

WAIMAIRI BEACH GOLF CLUB, Christchurch, NZ

Waimairi Beach Golf Club celebrates the opening of their revamped golf course, having a full 18 holes in play for the first time in two years. With works being completed in January 2013, the course now boasts 13 new golf holes, driving range, 2 practice greens and a new clubhouse on the way.

While a devastating series of earthquakes in Christchurch during 2010-2011, meant that the club was left with 9 holes unplayable, a clubhouse needing to be demolished, and membership dwindling as people left the city, the Committee and Members unanimously agreed upon seizing the opportunity to upgrade the 80 year old course.

Kristine Kerr of Kura Golf Course Design was responsible for the re-design, along with Golf Renovations And Shaping Specialists (GRASS) undertaking the construction.

The Waimairi Beach Golf Club has been an integral part of life in Christchurch's eastern suburbs and lays claim to one of the

largest golf memberships in the Canterbury region. An average Saturday would easily see 200 rounds being played.

A central location on the course was selected for the clubhouse and became the heart of the re-routing: from here rerouting meant holes 1 and 10 could emanate and holes 10 and 18 could return. The clubhouse would be oriented to maximise a north-westerly sunny aspect and views over the course, and diminish the nuisance of the ubiquitous easterly wind.

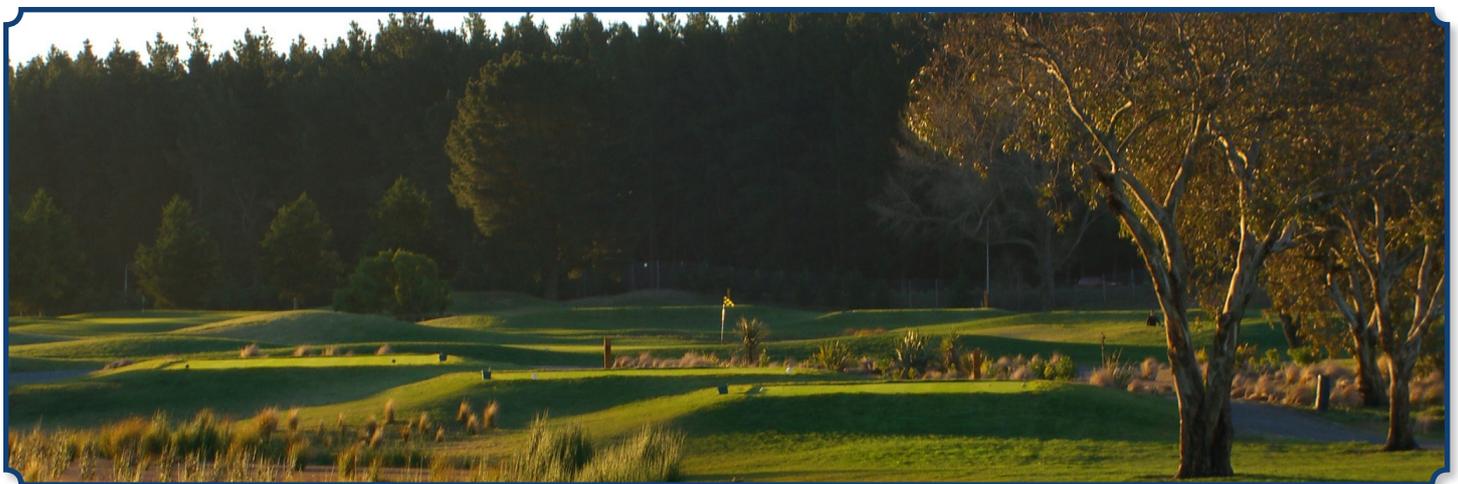
The near coastal course compromises sandy soils, the perfect medium for golf course construction, with its inherent easy earthmoving, great drainage and turf growing qualities. The snag of this otherwise ideal golf course locale, is that the course is very low lying, only several meters above sea level, and the water table is high in the sandy soils.

Key themes of the design were the creation of low sandy waste bunkers and wetlands, as a

strategic feature, to generate material for shaping and to raise the golf features above the water table. The removal of large tracts of pine between holes had exposed dune formations that were incorporated into the hole design – creating undulations and slopes in fairways that were previously flat. The course is now more open with sweeping vistas, and shaping reflective of the Port Hills in the skyline to the south.

Sustainability and minimising ongoing maintenance costs were a strong consideration, and grasses were selected to suit the local climate.

Design commenced in March 2012, construction in April 2012. The sequence of construction meant that at least 9 holes were open at any one time as construction moved around the course. Weather conditions played a crucial role in timely completion. Heavy snowfall mid-winter meant only one week of weather delay and ground temperatures stayed warm enough to encourage strong



Hole 8: New style square tees, play over small wetland.

grass growth on the recently seeded holes.

'Nor-Westerns' – powerful, warm winds which characterise Spring in Canterbury – caused sands to swirl reminiscent of a desert, causing a hindrance to seeding... and the course's neighbours were very patient during this time!

Set on 42 Ha, the site is small and the course is short by modern standards at 5500m, but is a par 72 . There are 3 generous tees per hole, designed for each level of play as well as allowing for turf recovery on a high traffic course. In designing a shorter course, Kerr made much effort to ensure there was diversity in design of holes of each par. Where holes are not long, instead of length Kerr ensured that clever club selection is called for if a golfer is to make par – or better. Newly introduced waste bunkers present an assortment of challenges, with some being easy to play out of, or higher faces being more confronting in tactical locations; the ever-present easterly

winds - and spring Nor-wester! – constitute another form of contest.

The challenges and increased strategy of the course add a new dimension to the round and are proving popular with members. Two of the par 3s have become early favourites: One of these is Hole 8, playing over a low wetland to an elevated green nestled into one of the few remaining tracts of pine. The hole appears challenging with a bunker short right, and a slope from the trees down to the green. The green however is receptive, almost punchbowl, and while its entire surface can be seen from the tees, looks narrower than it is. Many golfers are either pleasantly surprised to find their shot on the green, or less thrilled to find the bunker short has tricked them.

The Club pro's favourite is hole 13: A sharp dogleg par 5 calling for accurate shot length from the elevated tee. The landing area is wide, but judging drive distance is crucial: too long and the ball

will end in the shallow wetland. Too short, and visibility and line of play may be obscured by several tall pines.

The par 460m par 5, 18th provides a fitting climax to the round, incorporating a representation of all of the new features: the tees nestled into a low wetland provide a good view of the expansive first landing area, just short of a saddle across the fairway. Reaching the saddle the rest of the hole opens up and to the right of this is a waste bunker. Mature trees are left of the fairway at the second landing area, where a wetland nips into the right hand side, some 40m short of the green. The timid will lay up, the bold long-hitters will aim to clear the wetland if winning the match depends on reaching the green in two.

While the reason for this work will not be forgotten for a long time, we also are sure this legacy of a virtually brand spanking new golf course will endure and provide enjoyment to Christchurch golfers for many decades to come.



Green 10: New sandy waste towards 10 green.



Kristine Kerr of Kura Golf Course Design