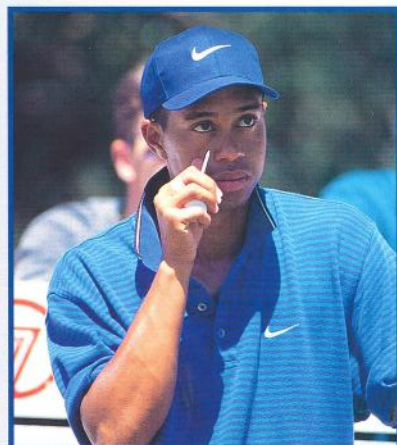
## Australian Masters

Established in 1979, the Australian Masters became Huntingdale's signature event being hosted a total of 31 times during this period, earning it the title "Home of the Australian Masters." The tournament attracted global stars like Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Seve Ballesteros, and Tiger Woods. Greg Norman notably won six times between 1981 and 1990

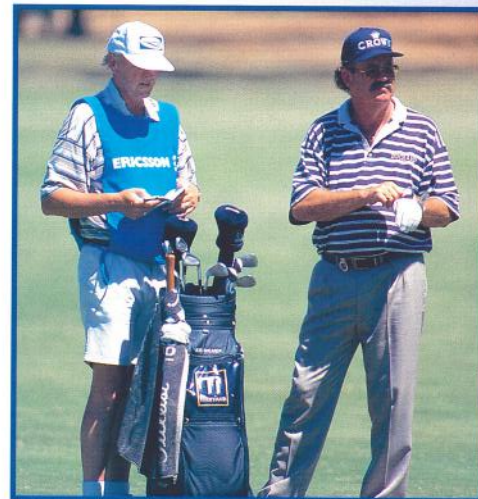
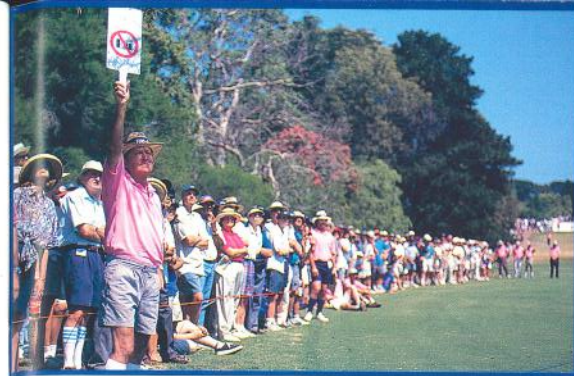


# Memories from the 1997 ERICSSON MASTERS

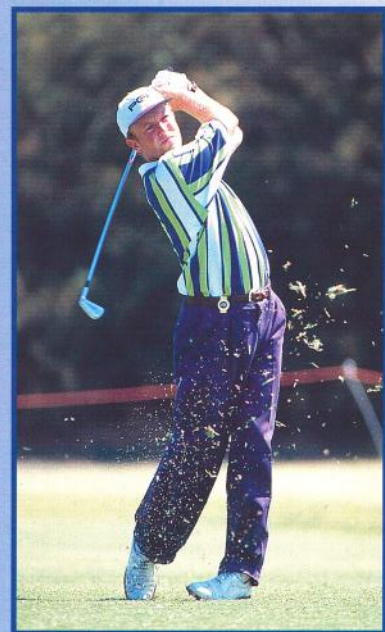
Photographs by Paul Shire



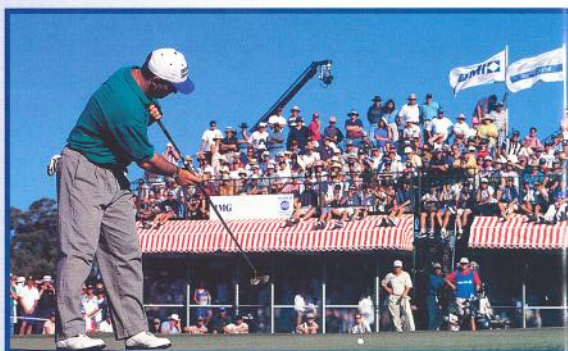
Tiger Woods added his own flair.



Bob Shearer, runner up in the first Masters tournament in 1979.



Jarrod Mosely.



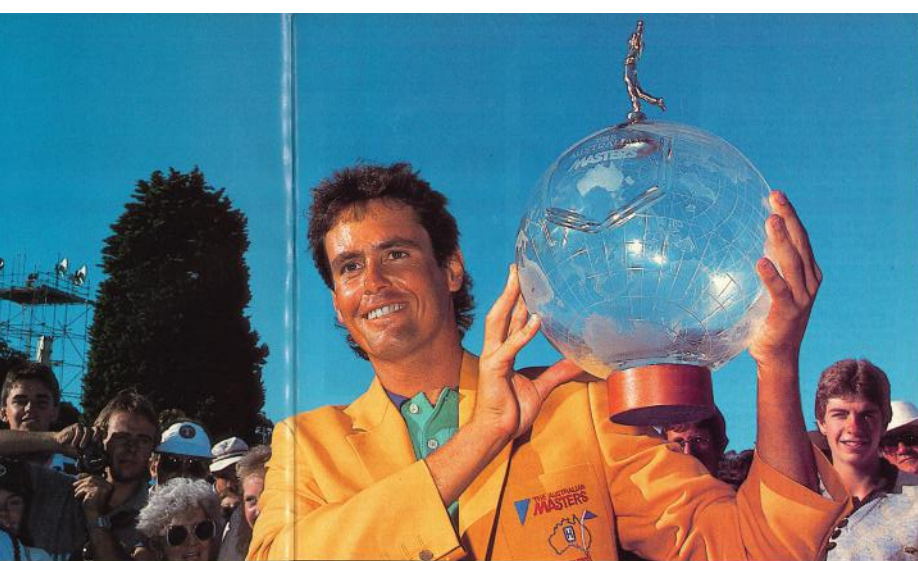
Peter Lonard makes his final winning putt.



Television coverage on Channel 7 has added to the popularity of the event.



Searching for Tiger.



It was the 10th birthday of the Australian Masters and the finish spectacularly matched the occasion. Huge galleries hushed as Ian Baker-Finch, Craig Parry and Roger Mackay staged a sudden-death playoff. It was to be Baker-Finch's title with one of the most memorable shots in golf. The three stars recall the climax.

36

by PHIL TRESIDDER

## WHAT A FINISH!

**ROGER MACKAY:** For me, the last round was sustained tension, climaxing with the last hole where I knew I needed a birdie to catch Baker-Finch and Parry. It was crucial that my drive off the 18th found the fairway to give me a chance at the flag. The drive was a good one, fading from the left over the mounds and leaving me about 197-yards from the flag. My caddy and I agreed on a 3-iron as the club for my second shot.

They had cut the pin back left. I made

the heart of the green my target and the 3-iron was right on line. Now I steadied myself for the putt that could give me a birdie and vault me into a tie with Baker-Finch and Parry and, hopefully, a playoff. It was a tough putt, straight initially but six-feet from the cup there was a tricky break of some 18-inches.

I put a good stroke on the ball and saw it curve nicely to take the break. It rolled unerringly to the cup and disappeared

dead centre. What a moment!

I signed my card then stepped into the media tent next door where I could watch Parry then Baker-Finch play the last hole on the television cameras. If either got a birdie I was out of business. Parry was in the next group and he had to settle for a par. He joined me in the media tent and now we both were sweating it out. It was Baker-Finch's turn in the last group but the birdie putt that would have won him the Masters outright eluded him. We both

AUSTRALIAN MASTERS PROGRAM



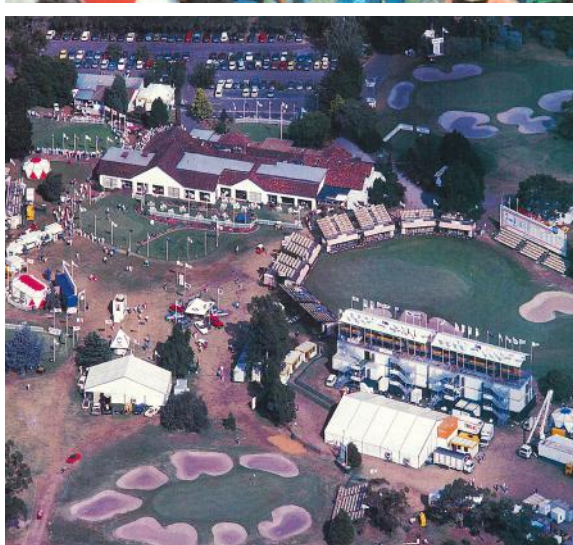
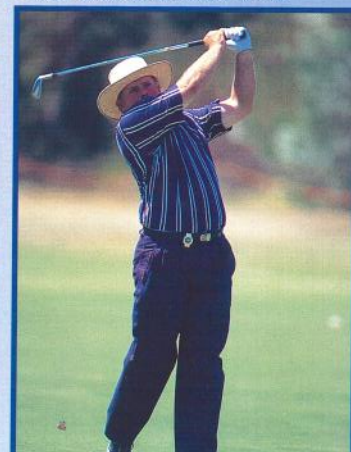
very vantage point in the amphitheatre of the 18th hole.



The tournament's youngest competitor?



Popular Queenslander, Peter Senior.



# THE MERGER OF PENINSULA & KINGSWOOD

*Words and Photography by William Watt.*

*Extracted from the hardcover book 'Peninsula Kingswood' co-authored by William Watt and Mike Cocking and published by Contours Agency.*





Nothing truly remarkable comes easy. Behind every great achievement, hidden behind the glossy exterior of success, are many days, months and usually years of toil, stress and even pain. A string of smaller victories, seemingly inconsequential at the time.

A series of setbacks that can deflate and conflate the final goal, obscuring the original vision and hampering progress for all but the most dedicated and passionate pursuers. Victory, if it comes, for it is not assured, brings with it not only immense satisfaction, but a legacy for future generations to enjoy. The newcomers might not have witnessed or even know about the battle, or even the names of the heroes that led them there. Most heroes don't want accolades – the satisfaction of achievement is enough. But every now and then it's worth reflecting on their journey, and being thankful for the vision and grit that helped make it to the finish line. This is the story of those who brought the Peninsula Kingswood vision to life.

It's a calm winter morning in Melbourne, in what would turn out to be a brief respite from the interminable lockdowns that would mark 2021, almost as just as much as 2020, as a year to forget. But if there's been an upside to this whole thing, it's that days like today, when I'll be sitting down, in person, with five of the principal players of the Peninsula Kingswood merger, are something to relish, rather than 'just a coffee'. As the gates to Peninsula Kingswood open, and the long, flowing driveway stretches out ahead, weaving between pristine golf holes, it's as if this place was



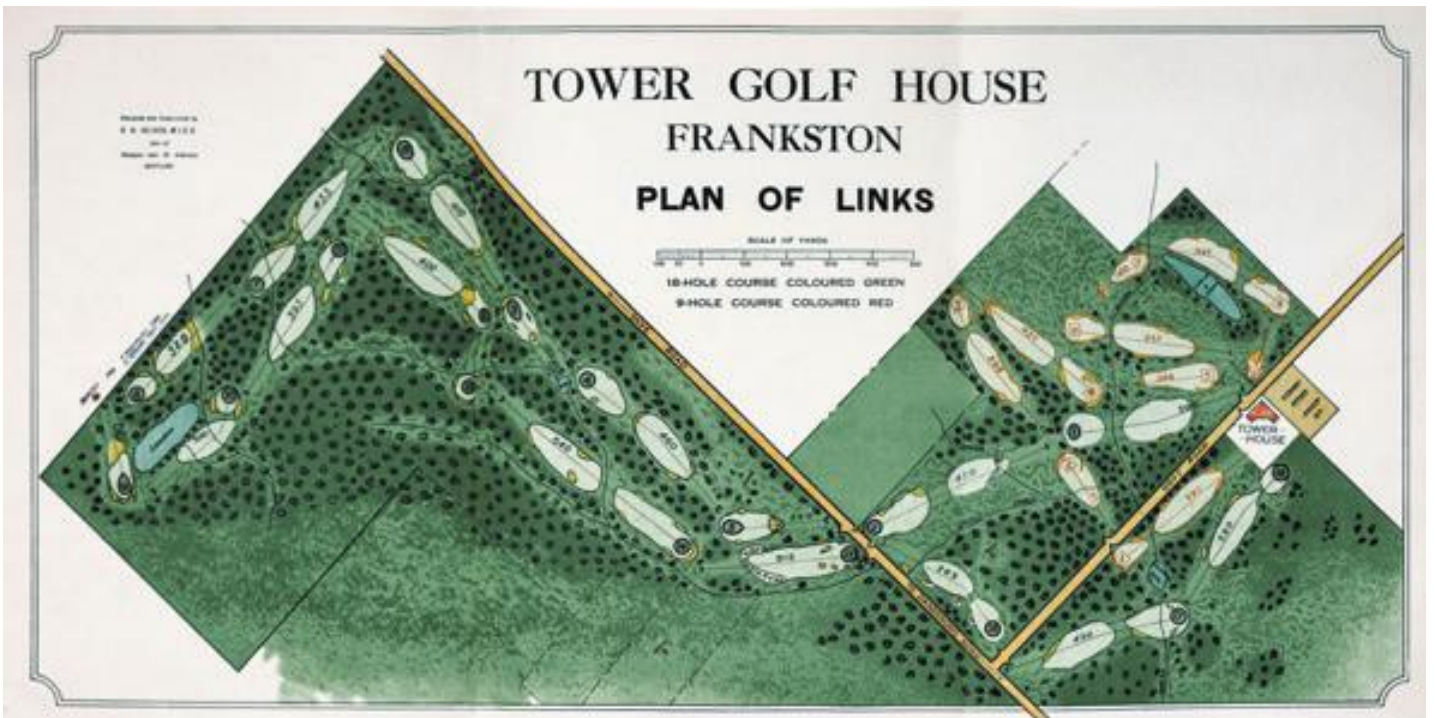
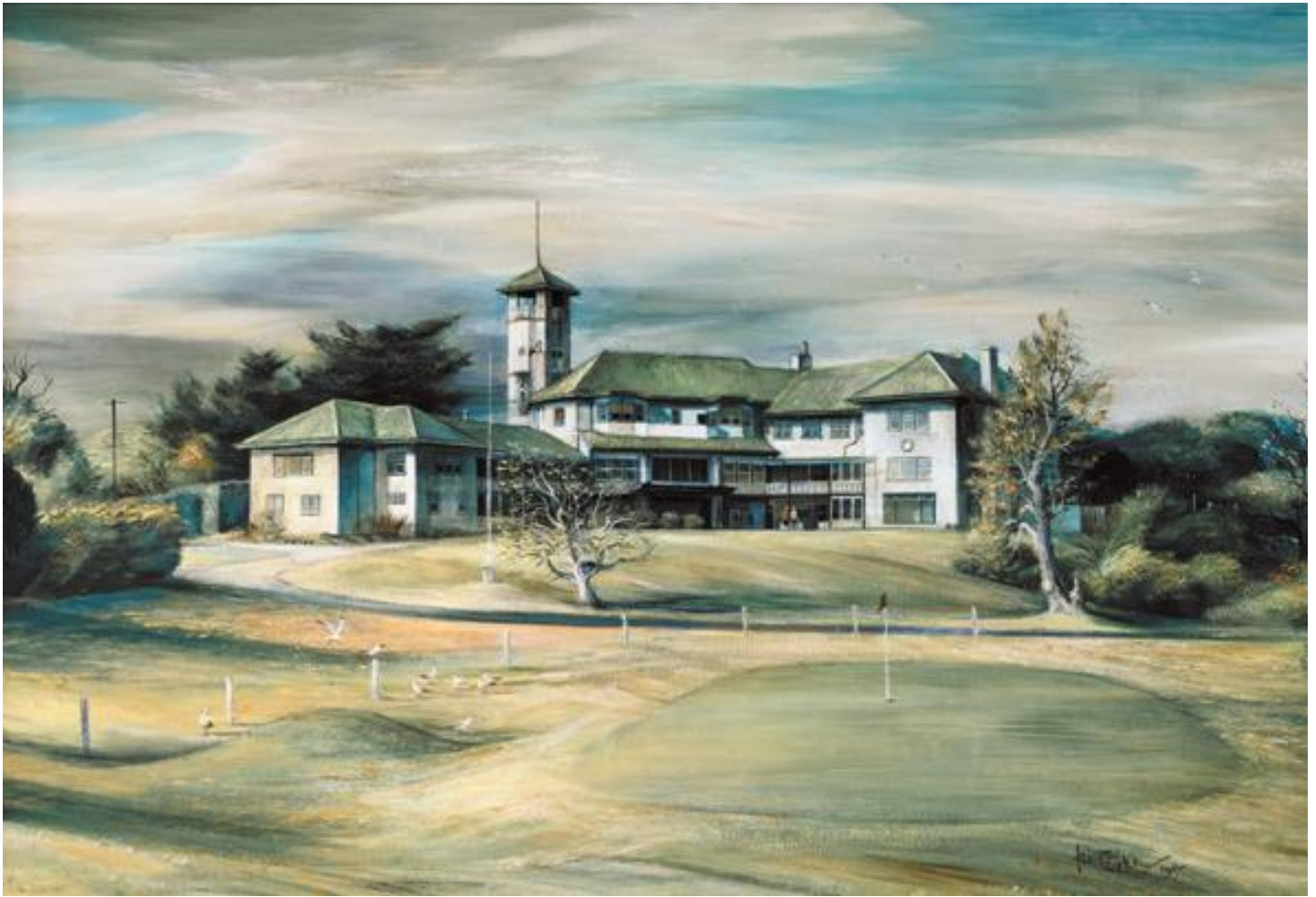
Kingswood Golf Club  
course rendering, by  
Mike Cocking



The Tower Golf House,  
by Kenneth Jack



Tower Golf House,  
plan of links



**"Originally the idea was to spend some small amount of money on upgrading the old clubhouse, try and fix the greens and put a new sprinkler system in. Things escalated somewhat once we put a vision in place."**

P E T E R   S W E E N E Y

Former President at Kingswood Golf Club

just meant to be – it sends a tingle down my spine. It's impossible to gain much speed along this drive, not because of the speed bumps (although they are vicious), but because there is just so much to take in all around me. It's a slice of golfing heaven.

It's not my first time through the gates, having been lucky enough to photograph the course several times, and indeed provide coverage for *Caddie Magazine* on the opening weekend in early 2019. Back then, I had wondered to myself how Peninsula Kingswood had come to be. How was it that a couple of previously mid-range Sandbelt clubs had suddenly joined up and appeared on my radar as something worthy of coverage for our global audience? Was the hype real about this place? I remember sending up the drone above the first green and blinking in amazement at what I saw on the screen. I was pretty sure I could see world class golf holes all around me. A tour of the course with Mike Cocking later that week confirmed my suspicions. 'How on earth have they done this?' I thought. Today is my chance to get some answers. As I settle into the library with my voice recorder and a double shot flat white, I'm excited to meet the heroes of the battle.

I met Peter Sweeney once before as part of a video project documenting the closing of Kingswood Golf Club, prior to the new site being completed. I didn't know it at the time, but that was at the tail end of some pretty dark days, and uncertainty and gloom were only just clearing from the air. But you wouldn't have known it talking to him – Peter is the definition of the relaxed Aussie bloke, the sort of guy who you would love to have a beer with and listen to his tales of life in business and sport.

As the President of Kingswood prior to, and leading into the merger, Peter was intimately involved in bringing the idea, which was first floated to him by General Manager Heath Wilson, to the membership. Wilson had been in talks with his counterpart at

Peninsula Country Golf Club, Gary Richardson, about struggling membership numbers and balance sheets, and what options might be available to them. A merger of equals, largely unheralded in Australian golf at least, was the bold proposition. For Sweeney, it meant considering how to prepare for the largest change a club could enact – leaving the hallowed soil of their own course. Peter knew they were taking on a big project.

"Clearly the decision to merge was a very brave decision by both clubs. It's something that had never happened before from what I could gather. But I felt strongly that it could work because it was a merger of equals. In my initial conversations with Gerry Ryan (President at Peninsula Kingswood), it wasn't 'we've got 36 holes and you've only got 18, we've got more members, therefore we're two thirds and you're one third'. It was a handshake agreement that this was a merger of equals. You have six board members, I have six board members. And there was a level of trust there that brought me a lot of comfort in the decision. My philosophy in business is that if you do a deal with somebody, and one person leaves the room and says, 'well, we got them on that deal didn't we?', or the other person leaves and says, 'I'm not sure that was such a good idea doing that deal', it never works. But this one was a simple handshake between Gerry and myself, and I knew the foundation was there for a successful coming together."

As Peter and Heath explored the idea further, it became more obvious the situation the club was in meant this was something they really had to pursue.

"We were offering five day memberships, one day memberships, waiving our joining fees completely in some cases, and putting bar levies on people to try and get them to spend more at the club. We were losing a number of members each year just from general attrition, and we weren't able to fill those places. It got to the point where we just said to each

**"Sometimes when I drive in, I feel like I'm coming into heaven.  
When I drive out, sometimes I feel like I've been through hell.  
But that's golf for you."**

G E R R Y   R Y A N

Former President at Peninsula Golf Club

other 'we can't go on like this'. With the merger on the table, it became clear that a no vote would kill the club."

For Peter, a lifelong member at Kingswood, former club president and, as they say in clubland, 'part of the furniture', this was sobering news. But perhaps a necessary realisation. "That really allowed me to keep the emotion out of it because, I mean, I'd been there a long time. I had only ever played there, had all my golf successes through that club. But when I saw the numbers, I couldn't get emotional about it. The 'no vote' would have just wiped us out, because for even rusted-on members like me, we would have to go and play at one of the other big Sandbelt clubs, rather than stay on a sinking ship."

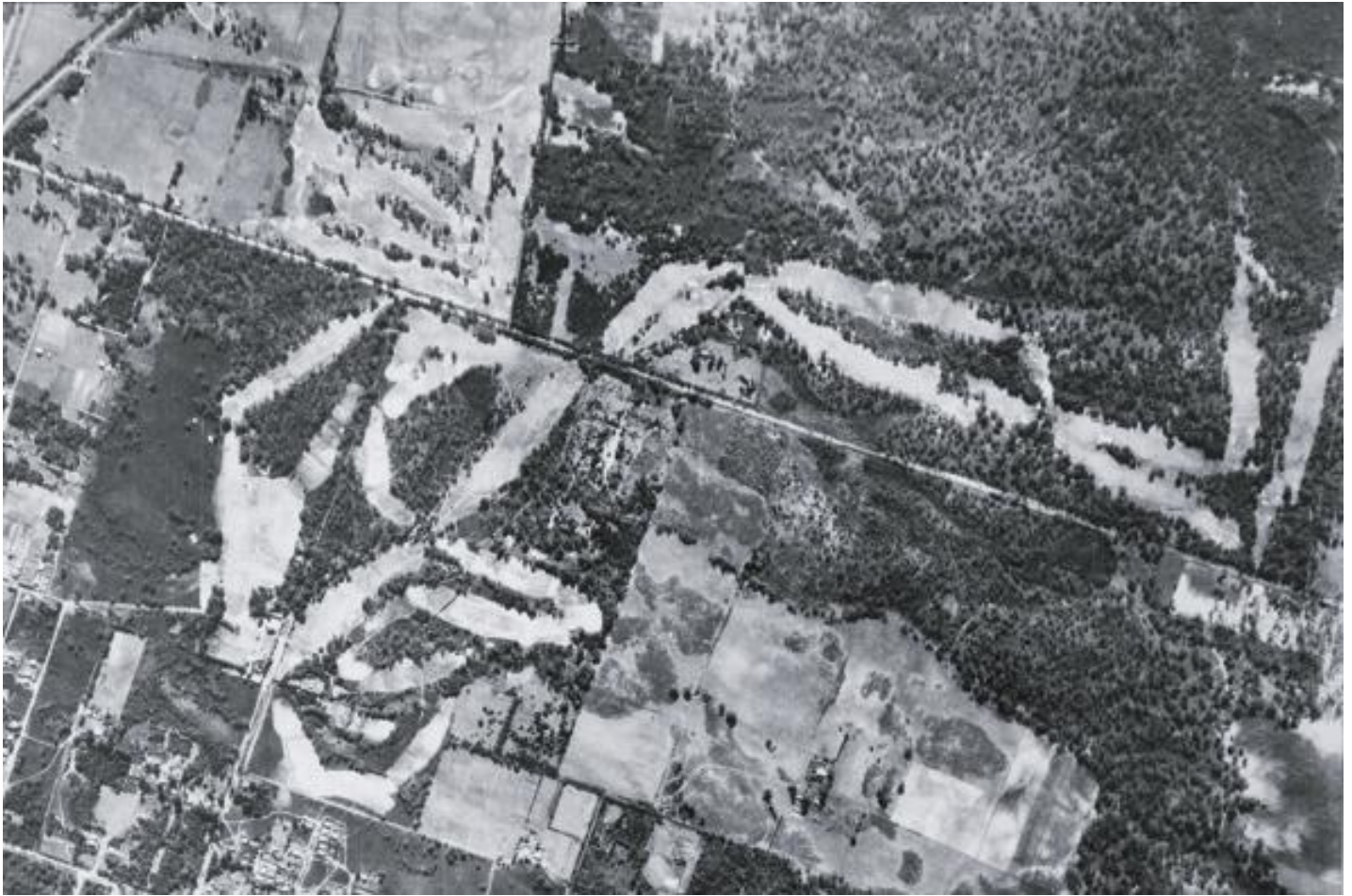
Perhaps suprisingly, a strong corner of support within the club came from some of the longest serving members, for whom moving locations wasn't a new phenomenon. "The other thing that helped a lot was that a lot of the older, longest serving members remember when we moved before. We used to be in Dandenong going way back, and were known as the 'Tin Shedders'. We came into Dingley when Dingley was just paddocks. So they remember that, and what they got from that decision was 70 wonderful years of membership. With the advantage of that perspective, they could clearly see there wasn't going to be another 70 years at this location."

But while the vote for the merger received a strong majority of votes from Kingswood members, there was enough opposition from members unwilling to accept the plight of the club that a serious legal challenge was mounted. It was something Peter had obviously hoped to avoid, and looking back now he is keen not to dwell on it. "That took a lot of energy out of the place, because we were in court so much it wasn't funny. No one wins in court. But there's a new generation of people here who don't care about the baggage, they really don't. They just go, 'mate, this

is fantastic'. And that's how it should be." The court proceedings took 15 months and could have brought the entire deal to a halt if it had succeeded.

The other end of that handshake, Gerry Ryan, is next in. Arriving right on time, looking sharp in a navy jumper, trimmed beard and sporting an easy smile, Gerry is softly spoken and careful with his words. He has prepared detailed notes on the merger process that he carries in a neat leather folder. I immediately get the impression that this must have been a good man to have had on the team. He begins his recollections by describing the feeling at his home club, Peninsula, at the time.

"Peninsula was a somewhat faded lady. It had a wonderful reputation and was part of the official Sandbelt group. It historically had been the seaside club, largely for Royal Melbourne members, many years ago. However, like many other clubs at that time, we were suffering, particularly in the area of retaining membership, attracting new members, and of meeting high expectations without a preparedness on the part of some members to pay the subs that were needed to sustain that sort of level. So we were looking at a reducing membership, a reducing capacity to meet the costs of keeping up a high-performing club, and a slide towards mediocrity. And perhaps worse in another 10 or 20 years. When you really sat down and thought about it, it was not a good prospect, and the Board of Peninsula began a consideration of all the challenges we had and the options that we had. We identified a range of options that are not unusual to any club – lifting subs, lowering costs, selling off part of the land, because part of the land was already re-zoned. Or something more radical like a merger. Rather than becoming a victim of the circumstances, we decided to act and work our way through it and hopefully achieve something great for a new club."



Peninsula Country Golf Club, May 1939

March 1966





May 1989

July 2001







The trust that Peter had spoken about was, crucially, felt at the other end of the deal. "From the very first meeting I had with Peter Sweeney and Gary [Richardson] and Heath [Wilson], we developed a really good rapport, trust, and respect for each other. We formed a really firm commitment that we'd explore the merger option very carefully, and if it added up we would support it really strongly to our members. There was that conviction and shared purpose, really from day one, but I think the most important component was trust. When mergers are looked at in business, there's usually a dominant party and a supplicant, and the dominant party tends to do what dominant parties do – dominate everything. We decided not to do that here. I mean, Peninsula had a larger membership base, but Kingswood had a much better balance sheet. And Kingswood were prepared to offer their land for sale, so in our eyes it really was an equal relationship."

"That was the building block and the cement of all of the work that went on from there. Peter addressed the Peninsula board about Kingswood's situation, and I went to their board and did the same about Peninsula. I think that also helped to break the ice, and Kingswood could see that we weren't the stuck-up club that many thought we were. Because we're just not that. We're people who love golf, firstly, and the camaraderie that comes from golf. So that helped break the ice, and then we moved quickly once the vote was done, to establish the new club as a legal entity, set up the new board, which had equal representation from each of the founding clubs. Again, that reinforced the message that this was a merger of equals."

While the 'merger of equals' framework would prove critical to the fairness and success of the project, there was still plenty that could go wrong along the way. Fortunately the experienced minds of the two presidents meant they were able to put additional principles in place to help provide solidity and direction throughout the process.

"Peter and I really agreed on four principles. One was, it will be a merger of equals. Two, that we'll work in the interest of the new club, not in the interest of one of the founding clubs. Three, that we would always look for solutions, even though some of the problems seemed insurmountable, we would work through to find solutions. And finally we committed to high levels of communication with the members of both of the founding clubs initially, and then with the new club once it was established. I think that communication stream has continued very effectively by Heath Wilson and successive boards after Peter and I became feather dusters."

And so they started working through the solutions. Nine months on from the successful yes vote, they were looking into selling the land, had established the new club, started recruiting for the new course works, and were looking into course designers to take on the project. Then the legal challenge hit them.

"The claim was that certain members had not been given their proper rights in relation to a consideration of the merger under the Corporations Act, and that as a result of that, the merger should be declared invalid, the sale of land discontinued, and we revert back to the two original clubs. It was quite a fundamental challenge. At the time it was very stressful, very personal, many sleepless nights, and my health even suffered. It was a really stressful period for all of us. However, we needed to accept and realise that the action that was being taken was an action that was open under the law. So while we felt frustrated and anxious and very concerned about where it all could lead, we had to accept that it was part of the legal process.

I think we were able to do that, more or less, but it was a big effort to block out the noise. Because we're human too, and there were a lot of unfair, misguided claims made against certain people, which hurt at the time and caused us a lot of angst."

The court process itself dragged on through various courts, challenges and appeals, but at no point did the legal challenge find any success. Then they finally got the words they needed to hear. 'Application for leave to the High Court is denied.' "There were a few glasses handed around, a few tears shed. Yeah, it was wonderful."

It turns out the court case wasn't Gerry's only brush with the law that day. "I had a knock on the door that night and it was a young constable from the Mornington Police. He said, 'Is your name Gerald Ryan?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Have you got a car, with the following rego number?' I said, 'Yes, but I don't think it's been stolen, it's in the garage'. He said, 'No, you've been reported as a drive-off from the Shell petrol station.'" So consumed with thoughts of the court case and the possible ramifications, the usually attentive Gerry Ryan had done a runner.

For Gary Richardson and Heath Wilson, the two GMs at the time, there was no champagne. Recalls Gary: "Heath and I met at a souvlaki joint on the side of the highway and had a soft drink. We were just wiped. That's all we had the energy for. It was just such a relief."

As Gary enters the room, it is immediately apparent that energy is not something he is normally short on. He bustles into the room, still chatting to someone in the

hall, and perches on the couch, eager to get going. As the GM at Peninsula since 1997, Gary had been able to see the inevitable need for change approaching for some time.

"It was always a challenge for us because we were a top club, just hanging on. Strategically, it was better for us to be considered in the primary Sandbelt group, rather than the best of the rest, but we didn't really have the ability to service the great facility and great bit of land we had. The future was never certain for us – we were like the duck on calm waters paddling furiously below the surface just to stay in place. We never had the budgets to achieve the potential that's now been achieved, or to maintain the courses to the level that we wanted to. We had some debt from some clubhouse renovations, which we were gradually retiring. Everything was fine, but we could never get ahead of the game.

An example of this was around 2012 when we embarked on some course renovations. At the time both the North and South courses were ranked out of the Top 60 in Australia. I remember Michael's Cocking and Clayton both telling me the topography of the North course enabled it to be in the Top 10 in Australia, and even fairly high within that ten.

The same design team did the plans with Mike Cocking, Ashley Mead and the late Bruce Grant also doing the work on the ground. Despite the limited budget it was a tribute to them that the North Course jumped into the Top 20 and the South into the Top 40. That said it was a very clear reminder that we simply couldn't re-design, renovate and maintain the courses to the level they deserved.

I remember Rob Dowling, long-term Treasurer and eventually president of PK when we merged onto the one site, famously telling the members at one AGM that 'we feel like we have pulled every rabbit out of the proverbial hat'. In other words we had tried many things, for example initiating the under 40s membership, but we needed a game-changer."

Rob agrees when I catch up with him a few weeks later. "We had a few cracks at renovating over the years but there was just never enough money. Even successful programs like the under 40s program weren't going to bring about the step change that we needed. I'd grown a bit weary of finding ways to improve. We had PWC do forward projections, for where both clubs would sit if the merger didn't go ahead. Kingswood were losing members and not replacing them. We were replacing the members, but not really increasing the number of members. We basically couldn't do any capital work for five years. Kingswood showed that their membership

fees would have to increase almost to the level of just under Royal Melbourne to survive."

Given the club's ambitions, along with a broader market environment that did not paint a pretty picture for private golf clubs, Peninsula had started to look at the option of selling some land of its own. Gary: "There is a strip of land east of the 16th South that was zoned residential, and would have generated up to 27 lots. Selling would not have interfered with play, and sales may have only been offered to existing members, but the ideal is that a club would never have to do this as it is irreversible. It was during this time that merger discussions arose, so a decision was never required, however founding members should know that it was serious enough that this was on the table."

After feeling out a couple of other clubs for merger opportunities (including neighbouring Long Island that would go on to join The National), Gary met with Kingswood's GM Heath Wilson at a golf club managers meeting at Healesville Country Club.

"As often happens at these sort of events we shared some of the same issues, the same future concerns for our clubs. We discussed it at some length. Then, after some hesitation, we said 'maybe we can do something together'. I'd like to say it was difficult, or that it was some grand epiphany that hit us like a bolt from the blue. But because we both knew the industry, the ongoing and future challenges, it was actually a pretty organic solution for both clubs. So we resolved to work on documenting that model then take it to our respective boards."

Several meetings ensued between the two managers, and before long they were joined by the two presidents, Peter and Gerry. "From the outset Peter and Gerry both knew the challenges, saw the potential and, in a like-minded way, saw how it would evolve. Critically, they each not only saw the challenges that would be faced along the way but also strategies to offset them. Having that sort of capability on our side was a boost. From our side of things, Gerry is not only a wise and experienced businessman, he is also very much a people person. He intuitively knew the critical role of communication with the Peninsula members from the outset. Bringing them along for the ride, knowing all the challenges, risks and potential upside was the right of every member, and Gerry assured this happened. As a result the vote of Peninsula members on the three resolutions was 98-99% on each, and Gerry deserves the credit for this."

Treasurer Rob Dowling's experience in managing large budgets, along with sitting on the board of several sporting clubs, provided an important boost









Top down above the new clubhouse (left) and 1st North and 17th South greens (right)



Members make their way up the 6th North fairway

of confidence that, from a financial point of view at least, the project wasn't as risky as many thought. As Rob describes, there were strong measures in place to ensure the money was being spent wisely.

"We developed a clear capital expenditure program document that was basically the focus of every board meeting – people got sick of this document. It included everything – all the different costs, changes in revenue to expect and so on – in a simple two page spread that we could monitor very closely. It basically said, 'this is where we're tracking', and the bottom line was 'this is how much money we're going to have left over'. With a project like this, there are just so many different aspects to it, that if everyone runs a little bit over budget, suddenly you've got a problem."

While managing costs was critical, the unity behind the overall concept permeated into budget decisions as well.

"Peter had said to us, 'if we do all this and at the end of the day, the members have got exactly the same services they've got now, they'll lynch us'. You've got to have more, we've got to have better facilities and more facilities than we had before. We have to give someone who's driving down Warrigal Road a reason to drive past Metropolitan, Commonwealth, Huntingdale, Yarra Yarra and Kingston Heath. And if we don't do that, we're just another golf club. Battling with the likes of Long Island, Southern and Keysborough. So that was our focus, develop a world class facility. Which I think we've done."

The vote, as anticipated, was tighter at Kingswood, but as it required the loss of a treasured course it was certainly understandable. The looming reality aside, letting go of history is never easy. But the prospect of building something truly incredible at the Peninsula site, along with Peter and Heath's leadership, proved to be enough.

"We were always very clear – the reason we're merging is to achieve something genuinely state of the art. That is the vision here. And that made every vote easy, or every decision easy, because we'd be delivering on that promise. If something could add to that, we'd do it. We've been criticised for spending too much money here. But at the end of the day, no one's going to join because we've got 50 million in the bank. They'll join here

because they love the clubhouse, they love the courses, they love the membership, they love the camaraderie."

Gary continues: "Maybe it's because of my experience working 15 years in America, but I always treated this club as being in competition with other clubs. It's a friendly competition, but it's a competition. It's a business. And so, these were largely business decisions. But within a people-focused industry. And if there's one thing people dislike, as we all get older, it is change. And this project was all about change. If you don't change, you're falling behind. But getting some people to accept that was tough. They didn't even have to embrace it; they just had to accept the change. I'm not talking only about members. It was staff. It was the industry. It was just people who are locked into their way of seeing things. We had to block a lot of that out and stick to our guns."

Heath Wilson joins us in the room, and it's clear there is a strong rapport between the two GMs who took the clubs through this adventure. Not only had they together hatched a plan that would result in such a successful venture, they had seen it through together and never wavered in their commitment. Part of that camaraderie was due to an understanding that was in place even before the project kicked off – that once the dust settled, Gary would move on and Heath would apply for position of CEO at the new club. Recalls Heath: "Everyone in Melbourne wanted Gary's job. Working with a brand new facility, with a healthy balance sheet – there just weren't a lot of jobs like that in the golf industry at the time. But Gary was very up front that this would be his last big project for the club, so that took away any chance of competition between the two of us, and we could focus purely on getting the best result."

That trust, and again the transparency and clarity of vision that all five of these key players were able to bring in, must have played a part in the solidarity they were able to build throughout the six year process. Heath says it was crucial. "I think the team that we had was just amazing. There only needed to be one person to not want that to happen, like Gary or myself, or Peter, Gerry or Robert – if any one of the five was even 10% against it, forget it. It wouldn't have worked."

Gary agrees: "You very rarely see a group of people so committed to one goal."

**"I think if we knew how hard it was going to be, I don't know, I feel we wouldn't have done it. But I'm sure glad we did."**

H E A T H   W I L S O N

CEO at Peninsula Kingswood & former General Manager at Kingswood Golf Club

Gary and Heath start to banter back and forth, laughing now at some of the battles and insane workloads they had to push through, and that made them wonder if it was all worth it. Heath says, "Seriously, I think if we knew how hard it would be, I don't know, I feel we wouldn't have done it from the start. But sitting here today, I'm so glad we did."

So it is with many great projects, products and achievements. Which is why the key elements that went into this project are so important. Vision. Trust. Transparency. These are the things that get you through the mud and out onto those pristine fairways. And, like a hard earned thirst, the challenges along the way make the satisfaction at the end that much more palpable. I ask each of the team if they are proud of what they have achieved here.

Gary says "I do feel pride, and part of that's because I think what's been built will bring people a lot of pleasure for years to come, when we're long gone. There was no path to follow other than what we set out to achieve. So it was exciting. I drove in at the time, still being excited about what's going to happen today. This was about building something. So to see it, living it out, is certainly enjoyable."

Peter Sweeney knew success was assured well ahead of the opening day. "I knew it would be a success when Mike [Cocking] took a couple of us up to Royal Canberra to have a look at the greens, and they were so impressive. I was born in New South Wales and we had this mentality in the country that if you could grow something in Canberra, it would grow anywhere in the world, because the variances in the temperatures are so extreme there. Now, we're probably five hours from Canberra but taking that grass was key. I asked Glenn Stuart, 'How do you feel about taking a job where you've had no input into anything, yet you're going to be held responsible for keeping it perfect?' He just said, 'I know Mike's work, I'm in'.

Then we were out with Mike touring the course one day and asked how it was shaping up from his perspective. 'I can see the bunkering at Kingston Heath, I can see the fairway conditions of Metropolitan, and I can see the greens of Royal Melbourne.' And I go, 'You do that, you'll make people very happy.' And you know what? They've made a lot of people very happy!"

Gerry sums up before he heads off for a sandwich in the main dining room. "I get an adrenaline charge every time I drive in those gates. I just drive in and go, 'how good is this?' I can deal with all the emotions that I've experienced through the whole process. But the one that really matters is the thrill every time I drive through the front gate, and see what together we have achieved. It's just fantastic." He also has a final thought for his fellow President, Peter Sweeney. "As presidents, Peter and I worked as partners. I could not have wished for a better person with whom to share our leadership responsibilities. Peter had to bear the burden of unfounded attacks from some quarters opposed to the merger and did so with dignity and resolve. Peter is a man of his word, a strategic thinker, courageous and was driven to achieve a wonderful outcome for the members. He deserves as much as anyone to be quietly proud and satisfied with what we all achieved."

As I pack up my recorder and laptop, I'm struck by the realisation of how many things had to go right for this place to happen. If the timing hadn't worked out for one of the clubs. If the right people hadn't been involved. If that court case had gone the other way. None of this would exist, or at least not at this level. And while all those involved in making this happen are happy for future generations to enjoy it, in blissful ignorance of how it came to be, I'm glad I now know. Because next time I'm standing on the 2nd tee surrounded by amazing golf, I'll know at least a little bit of how it came to be. And I'll no doubt say a quiet 'thank you' to those who made it so.

**"There was no path to follow other than what we set out to achieve. This was about building something. I knew the potential of this place that had always been out of reach, and I knew we couldn't do it on our own. So to see it happen, and living it out today, has been not only enjoyable but also extremely rewarding for all involved."**

GARY RICHARDSON

Former General Manager at Peninsula Golf Club

**"I used to say to the board members - don't downplay what we've achieved. Be proud of what we've done. It's a sad dog that doesn't wag its own tail."**

ROBERT DOWLING

Former President at Peninsula Kingswood & Treasurer during the merger process





# PETER THOMSON

## A TRUE MELBOURNE SANDBELT LEGEND!

*Peter Thomson wasn't just one of Australia's most celebrated golfers - he was a proud Melburnian whose deep connection to the Sandbelt shaped his career, his philosophy on the game, and his legacy. A product of its fairways and firm, fast greens, he became one of the region's greatest ambassadors, championing the Sandbelt to the world stage.*





Born in Brunswick in 1929, Thomson grew up playing on the legendary layouts of The Royal Melbourne Golf Club, The Victoria Golf Club, and Yarra Yarra Golf Club. These courses, with their strategic bunkering, firm fairways, and fast greens, shaped his approach to the game and became central to his philosophy on golf course design.

At just 16, Thomson joined The Victoria Golf Club, where he quickly made his mark by becoming club champion. This early success set the stage for an extraordinary career that included five Open Championship victories - 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, and 1965 - making him the only golfer in the 20th century to win the tournament three years in a row.

His 1954 win was particularly special, as it coincided with fellow Victoria member Doug Bachli's victory in the British Amateur Championship. For a time, both trophies sat side by side in the club's members' bar, a testament to the club's rich heritage.

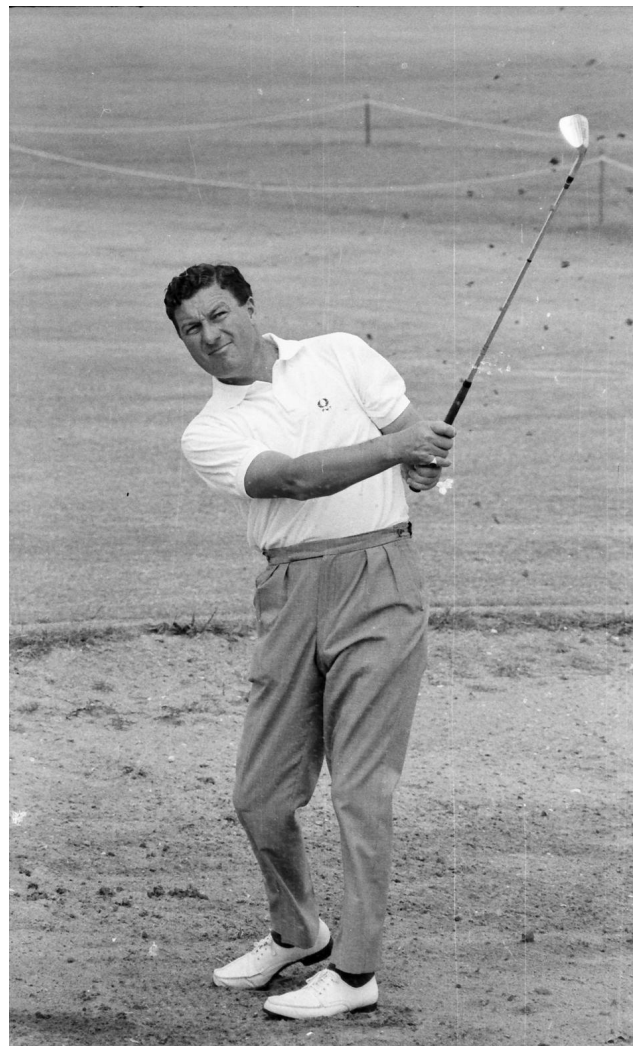
Thomson's connection to the Sandbelt region extended beyond playing. He was

an honorary member of The Royal Melbourne Golf Club and Kingston Heath Golf Club and served as club captain and president at The Victoria Golf Club. His influence is commemorated with a statue overlooking the 10th hole at Victoria, a lasting tribute to his legacy.

In 1997, the Peter Thomson Trophy was established, contested between the eight Melbourne Sandbelt clubs, further cementing his impact on the region's golfing community.

Beyond his playing achievements, Thomson was a visionary in golf course design. He co-founded a design firm that contributed to over a hundred golf course projects worldwide, many reflecting the strategic elements characteristic of the Sandbelt.

Peter Thomson's legacy is deeply intertwined with Melbourne's Sandbelt. His contributions as a player, leader, and designer have left an indelible mark on the game, both in Australia and internationally.





# THE MELBOURNE SANDBELT

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