

From Eyrie to Eagles



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to Eagles



THE HISTORY OF
THE YARRA YARRA
GOLF CLUB





Preface

THE CELEBRATION of the centenary of the Yarra Yarra Golf Club is an appropriate time to reflect on how the Club has developed. This history provides us with valuable insights into our past and the occasion to reflect on how our course and Club may develop in the future.

We sometimes overlook the fact that our history continues with every day and every year of our existence. Our General Committee came to appreciate this more and more as our centenary year loomed closer and, in recent years, we have paid much greater attention to the careful storage, classification and display of historical documents, other artefacts and memorabilia, as well as contemporary information.

This history will provide us with a better understanding of how we have matured as a club. In the language of the Australian Aborigines, 'Yarra Yarra' means 'ever-flowing'. Just as a river changes as it moves forward, the lists of Club memberships will continue to change and evolve and the nature and

structure of our Club should reflect the times and attitudes of our society.

The well-presented, manicured golf course that we play today stands in stark contrast to the conditions it was necessary for our forebears to tolerate at either Eaglemont or Rosanna, or even in the establishment years of our existing course at East Bentleigh. For much of this, we must be grateful to the hard work and imagination of many previous members of committee and staff. The future is dependent upon men and women with this commitment and vision.

Our Club and course are not insulated from the influences outside its boundaries — political, environmental and neighbourhood. Members should be alive to these challenges and the need to fulfil our obligations to the community. They should be willing to provide their expertise for the benefit of the Club — including accepting responsibility by nominating for committee.

•••Editor•••Please add 1 line to this column



*Caption for medals
to come*



*Caption for medals
to come*



*Caption for medals
to come*



*Caption for medals
to come*

To some members, any change may be regarded as sacrilege, but we should recognise that golf courses are dynamic entities affected by nature. With the advance of technology affecting golfing equipment, new strategies may be required on some of our holes which are now regarded as 'short' by modern standards. On the other hand, in a recent conversation with Charlie Earp, the professional mentor and coach of Greg Norman, he stated: 'No par 5s are long enough for the modern professional. Don't worry about their length, the quality of your par 3s more than make up for that.' Future committees must endeavour to maintain and retain the essential character and qualities of our beautiful course, while we remain receptive to change should it be demonstrated as necessary.

Our Centenary Year also marks 70 years since the construction of our clubhouse at Bently. Over those years, various alterations, renovations and additions have taken place. We have developed a Strategic Plan as outlined in the 1995 Annual Report and many incremental improvements have already been implemented. The time is now overdue for several modifications to the clubhouse to provide additional facilities that are required. These additions and improvements, in keeping with the graceful and charming appearance of the clubhouse, will be delayed until the completion of our Centenary Year.

The entrance to our clubhouse along the driveway from Warrigal Road could be greatly enhanced by the addition of colourful trees and shrubs grown under irrigated conditions. These plantings could also provide vistas across the 18th green to the clubhouse. There is little doubt that such additions will add to the existing attraction of our course and clubhouse.

Our Club has produced a long list of champion golfers, the most recent being Robert Allenby and Stuart Appleby. Who can predict what success and international fame may lie ahead for these two — or any other young golfer who may be representing Yarra Yarra right now? Perhaps the best is yet to come! At present, at the level of club golf, both our men's and women's teams play at the highest level of pennant competition and, taken together, Yarra Yarra must be ranked higher than any other golf club in the Victorian competition. We must endeavour to maintain this level in the future.

There are many members of our Club and others from outside who have been instrumental in creating this publication.

On 5th March 1992, the General Committee formed an Historical sub-committee charged with the task of preserving and expanding the sources of knowledge and understanding of our Club's past — in anticipation of the centenary. Initially under the chairmanship of Allan Waugh, this responsibility devolved shortly thereafter to Michael Croyle. The obligation grew with the decision of Committee to commission a professional historian, Joseph Johnson, to write a manuscript — which has been the core of this publication.

This committee has since worked tirelessly, enlisting the help of many Club members along the way. These numerous people are identified elsewhere in this book. However, on behalf of the Club, specific reference needs to be made to the several people whose commitment to this substantial venture has been outstanding and essential to its success. I refer to Michael Croyle as chairman of the Editorial sub-committee who has been ably assisted by Noel Bucknall, Hedley Ham and John





12 A Round at Yarra Yarra

*Opposite left:
This aerial photo
taken in 1945 shows
how the course,
with its early
planting of trees,
was surrounded by
market gardens,
and little evidence
of suburbia.*

*Opposite right:
By 1988 the aerial
view indicates
that very little
room remained
for development
as suburbia
encroaches on the
Club boundaries,
and only freeway
reserves remain
untouched.*

IN ACCORDANCE with the golfing philosophy of the time, Yarra Yarra's present course was designed for its members.

'Bogey' was the method for assessing the shots to be taken at a hole by the golfer using equipment of the time — so very different from today's. Times change. In 1935, the concept of 'standard Scratch score' was introduced. In 1951, new ratings for a hole were based on yardage — hence the 5th hole at Yarra Yarra was reduced from 5 to 4 shots. In 1971, the concept of 'par' for each hole, again affected by length, came into vogue, and remains today.

A great deal of care has been taken, throughout the history of the Bentleigh property, to avoid changes to the original design of the course.

As the original members have passed on and successive committees have handed responsibility to new generations it has been necessary to take great care to renovate rather than redesign the course.

Renovations have been guided by old photographs, and older members have given advice on

the repair of changes that have already occurred. These often arise from natural circumstances and normal wear and tear. Some, however, are strategic, forced by changes in golf equipment and the use of modern maintenance hardware.

The contributions of Hartley Mitchell, Kevin Hartley and Noel Bucknall in this role have been significant, and reflect their golfing skills as well as many years of association with Yarra Yarra Golf Club.

The 1st at Yarra Yarra (as at Commonwealth and Victoria) was originally a short bogey four, but improvements in golfing equipment have turned it into a par three, and one of the toughest opening holes in Melbourne golf. Tough but fair. Bunkers heavily penalise the player who misses on the side closer to the pin placement. Over the years neighbours have suffered from balls sprayed to the right. In 1993, as a deterrent, Kevin Hartley designed new bunkers on the right of the fairway, and the bunkers on the left were filled in. The marker discs on the



The first of our par threes, which was recently changed to move the fairway bunkers to the right-hand side.

tee have been oriented to the left to emphasise the left aspect of the green, and as the Eucalypts on the boundary stretch skywards, neighbours are suffering less than in days gone by. In the early 1960s, Geoff Walter, leading the Club championship after the first round, had a horror start to the second. His tee shot rebounded from a post and soared over the cypresses at the rear and onto the 18th green, 50

yards away. The story has been embellished over the years and it is now said that he hit his first three tee shots into the Oakleigh Club next door and was playing his eighth shot from the 18th.

Another member, Charlie Punch, had a bad experience on this hole. He was stone deaf, and members used to say the most terrible things about him at the start of a round, especially in respect of

his slow play. Unknown to his playing partners he turned up one day wearing a hearing aid. Imagine his consternation when he heard the most dreadful things being said about him! All golfers, including the top professionals, are happy to walk away from the first with a par.

Peter Thomson described the 2nd as 'relatively easy' after winning the 1973 Victorian Open, though he failed to beat par on any of the four days. In his youth, big-hitting Bruce Lawrence could drive the

green by cutting across the dog-leg before the trees on the right of the fairway grew to their present size. These trees have been placed on the right of the fairway to tighten the drive. In 1977, the drive bunker was altered to a design by Kevin Hartley, and this made it more visible from the tee. These days, top players tend to hit an iron from the tee, as placement is all-important for the shot into the green, which was enlarged during recent reconstruction in 1993. Small greens are becoming a rarity



Approaching the newly constructed 2nd green from alongside the bunkers at the dogleg.