

# Lake Karrinyup

## AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING



**KEITH BARKER**  
169 Wellington Street  
Mosman Park  
Western Australia

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It was intended that this be written as a documentary of the early days but after scanning through the wealth of records, kindly made available to me by the club, I decided it would only be collating what is already there in abundance. So I have related from my own memory – happenings in those days of the Foundation Committee, the designing of the course, the clearing of the land, siting of the clubhouse and a few early episodes. Many of the last named never “hit” the minute book – certainly not in the form they have been told.

In 1891 the lake was called Careniup. When Arnold Holder produced 360 acres offered by the Maley Estate to the FC it decided to give its own name to the area. We all had a go at it. The soft “C” became the hard “K”. “It makes you think of trees” one of us said. The “Y” was thrown in for good measure. It was a little difficult to mouth by way of an explanation of a late return home, so the “Y” soon became silent. Altogether the more rugged name Karrinyup seemed to suit the locality very well.

It is rather awe inspiring to think that we created a name that was adopted by the Department of Lands and Surveys and has become a prominent electoral division. Was there a Nomenclature Committee then? If so did we go to it? I can’t remember. After all Karrinyup was miles out in the bush in those days – 40 years ago. Nothing of this nature mattered very much.

In the Careniup time the lake was often dry and the perimeter was a race track. A story is told of a race one day when four horses started and five finished. The plan was for one to run off behind the trees and a fresh understudy was to take over on the last lap and finish with a burst of speed. Things went astray when the candidate for the job refused to run off. Fact or fiction? Hard to say except that the boys of Osborne Park and Wanneroo were well acquainted with all aspect of the racing game.

Karrinyup was conceived in days of prosperity and was born in days of depression. The original idea was a country club in its true sense. 18 hole golf course with an extra 9 tennis courts, swimming pool, even a polo ground was talked of.

We did have an organised clay target club in the hollow of the now practice fairway. Every form of recreation was envisaged including aquatic events on the lake. The clubhouse of course was to be residential.

Two other major schemes and the hard times of the 1930’s made the FC modify its plans considerably and alter its target to what we have today. It could be, with momentous developments underway, that the original country club idea with all possible extras – will come to be.

With land availability it was a time of great opportunity. New Cottesloe and Mt Yokine both coincided with Karrinyup in their commencements. At about the same time Victor Manning offered to any interested group a large block of family estate at Mt Henry. This is included in the Manning of today. The price was unbelievable, but we had gone past the stage of no return.

The FC may have made many mistakes but in the choice of a course architect it certainly did not err. In 1927 the Royal Melbourne Golf Club, having sold the town section of its course at Sandringham, had brought out the world famous course architect, Dr Mackenzie, to confer with Alex Russell and remodel the two layouts known as the East and West courses. Mackenzie and Russell formed an Australian partnership as golf architects.

Mackenzie was a Black Scot. The famous Augusta National in conjunction with Bobby Jones and Pebble Beach in California were his works. He had a home facing on to one of the fairways at Pebble Beach that can only be described as “dreamy” just like the houses facing the 2<sup>nd</sup> will be only even more intimate to the course.

Alex Russell was a pastoralist and head of the family property “Mawallox”, Beaufort, Victoria, one of Australia’s show places. He was a Cambridge graduate, an Australian Open Golf Champion and also a Victorian and South Australian Amateur Champion during the 1920’s. He was a member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club St Andrews and a life member of the Royal Melbourne Golf Club. He served in two wars with rank and distinction. Golf architecture was his hobby. The FC’s choice of Russell was a “natural”. I knew him personally and was therefore delighted when the FC requested me to approach him on a Melbourne visit in 1927. Mackenzie was impressed with the immediate results of the new partnership. To Russell it presented a great challenge – a major golf course on a new frontier, Perth, Western Australia.

Russell came to Perth in the very hot February of 1928. The first phase was to prepare a plan of the course and before leaving personally supervise the formation on one green. He chose the 8<sup>th</sup> which he thought would become a famous “one shotter” in time to come. I am sure it has.

It was hot work in the dense tuart forest as it was, flies and sand. After the day the Osborne Park Hotel became a springboard to the ocean and the OBH. Some of us were with Russell every day. One who was there often was Bill McLean – not because he was interested in golf particularly but because he was interested in all sporting projects. No doubt he was one of these who believed “you don’t have to be mad to play golf but it helps”. He followed Russell about in the hot bush day after day.



Alex Russell, designer of the Lake Karingup course.

Early in the piece Russell gathered us together on the hilltop where the clubhouse now stands. He said “You have two choices – either you can have the clubhouse by the lakeside with the course laid out on easy lines, it will be hot in summer and you have to build a considerable roadway into it – or you can have your clubhouse here where we stand, a magnificent panorama, cool in summer, short access from the road but you will have to play up to it twice”. The FC with visions of a weekend room with a view with one voice said “here”.

Even though the severity of the course has met with a lot of criticism I am sure the decision was the right one – Karrinyup is more than just a golf course. The majestic panorama of forest and lake from the hilltop contributes a lot to the character of the club.

The reason why the two 9's are reversed for International fixtures is that it presents a TV dream finish with both the ultimate and penultimate holes being in view from the one stand. Strangely enough this way was Russell's first thought of laying out the 9's, but he changed it for another reason. “It would be better” he said “to have the 1<sup>st</sup> a spacing hole followed by three stretching out holes before the first short hole. This absorbs the field early, settles it own and avoids congestion”. It worked well. Karrinyup can take a large field, such as a Winter Cup, with the greatest of ease. In fact if it were not for the car park it would be hard to imagine that a big event was in progress.

In those days we had a number of enthusiastic members who were willing to form working bees. Two of these I well remember. Russell was asked if it would be possible to construct bunkers by straight out digging with shovels. He said it would but the result would make it appear as if someone had been at it with a teaspoon. In spite of this a gang of us dug the bunker on the left front of the 2<sup>nd</sup> green and it took us six months to get rid of the sandfly rashes we acquired. To me the “teaspoon” look is still there but perhaps it is only my imagination having heard the original comment. For all future bunker work we resorted to the then modern method of construction – man, horse and scoop.

Another working bee brought results which for one of us was just as poignant. One Sunday morning a few of us decided to remove the dead tree from the centre of the lake. The job had not been long in progress before a piercing cry of anguish echoed across the waters. No part of the human body is sacred to a leech. The exercise was completed but the injured party thereafter looked after the drinks.



Above: Clearing the Karrinyup site, 1928-29.

Stories about the lake are many and varied – thousands of balls have of course been hit into it. Many have been thrown in or dipped in to placate the Gods; Caddies have fallen in or have been thrown in, even players have fallen in or have been pushed in by infuriated opponents (so rumour hath it). One of our nature loving early members bathed in the lake whenever he felt like it – using the bathers God gave him irrespective of who was in the vicinity. Ducks have been banded there. One of these was recovered in the Eastern States. I have shepherded a mother duck with her young across the 2<sup>nd</sup> fairway into the lake and the same day have seen another setting flutter down from a 30ft high hollow tree. The courting overtures of a pair of Grebes during a recent big tournament far outweighed the efforts of one of the worlds leading golfers who was just then “hacking” his way along the adjacent rough. This alone was worth a season ticket to see.

Carp were put into the lake but these did not survive the shags and the occasional drying out. One large goldfish was found dead on the beach which shows that had the water been constant and with a little undersurface cover these would survive.

Foxes abound in the Karrinyup area. These gave rise to two complaints – one from the professional who recovered his practice golf balls chewed up and another from the foxes against the club for not providing the type of egg they were accustomed to!

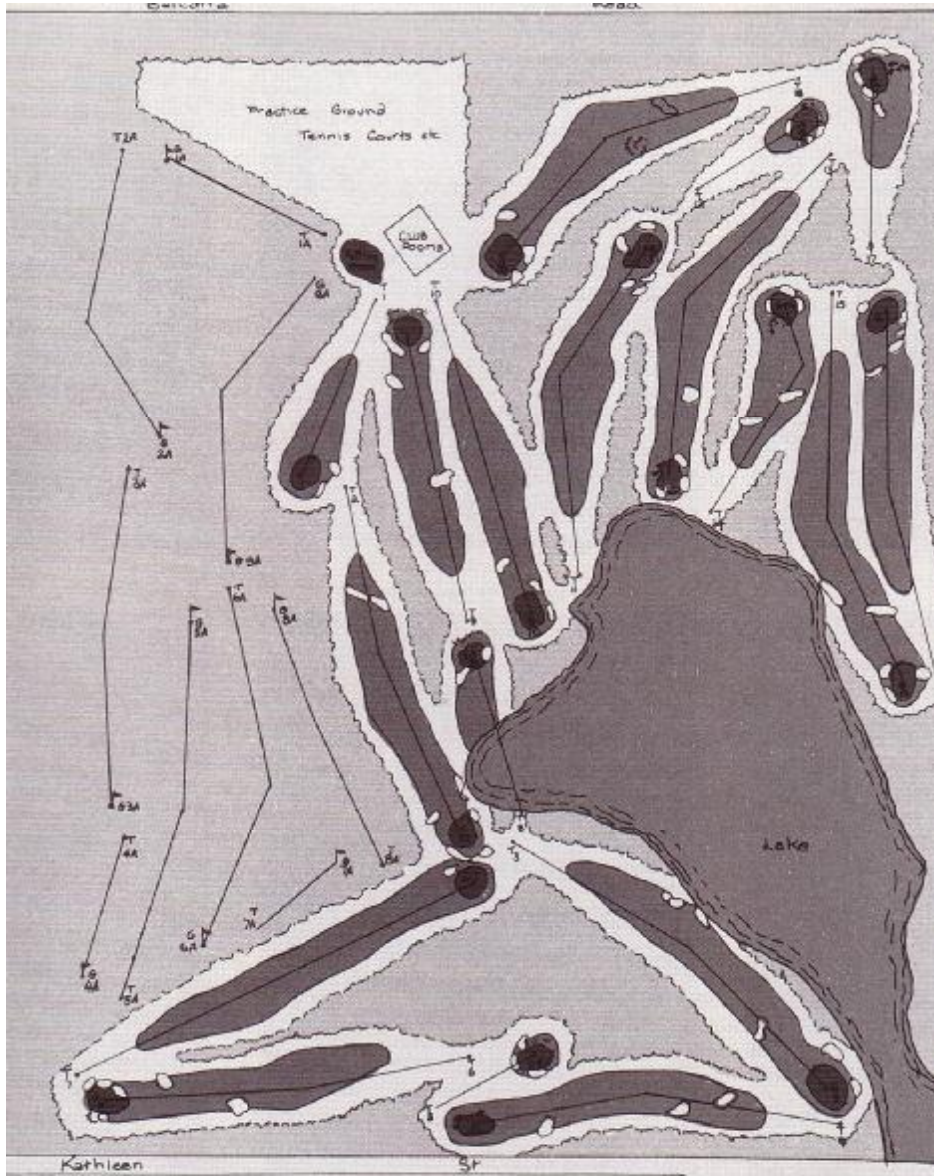
What a wonderful flora and fauna showpiece Karrinyup would make. We seem to have all the ingredients – a lake, an amount of natural bush, the means, a very co-operative Government Wildlife organisation and one of the world’s leading botanists and curators right at hand to give advice. Perhaps one day people could see a small group of our national animal in a natural setting. The waterfowl possibilities are limitless, so are the flora prospects – perhaps we could keep or better – increase our golden banksias which are hard to find growing naturally within 100 miles of the city.

After Russell’s first visit our job was to get ahead with clearing, green formation and bunkering according to his plan. The clearing was let to a contractor, \$20 per acre on a prescribed plan and he to take the firewood. The contractor sub-contracted with 60 Italians who lived in a colony behind the 15<sup>th</sup> green. When the going got harder Arnold Hodder often went out to placate the two parties, expecting a fist in each ear.

Although the contractor had the timber rights he boggled at the stumps. I did not blame him. We fired many of these but really got overwhelmed in the hollow of the 17<sup>th</sup>. We dragged a great number of the stumps together and formed the 12<sup>th</sup> green over them. For years afterwards we found it hard to find pin spots on this green on account of sinkages through rotting and underground caves.

The faithful horse, dragging the scoop, did his job well but expired on his very last task, the bunker, in front of the 10<sup>th</sup> green. As we had no “dead horse removal” equipment available we reverently lowered him into the bunker where he lies today. One day some sand blaster will get a surprise when he or she digs too deeply there.

When Russell presented his report and layout he asked that if possible it not be altered. He forecasted that one day play would be longer and all that would be needed would be “Tiger” tees and some tightening up to meet this development.



*Russell's layout of the course*

All his plans, sketches and notes after his several visits are well preserved and it is to the credit of the various committees that they have abided by these very faithfully.

He was an original thinker and had no hidebound ideas. He was all for alternative routes for the middle and longer markers. He strongly urged us to use the front tees while the going was heavy. He had a keen eye for ground and hated anything artificial. The lake itself was the focal point of the course and it can be seen from 17 holes.

He introduced an "heroic carry" on the 7<sup>th</sup> and revelled in the criticism this

brought forth – "a hole is not worth a damn if no one comments on it one way or another" he used to say.

Another saying he had about golf holes in general was "if it has to be blind make it bloody blind". He spent a lot of his student days on famous Scottish courses where every so called rule of golf architecture is broken – particularly on the most famous one.

Russell visited Karrinyup several times in the 1930s going to and returning from England. He helped us considerably with advice and by checking our progress. He had a lot of pride in the course with a "that's my baby" outlook. His wife too, herself an Australian Champion had the same feeling about Karrinyup. She played the course several times in those early days.

Regrowth was tremendous particularly with the marri trees. As an example the rough between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> was as bare as a board a few years after commencement – when we rather overdid our clearing. It is hard to imagine this when you look at these areas today.

The clubhouse architect was Reg Summerhayes who was a prominent low marker of the day – one of the state’s best lefthanders. Like the course the clubhouse has stood the test of time. A few deft alterations between the dining room and the bar, the closing in of a section of the verandah seems all that has been done over the years. The splendid lounge room, although not regularly used to its capacity, has been a feature of the building. I am sure the old timers will be sad if it cannot be incorporated in new development. We on the FC did not always agree. Far from it. Many heated exchanges took place. The “holders of the purse strings” and the “young tigers” were often at odds and the “out with the tree-ers” and the “over my dead body-ers” frequently clashed. Altogether though we were a very dedicated cross section of the golfing community with a single purpose.



The first measure of the course was carried out by a famous man, the late Surveyor General and explorer, Alfred Canning. Touched by the great again.

During the last war the course was abandoned and the clubhouse was taken over by the WAAF (became a Waffery it was said). Charles Maynard, Grant McDonald and a small committee acted as the custodians of the club.

After the war the course, which had almost reverted to bush, was restored by an enthusiastic committee. The clubhouse was handed back in pretty good shape – all the better I think for occupation over those years.

It was then that the post war political side of Golf started to take effect. The West Australian Golf Association had been making strong representations to the Australian Golf Union for a national meeting to be held in this State. In order to placate us the AGU appointed a committee of two from the Eastern States to confer with Ted Hantke, the state delegate to the AGU, who were to recommend if there was a metropolitan course suitable for this big meeting. The two from the Eastern States were Alex Russell and Ivo Whitton. They were affectionately known as the Byng Boys at a club where they resided.

After an inspection of all courses the committee recommended Karrinyup under certain conditions. These were briefly, that a practice fairway be established and that Russell’s original development plan be completed. As far as the latter was concerned it took merely days with front end loaders where before it took weeks with the old horse and scoop.

The rest is history. The course became nationally known by the 1952 meeting which was a great success in all ways and internationally known by the various big meetings that followed over the years.

A few more rambling reminiscences are perhaps worth recording. Two well known members were partners in the racing game. One of them in his generous and openhearted way used to give red hot information about their prospects for the following Saturday. A very astute steward did very well indeed by backing them – one week later.

Some of the drives home in these pre .08 days were quite famous and fortunately no accidents occurred. The hazards were not so great perhaps – Vladich's vineyard was often the starting line. The distinguished father of two present members holds a proud record to Peppermint Grove.

A late arrival for an official dinner drove his Baby Austin right up to his place in the dining room. One member who, owing to his irascible nature, had difficulty in securing a caddy, was surprised to find a lad waiting for him one Saturday afternoon and to be greeted with the information that he didn't care who he carried for – he only wanted the dough.

Two well known senior members were returning to Perth on a Sunday evening when they were hit by a Yellow Cab broadside on. The taxi driver, working on the principle of "first into battle", was putting up an excellent slanging match when one of our members said "wait a moment young fellow, this is Mr Just D..... and I am J P L..... the chairman of the Yellow Cab Company" – the millionth chance.

Still on the comings and goings to and from the course. Not long ago two of the early office bearers were invited to dinner at the club. Running a little late and bewildered by the unfamiliar landscape caused by progress, they failed to turn at the Gwelup corner. After milling around for a while they came to a dead end. The conversation then went something like this – "Isn't that the 4<sup>th</sup> green over there? If so it is only a couple of minutes to the clubhouse". Answer – "Yes but we closed that road 40 years ago and it's about 4 miles around to the front gate".

In the early days we required animal manure but it was hard to come by. The market gardeners and dairy folk used it to be ploughed back into their own properties. However we prevailed on one of them to let us have some if we gave him the club contract for milk. The first invoice we received was dramatic and simple. 2 gallons of milk and 5 bags of the sought after commodity expressed in its 4 letter Anglo Saxon term. Passed for payment by the committee but the secretary was requested to inform the supplier to render his account in gentler terms in the future.

One of the various descriptions of the club was that it was the Doctors club. Undoubtedly very many of the profession were among our first members. Many of these played under assumed names – Rufus, Brittle, Scribe, Locksley and Agricola were those I well remember. Some ailing patient, unable to raise his or her favourite doctor on a weekend would have been justly infuriated to read that doctor so and so had holed out in one but to have read the "Agricola" had aced the 12<sup>th</sup> at Karrinyup would have conveyed nothing of a neglectful nature.

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I would like to thank some of my old cronies who have jogged my memory over incidents, particularly those who, when I told them I was writing reminiscences of Karrinyup, gave me one searching look and said "you had better hurry and get it down on paper"! Altogether it has revived many pleasant memories.

