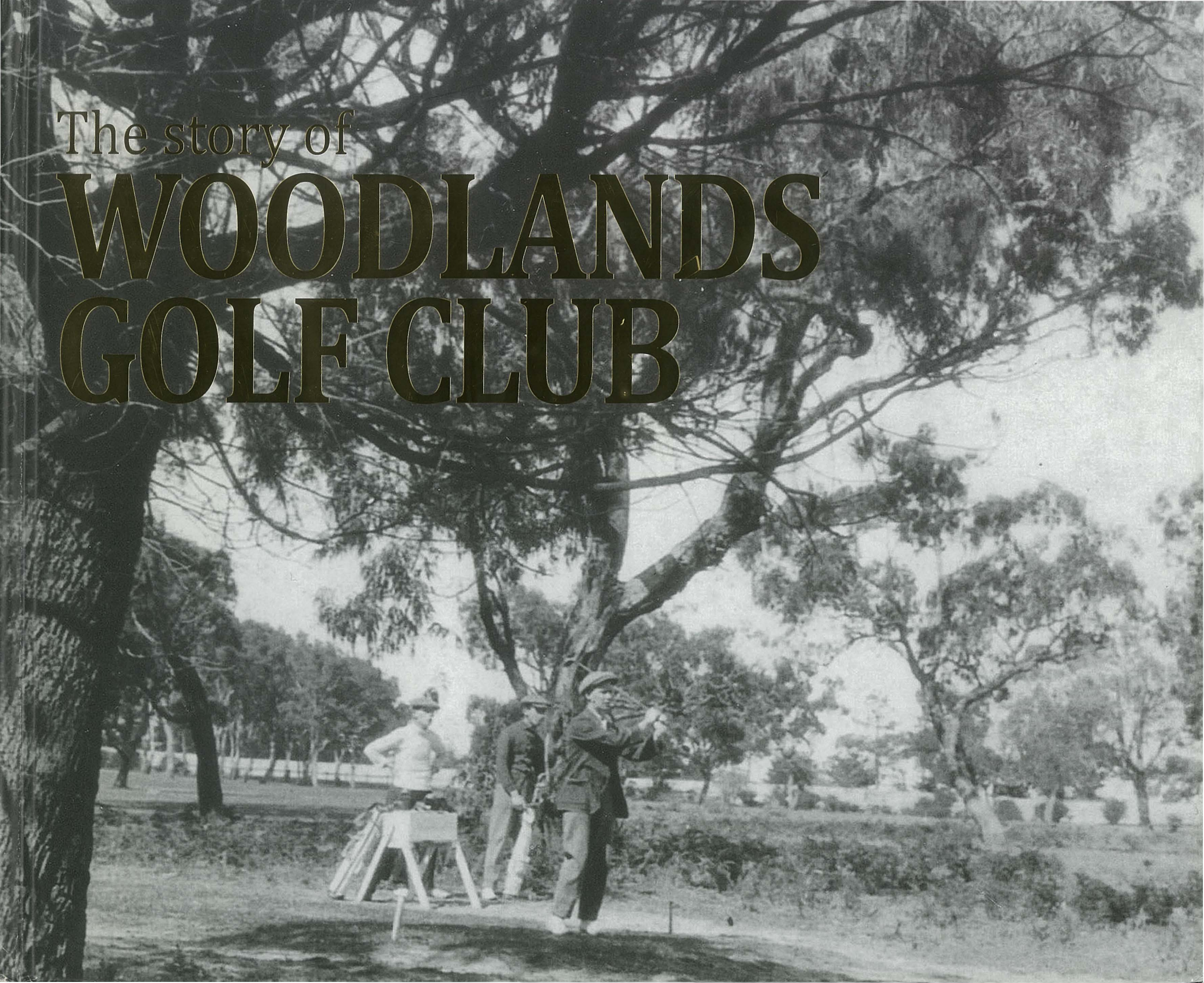


The story of

WOODLANDS GOLF CLUB



The power of branding in golf course design is stronger in some countries than others. In the UK, the architect's name is no more than an afterthought: many of the famous links pre-date golf course architecture entirely, and have had to be modified repeatedly over time to keep up with changes in equipment technology, so it's not easy to assign credit for the course to any single architect. In the US, and most countries in the modern era, the architect's identity is the centerpiece of marketing a course and often found printed on the scorecard.

In Australia, the attitude is a hybrid of the English and American attitudes: no one pays much attention to the architect's name, unless it is one of the courses advised by Dr. Alister Mackenzie during his momentous trip to Australia in October and November of 1926. Thus, many fine courses without the Mackenzie connection, such as Woodlands, have flown under the radar for years. Indeed, the first time I came to Australia in 1988, I visited 25 courses but didn't get to Woodlands, because I hadn't ever heard of it until 10 years later, when Michael Clayton suggested we make a visit.

All great courses are a product of evolution: the only question is whether they evolve mostly in the architect's mind, or on paper through various iterations of the routing, or as the greens and bunkers are constructed, or over time as they are tweaked and improved. Famous designers like Dr. Mackenzie are given the benefit of the doubt, so people imagine that he had every detail figured out when he drew up his plans. But we know that he only had a couple of days at most of the courses where he consulted on his Australian trip, and that he insisted to Kingston Heath that his associates who would build the bunkers and the

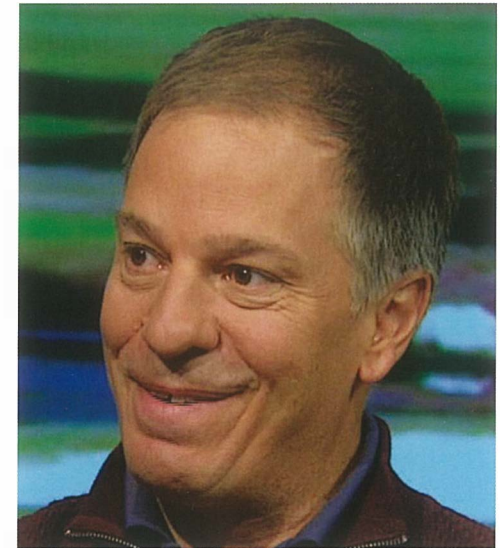
new 15th, Vern and Mick Morcom, not be held too closely to the plans he had drawn.

So is Mackenzie's contribution to Australian golf over-rated? Certainly not. Whatever he did or didn't build, the effect of his visit was enormous, not only on the courses where he consulted but even on their neighbors. The good Doctor raised awareness of what golf course architecture could produce, and raised the bar for everyone who would build a course in this country afterward, even at clubs like Woodlands where he never visited directly. I know enough about how golf courses are built to know that some of the people responsible for the many great holes at Woodlands will likely go unrecognised, just as the work of my own associates like Brian Slawnik (who has carried out many of my recommendations for Woodlands) all gets attributed to me.

In fact, it was Mick Morcom, who was the resident Superintendent at Royal Melbourne at the time, who would oversee the first greens laid at the new Woodlands Golf Course, and also supervise the eventual construction of the bunkering system at Woodlands. Even though Woodlands had more than one designer involved in its early days, it could easily be argued that Dr. Mackenzie's influence on some design aspects of Woodlands can be felt through the work carried out by Mick Morcom.

What really sets Woodlands apart is not the routing of the holes but the quality of the detailing – the shaping of the bunkers and the contouring of the greens. From the beginning of our involvement with the club, protecting the quality of that work has been our primary objective, no matter who was responsible for creating it.

Every great course has some defining characteristic that makes it stand out in people's



FOREWORD

Tom Doak – International Golf Course Architect (Renaissance Golf Design)

minds. For most, Woodlands is known for its beautiful collection of short holes, which stand out even in a town renowned for great par 3s. However, for me its defining characteristic are the small and firm greens which demand well-struck approach shots, and especially for the 4th and 15th greens, where the best approach is to run the ball up onto the plateau – a shot that is rarely found on any course in this day and age.

Perhaps this has come about through the fact that Woodlands still lies on its original location. It has survived through 100 years of advancement in equipment technology with a layout very close to the original. It still provides a challenge to golfers of all levels and will require little significant design alteration in order to continue to do so.