

AUSTRALIA'S **iconic holes**

For decades we've ranked the top golf courses in the land. Now we've turned the microscope on our best holes – and in the process launched the Hall of Fame for Australia's most iconic holes.

BY DARIUS OLIVER. PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY LISBON

The par-5 fifth at New South Wales Golf Club is one of the most iconic holes in the land.



Narooma Golf Club's famous par-3 third, "Hogan's Hole".

It all began with an innocent conversation about ranking great golf holes and whether it was possible, or even fair, to compare an outstanding par 3 with a similarly outstanding par 4 or 5. In Australia there are dozens of examples of each. There are also many ways to measure greatness, and we have always felt that superb golf should be celebrated regardless of its style, its location or its par.

Wanting to celebrate our finest golf holes without simply ranking them, we decided to create the AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST Golf Holes Hall of Fame, established to honour the best and most iconic par 3s, 4s and 5s in the country.

Great golf holes are the bedrock of great golf courses, but there are also places across Australia where a single brilliant hole can elevate the entire golf experience and make an ordinary course a must-play destination. The most obvious examples include the third hole at the Tasmania Golf Club and the third at Narooma, one of five short holes inducted into the Hall of Fame this year. Whether Hogan's Hole at Narooma is a better par 3 than the 15th at Kingston Heath or the 11th at Yarra Yarra is debateable, but clearly each is an important member of the Australian golf community and worthy of inclusion among such an esteemed group.

In this, our inaugural year, we decided to induct 18 holes into

the Hall of Fame, and our rules dictated that we would only allow one hole, per course, per induction – so expect further holes in coming years from the likes of Kingston Heath, Royal Melbourne, Barnbougle Dunes and others. We also decided that holes had to have been in play for at least 12 months in order to be eligible for the Hall of Fame, which is a similar standard we apply to our Top 100 Courses ranking. This means somewhere like Lost Farm in Tasmania, with several obvious candidates, could not be considered for the class of 2011. Expect it to feature in the future.

Given these parameters and the fact that we wanted to induct our best and most iconic holes first, there is a natural bias in this initial class towards older holes over more modern ones. This is understandable given that classic courses dominate the first third of our Top 100 list. There are, however, some obvious exceptions, such as the breathtaking seventh hole on the Old Course at The National and the gloriously original fourth at Barnbougle Dunes, which is only a few years old but already an international legend.

For different reasons we also inducted celebrity closing holes at Palm Meadows and Hyatt Coolom, as much for their tournament prominence as the excellence of their design. Both are exciting water holes that have played a major role in determined the outcome of professional championships. The 18th at Coolom

has become one of the most identifiable holes in the nation over the past decade, and the resort's reputation as a tournament test continues to rise. By contrast, Palm Meadows has become somewhat of the forgotten star of Australian golf and the course actually closed for part of last year. It may have an uncertain future but what can't be denied is its past, and the role Palm Meadows played during golf's heady days of the 1980s and early '90s. Its 18th hole deserves a place within our Hall of the Fame, and we wanted to honour the hole now in case it wasn't in play next time around.

Like any sporting Hall of Fame, the criteria used by our panel to select the inducted holes is unlikely to please all readers and golf operators, and we expect as much debate and conjecture about this list as our Top 100 Courses ranking. In our defence, we ask critics to look not at what was overlooked, but instead to focus on the quality of what has been included here in this inaugural class. These holes are superb examples of the best of Australian golf, and they represent the great variety and diversity available across our wonderful courses. Those lucky enough to have played all 18 have been truly blessed.

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GOLF HOLES HALL OF FAME

2011 inductees

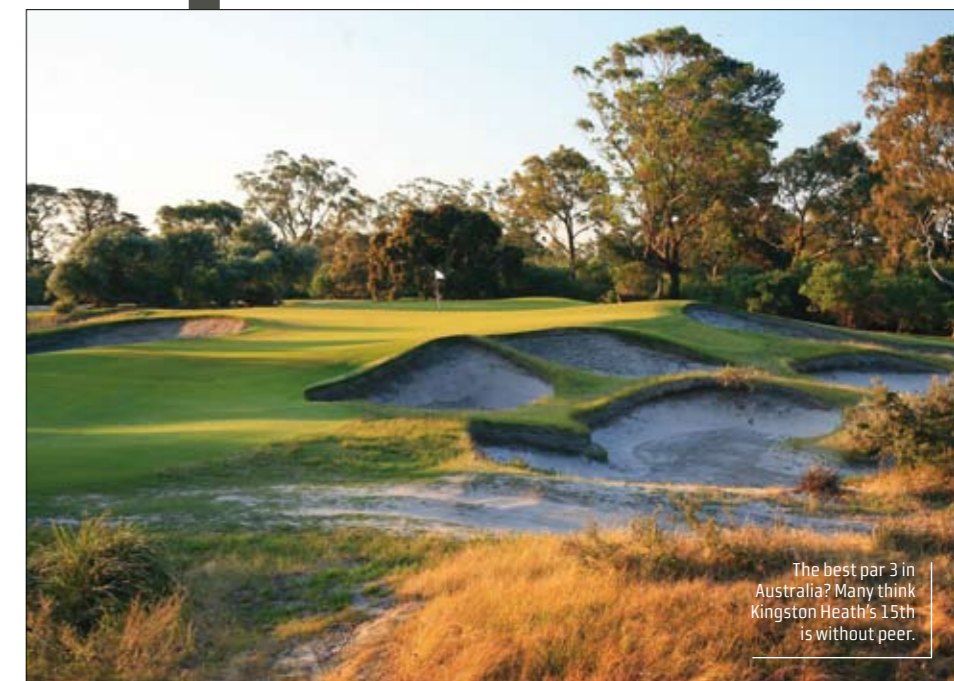
PAR 3s

15th hole, Kingston Heath Golf Club, 142 metres

The developer of America's hugely successful Bandon Dunes Resort recently nominated the 15th at Kingston Heath as the finest uphill par 3 in golf. It is hard to argue with his selection, for the bunkering and green contouring are quite extraordinary and showcase the artistic genius of creator Dr Alister Mackenzie. Like Victoria, Royal Sydney and The Australian, Kingston Heath was already built when Mackenzie arrived to offer design suggestions in 1926. Impressed by what he saw at The Heath, he nominated just one structural alteration – replacing a blind par 4 with this short uphill work of art. Rare is the golfer who stands on this tee without feeling a tinge of excitement as they prepare to play what is unquestionably the most testing short-iron shot in the country.

7th hole, The National Golf Club (Old Course), 139 metres

When the initial routing for the first (Old) course at The National Golf Club was completed, the current seventh hole actually headed in the opposite direction. For those familiar with the hole, that meant you essentially stood on what is now the green and played across the giant ravine to what is now the tee – in other words, away from the sublime views of Bass Strait and the Mornington Peninsula. Fortunately for the club, when Robert Trent Jones Jnr's design team had cleared the necessary tree from the site they sensibly reversed the direction this gem was to be played. While it may sound a stretch, this decision helped secure the future of The National, as much of the hype surrounding the club during its formative years was due to images of and reports from this hole.



The best par 3 in Australia? Many think Kingston Heath's 15th is without peer.



Royal Adelaide's par-4 third remains the only true testament to the input of Alister Mackenzie.

11th hole, Yarra Yarra Golf Club, 165 metres

Of all the short holes in Australia, perhaps only the 15th at Kingston Heath features a more elaborately contoured green complex than Alex Russell's 11th hole at Yarra Yarra. This treacherous par 3 is famous for its triple-tiered putting surface, which is slightly elevated, angled awkwardly from the tee, shallow and protected by punishing bunkers. Higher right-side pins are notoriously intimidating, but lower flags are also difficult as the only safe place to leave your ball is under the hole. Finding one of the enormous frontal bunkers is a recipe for bogey, while missing long can be even worse as you invariably face a delicate sand blast to a sharply angled green falling away towards the aforementioned traps.

What's particularly impressive about Yarra's 11th hole is that its setting is not overly attractive, given the dead ground between tee and green and the fact that neighbouring homes are visible in the background. The target area itself, however, is a masterpiece of design, and something that all golf-playing Melburnians are justifiably proud.

3rd hole, Narooma Golf Club, 141 metres

While true that the greatest golf courses generally have the best holes, the third at Narooma Golf Club on the New South Wales South Coast is proof that even the most unassuming layout can leave a golfer completely breathless. This remarkable par 3, played directly across an inlet of the Pacific Ocean, is known as "Hogan's Hole" for it once featured in a popular Paul Hogan television commercial promoting Australia. Unlike the previously listed par 3s, with their sophisticated green shapes, the third at Narooma features a rather bland putting surface that leans gently to the

front and is guarded by a fairly uninspired bunker. What makes this iconic par 3 so memorable is the area between tee and green, a spectacular Pacific Ocean blowout.

13th hole, Barwon Heads Golf Club, 130 metres

The shortest and simplest par 3 inducted into our Hall of Fame is the 13th at Barwon Heads, which is also one of only two bunkerless holes among the class of 2011. Set atop a gentle sand ridge, the tee shot here can be anything from a flick wedge to a piercing long iron depending on the wind. The target is notoriously difficult to hit, with the putting surface miniscule and surrounded by subtle bumps and ground undulations. Like the Postage Stamp at Royal Troon, the genius of the 13th at Barwon Heads is that a pure shot invariably finds the green, while even a slight miss will kick off the edge and bound away into a dangerous area. This hole is one of the greatest advertisements in Australia for short grass as a legitimate greenside hazard.

Beyond its pure golf charms, the fact that the town's popular surf beach was named in honour of the 13th at Barwon Heads is a further tribute to the quality of this ageless devil.

PAR 4s

3rd hole, Royal Adelaide Golf Club, 266 metres

Even those who dislike blind holes would struggle to counter an argument that the third at Royal Adelaide is among the most outstanding short par 4s anywhere in the world. Interestingly, it's also the only hole at Seaton that remains structurally faithful to the design suggested by Dr Alister Mackenzie when he visited the club in 1926. Played beyond a small crest and along a sizeable sand ridge,

the brilliance of this piece of design is that the more aggressive the tee shot, the riskier it becomes, but also the simpler the birdie for those who strike their tee shot accurately. The green is narrow at the front and squeezed between the dune and a small knoll, which works perfectly to complicate any pitch shot played from the fat side of the fairway. Eagles and birdies are common here, but so are big numbers. Norman von Nida once took a 9 while Colin Montgomerie carded an 8.

4th hole, Barnbougale Dunes Golf Links, 271 metres

Take a look at any decent picture of this hole, or talk to those who have played at Barnbougale Dunes, and it becomes immediately apparent why the fourth here has been fast-tracked into our Hall of Fame. With its magnificent sand hill setting, stunning bunkering, quirky punchbowl green site and multiple routes of attack, the fourth at Barnbougale has everything a great gambling hole needs. Indeed, there may not be a more enjoyable par 4 in the country.

4th hole, Woodlands Golf Club, 251 metres

One of the simplest great par 4s in golf, the fourth at Woodlands is easily reachable from the tee but it features a truly sinister green that is steeply perched and only a couple of paces wide at the front. For every player standing on this tee the equation is simple: do whatever you can to keep your ball square to the front section of the green and you'll have no dramas. The trick of course, is that the longer you hit your drive the more difficult it becomes to keep it on that narrow axis, but the simpler the birdie or eagle becomes if you do keep it straight.

Ask any long-standing member of Woodlands if a 250-metre par 4 can be difficult, and they will reel off names of top-quality players who have racked up big numbers on this subtle wonder. As some of our leading professionals can attest, miss the fourth green at Woodlands pin high on either side and you will not only struggle to make par, you'll probably struggle to make a bogey.

11th hole, The National Golf Club (Moonah Course), 359 metres

The most common criticism of the Moonah Course at The National Golf Club is that once you putt out on the 11th, you face a long stretch of holes played into the stiff prevailing winds. The blame for this can be laid squarely at the foot of the 11th hole itself, which is on such glorious dune land that lead course architect Bob Harrison felt he simply had to incorporate it into his layout. Getting into the area meant accepting a slightly disjointed routing, but the trade-off was a superb mid-length par 4 played first through a natural saddle and then across a bunkered ridge into an angled bowl-shaped green. There are a number of outstanding holes on the Moonah Course, but the 11th tells the best tale.

5th hole, Newcastle Golf Club, 368 metres

The premier hole on one of regional Australia's premier golf courses, the fifth at Newcastle is a dramatic par 4 that tumbles through and across a series of gentle dune ridges. Newcastle was designed by Eric Apperly, who was mentored in golf architecture by Dr Alister Mackenzie while working with him on the New South

Wales Golf Club project. The green and bunker shaping here lacks the sophistication of Mackenzie's great courses on Melbourne's sandbelt, but there are few more exciting par 4s anywhere than Newcastle's fifth. Downwind you can hit this green with a wedge, but your tee shot needs to be hit with precision and shaped from right to left in order to avoid the dense off-fairway vegetation. Into the wind, driving to the top of the fairway is an achievement and can still leave you with a dangerous mid to long-iron approach shot.

12th hole, The Cut Golf Club, 400 metres

Designed by James Wilcher, The Cut opened in 2005 and immediately made headlines due to its proximity to some of the wildest and most dramatic coastal sand structures in Western Australia. Though the course has its flaws and has suffered serious hardships in its short life, including a change of ownership, what remains absolutely true about The Cut is that few visitors will ever forget the experience of playing the signature 12th hole. This strong par 4 runs directly alongside the ocean, tumbling through some sizeable dunes before turning right and rising sharply into an undulating green squeezed between formal bunkers and an unkempt waste.

Some will question whether a hole like the 12th is worthy of its place in our Hall of Fame, but ask West Australian golfers to nominate the standout hole in their state and our guess is that more will select this one than any other.

18th hole, Hyatt Regency Cooloom, 385 metres

Whether the 18th hole on the Hyatt Regency Cooloom course is a great hole or not depends on your definition of great golf. It's certainly a



The terrain can be your friend or foe on the 11th hole of The National's Moonah Course.



Two classics from the great dame of Australian golf, Royal Melbourne. Here, the 18th East and sixth West (right).



strategic test that rewards brave drives with simpler approach shots, but it's uncomfortably tight and one could argue that the putting contours are a little contrived. What makes this hole so significant to the local golf scene is the role it has played over the past nine years in determining the winner of the time-honoured Australian PGA Championship. We've seen plenty of primetime drama here, including playoffs abandoned because of darkness, champions crowned after holing outrageous bunker shots and wannabe champions having their hopes dashed by approach shots that end up in water. By any measure the Australian PGA at Coolool has been a raging success, and it has helped make a celebrity of both the Hyatt Coolool course as well as its famous closing hole.

18th hole, Royal Melbourne Golf Club (East Course), 395 metres
Once the most famous finishing holes in Australian golf, the 18th on the East Course at Royal Melbourne is also the closing hole on the club's much-revered Composite Course. It's a course that has hosted its share of prominent events, from the Eisenhower Trophy in 1968 to the World Cup in 1972 and 1988, the Bicentennial Classic, the Presidents Cup, the Heineken Classic and numerous Australian Opens. This wonderfully designed par 4 has seen its share of heroics over the years, including Wayne Riley's incredible 40-foot bomb to win the 1991 Australian Open and Craig Parry's chip-in to beat Tiger Woods and Fred Couples during the 1998 Presidents Cup. There was also Billy Dunk's equally remarkable up and down from the shaggy island inside the right greenside bunker, which is now named in his honour. As 18 East at Royal Melbourne can't be stretched any farther, it doesn't quite hold the same demons as years past for professionals, but for most amateur golfers it remains a suitably stern close to the round.

6th hole, Royal Melbourne Golf Club (West Course), 391 metres
There was a time when this was considered arguably the finest par 4 in the southern hemisphere, a perfectly proportioned and angled dogleg hole with a leaning fairway and a remarkable green site cut into a base of a scrubby dune. Those who were able to hug the dangerous right side from the tee were given a much more manageable angle into this treacherous target.

The problem with the modern hole is that bigger hitters can now more easily carry the right-side bunkers, so the risk from the tee has been diminished and the approach shot is generally played with a more lofted iron. The club also needs to clean out some of the scrub between tee and bunkers, to expose more of the sand

and restore the integrity of the original design concept.

Regardless of its present form, this magnificent Mackenzie hole remains the most strategic par 4 we have in this country, and for amateurs is one of the most satisfying to par. The green site remains unchanged, and is a genuine masterpiece in every sense. Here the target is elevated and defended by a fierce false front and a putting surface that slopes severely from back to front. Attempting to leave your ball under the hole is dangerous, but absolutely essential if you hope to avoid a three-putt.

PAR 5s

5th hole, New South Wales Golf Club, 468 metres

Not sure if there is a more exhilarating feeling in golf than traversing the crest of the fifth fairway at NSW Golf Club and staring down towards the crashing waves of La Perouse. Whether you have smashed your drive down the middle of the fairway or are walking towards your second shot, the view and the sensation of playing to a green pushed against the sea is unique in Australian golf. Those who tell you this is a flawed masterpiece overlook the fact that on a windy, coastal site it offers precisely the sort of challenge all exposed links holes should aim to provide. True, it can be a doddle downwind and an absolute torture test into a stiff breeze, but regardless of conditions it is playable to all and forgiving only to those who can strike their drives with strength and accuracy. This hole is truly an Australian icon, and arguably the most breathtaking par 5 on Earth.

18th hole, Palm Meadows Golf Club, 523 metres

One of the trailblazers of Gold Coast resort golf, Palm Meadows was designed by Graham Marsh and Ross Watson and opened to considerable fanfare during the mid-1980s. It first made headlines by hosting the rich Daikyo Palm Meadows Cup, which not only put the resort on the golf map, but also made a star out of its heroic par-5 finishing hole. Doglegging right around a massive lake that needs to be crossed twice en-route to the green, what made this hole such a success in its early days was the fact that it did what every gambling closing par 5 should do, and that is influence the outcome of championships. The hole works strategically because the fairway to the left allows golfers to either play the hole conservatively or attack the lake in order to reach the green in two. Greg Norman, who was once the course's touring professional, won the first Palm Meadows Cup in 1988 on the back of some incredibly aggressive driving on this hole. Even more memorable was the 1990 event, when local favourite Rodger Davis eagled the 18th to edge out defending champion Curtis



Tasmania Golf Club's third hole wraps around Barilla Bay.

played on an Al Howard-designed course that opened in 1971 and was instantly famed for its spectacular par-5 third hole. Lengthy and following the natural curve of the bay, the shape and strategy of this hole mimics the famous 18th at Pebble Beach, except that here the tee is elevated and provides players with a wonderful view of the coastline. Those able to bite off more of the bay with their drive are left with a shorter approach towards a green that is sensibly angled to be easier to hit from close to the water.

Strange, who had taken the safer three-shot option instead.

Though the halcyon days for Palm Meadows have long passed, the 18th hole still provides visitors with a wonderful close to their round and a reminder of the glory period for the Australian circuit. After closing midway through last year, Palm Meadows reopened in December under new management. We wish the current operators well, as it would be a great shame if Aussie golfers were no longer able to experience this exciting Hall of Famer.

3rd hole, Tasmania Golf Club, 528 metres

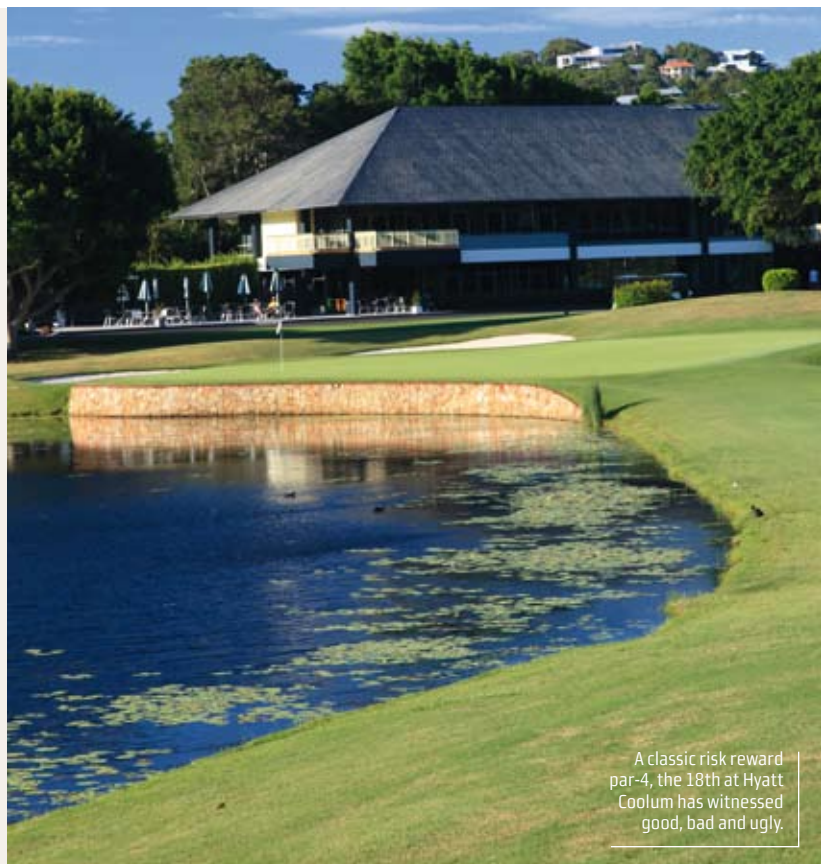
Tasmania Golf Club was established when the relocating Lindisfarne Golf Club moved from its original home to a new site beside Hobart's picturesque Barilla Bluff. Here the members

11th hole, The Lakes Golf Club, 528 metres

Bending around the main watercourse at The Lakes Golf Club in Sydney, the long par-5 11th is among the finest, and most recognisable, championship holes in the country. Although Michael Clayton redesigned The Lakes a couple of years ago, the structure of this hole has remained in place since Robert von Hagge penned the original layout in the early 1970s. From a lakeside tee golfers hit towards a reasonably generous landing zone, with water waiting to catch any drives that have been slightly pushed or sliced to the right. From here the fairway turns to the right, forcing stronger players to decide whether to carry the lake and hit straight at the peninsular green, or play safe and take the three-shot route instead. Even the safe option leaves golfers with multiple lay-up zones. ●

HALL OF FAME
Class of 2011

Hole	Club	Length
Par 3s		
15th	Kingston Heath Golf Club	142 metres
7th	The National Golf Club (Old)	139 metres
11th	Yarra Yarra Golf Club	165 metres
3rd	Narooma Golf Club	141 metres
13th	Barwon Heads Golf Club	130 metres
Par 4s		
4th	Barnbougle Dunes Golf Links	271 metres
4th	Woodlands Golf Club	251 metres
3rd	Royal Adelaide Golf Club	266 metres
11th	The National Golf Club (Moonah)	359 metres
5th	Newcastle Golf Club	368 metres
18th	Hyatt Regency Cooloom	385 metres
18th	Royal Melbourne Golf Club (East)	395 metres
6th	Royal Melbourne Golf Club (West)	391 metres
12th	The Cut Golf Club	400 metres
Par 5s		
5th	New South Wales Golf Club	468 metres
18th	Palm Meadows Golf Club	523 metres
3rd	Tasmania Golf Club	528 metres
11th	The Lakes Golf Club	528 metres



A classic risk reward par-4, the 18th at Hyatt Cooloom has witnessed good, bad and ugly.