

# GOLF WINE, ~~WOMEN~~ & SONG



Kooyonga Golf Club's closing hole is a short par-4 offering multiple options.

SINGER/SONGWRITER LLOYD COLE KNOWS QUALITY WHEN HE SEES IT – WHETHER IT'S WINE, FOOD OR, MORE IMPORTANTLY, GOLF. AT THE END OF HIS RECENT AUSTRALIAN TOUR, HE PAIRED UP WITH LONG-TIME FRIEND MIKE CLAYTON TO PLAY ADELAIDE'S FINEST COURSES AND SAMPLE FOUR INCREDIBLE REDS.

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Ordinarily, I end my Australian tours in Melbourne, stay on a week or so and play golf in the best golfing city in the world. Last November, though, as I was beginning to put this year's schedule together, The Hawke Institute at the University of South Australia contacted me and asked if I might consider becoming a visiting fellow, to talk rather than sing, to walk across the greens of Adelaide and perhaps sample a local red or two along the way. I e-mailed Mike Clayton: "Fancy a few days of golf in Adelaide? And could you bring the clubs I left in your office?"

Thus began Mike and Lloyd's excellent Adelaide adventure.

When I first encountered Adelaide as a solo performer in 2000

it could politely be described as sleepy. Its chief selling point to the visitor was that it was small and walker friendly. Only a vibrant Chinatown caught my eye, and the locally-brewed Coopers, of course. Things have changed, and some.

More than a billion dollars have been poured into the Riverbank precinct – the Adelaide Oval and Convention Centre expanded and modernised, and the casino is following suit. A vibrant small bar scene has emerged and there is an embarrassment of riches for diners. The Victoria Square project has revitalised the CBD, transforming the existing architecture with the magic of open space. Stand in the square on a clear night and look around – the city shines. Nineteenth century sandstone juxtaposed with towers of glass, ancient trees with intelligent fountains. The old town embraces the new ... the new town embraces the old.

I meet up with Mike at the airport – I've flown in from Brisbane with my giant suitcase, synthesiser and the usual two guitars – exhausted after a seven-week tour, and frankly a little reticent about playing 90 holes in three days. Mike has come from Melbourne with the clubs and no rain gear. It's late June, chilly and damp. Our hotel is the Adina, in the old Treasury building just off Victoria Square, about five minutes' walk from the vibrant Gouger Street, Chinatown and pretty much anything one might need after a full day of golf. On the first night we take the advice of my food critic friend, John Lethlean, and visit Park Lok, two blocks removed from the bustle and a spot few, if any, tourists would stumble upon. We dine excellently and talk LPGA and golf design in a serenity most welcome to my aching body and psyche. Back at the Adina I'm pleasantly surprised by the Treasury bar – it's cosy with old

wood and well worn red leather, excellent staff and bourbon selection – the opposite of your typical hotel bar. We have indeed lucked out. I say "we" ... Mike has gone to bed. I nurse a nightcap and consult my notes.

Four clubs sit above all the others in Adelaide – all are on the same strip of sand, ideal for golf, which runs parallel to the coastline and close to the airport. All are within a kilometre or two of the ocean, none is more than 30 minutes' drive from our hotel in the CBD. And we can thank one man for all of them. Without "Cargie" Rymill there is no Adelaide golf, as we know it today.

And you've never heard of Cargie, have you? I certainly hadn't ...

Herbert Lockett Rymill was born in Adelaide on August 19, 1870. Circumstances could easily have consigned him to an easy life among the idle rich, but at the age of 32 he was saved from croquet and shooting when he caught the golf bug. He immersed himself in the game and became a keen student of course design.

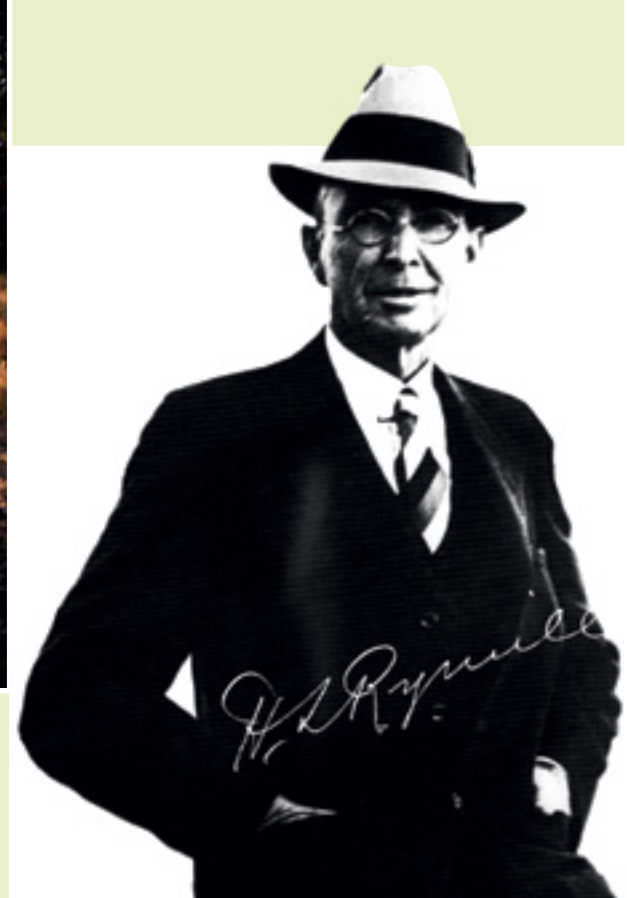
By 1904 he was chairman of the greens committee of the Adelaide Golf Club, then based in Glenelg but looking for better land. Upon inspecting the Seaton sand dunes which would soon become the new course, he said: "I have never seen St Andrews, but if it is like this – buy it!" The current layout at Royal Adelaide, as it is now known, is still based on the routing submitted by Cargie and club captain Dr Harry Swift, and agreed upon by the committee. His influence grew, on the course and within the club, and he was all but the autocrat of his ambition until he overstepped in 1911. A bunker too far. Ousted from absolute power, he resigned. Not a team player, but by no means finished either.

If the Seaton course was Cargie's first love then Kooyonga would be his life love. He stumbled upon the sandy tract of land, fortuitously for sale, hastily established the club to buy it, designed the course, and moved house to be next to it. In 1923 he travelled to Britain to study the great links and to consult with a prominent course architect, likely Herbert Fowler of Walton Heath fame. By 1924 the full 18 holes were in play but Cargie continued to fine-tune the design, adding land, lengthening the course and planting trees. He never stopped, until after ten years of rule and devotion, he was again ousted by the club committee.

In 1926, Cargie was contracted by the nascent Grange Club to

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CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Kooyonga's outstanding par-5 2nd hole; Cargie Rymill and his family dominated Adelaide golf in the first half of the 20th century; Kooyonga's 13th ends a great stretch of holes; The well-bunkered par-3 3rd hole.



The Treasury Bar ... our correspondent's favourite place to rest and recuperate.



The wonderful dogleg par-4 8th is a highlight of Kooyonga's front nine.

Glenelg's superbly crafted short par-4 4th hole, with an angled green surrounded by bunkers.

design what would become their West course. Much of his routing still remains. The same year he produced a plan for the Glenelg Golf Links Ltd. The relationship was short lived, but much of his intent seems to have been implemented, more or less, for the front nine.

It's at **Kooyonga Golf Club** that we begin our golf, on a cool grey Monday morning and with one look at the property it's easy to feel Cargie's excitement. This is ideal golfing terrain, if not technically linksland, then for all intents and purposes it offers the same opportunities for golf. The elevation changes are seldom extreme, but always creating nuance and challenge, and as the round progresses it becomes clear that when it comes to sites, Kooyonga is on a par with any club in mainland Australia.

The course opens with back-to-back par-5s, the second of which is a real beauty, snaking through the dunes. In the 1965 Australian Open, Gary Player started 3, 3, shooting 62 en route to victory. The tournament was held at Kooyonga five times, the last in 1972 with Peter Thomson the champion. After a few holes it is manifest that today's professionals with the modern ball would not be adequately tested, but there is plenty to test the rest of us, the examination peaking on the front at the wonderful 8th hole – a dogleg par-4 with a severely sloping fairway. Only a well-struck drive up the left will leave a view of the green, anything else will fall to the right leaving a longer, blind shot to a well-bunkered green with drop-offs all around. From this,

the apex of the property and the design we can survey the course, and what we see is fabulous land, and a lot of trees ... an awful lot of trees. Mike and I spend a few extra minutes here wondering how great this hole, and the next, would be if these trees could be removed ... a huge sandy crater would remain. How much fun would that be to hit over? This conversation is extended over the remainder of the round, applied to hole after hole.

In 1972, these trees would have been tall and proud, but they would not have choked the course, as they now do, in places. There is only one glaringly poor hole at Kooyonga today – the botched redesign of the short par-4 5th hole, which could be easily fixed. The rest are fine holes and great ones. Mike singles out the great variety found in the 10th through the 13th holes. Back-to-back par-3s to follow add a charm, quirk and no mean challenge. Still, there are at least half a dozen holes that could be improved with better tree management.

This is the one caveat when it comes to playing with course architects – they cannot fail to see how a course could be improved, and often the focus is on the negative; the positives don't need fixing and are simply enjoyed. There is much to be enjoyed at Kooyonga – the land is great, the routing is great, the turf is great, the bunkering is great. It's a great course ... that could be really great, really special, as it once was. Maybe the greens committee will look at the photos of the course hanging in the clubhouse taken in the 1920s. It looked amazing!

Cargie's Rymills were the preeminent family in Adelaide golf in the first half of the century, but since World War II it's the Crafters who have taken that mantle. Murray and Brian won numerous state Opens and PGA titles between them. Murray's son Peter is a golf pro and Brian's daughter Jane is arguably the best golfer South Australia ever produced, male or female. It's her brother who greets us at **Glenelg Golf Club** and will partner us in the afternoon.

No slouch himself – a four-time state amateur champion, Neil represented Australia in the Eisenhower Cup and since 1980 he's been a golf architect, like his father and uncle were. The Crafters have been part of the Glenelg club for more than 50 years, and hands on with the course design and upkeep since 1981, so it's not surprising that we find a consistency of philosophy and aesthetic throughout the property. The routing weaves through dunes and wetlands with the initial gentle terrain giving way to bolder contours, particularly the run of holes from the 8th through 12th offering magnificent grand-scale golf. As Mike puts it, "One of the best runs of holes in the country that isn't Royal Melbourne or Barnbougle."

Neil singles out the skyline green one-shotter 3rd as a personal favourite. The green is large but the middle is the play, such is the potential for disaster for the short-sided miss. It's 200 metres uphill and into the wind as we played it. The proper golfers hit 3-woods, I hit driver and made an improbable 'sandy' from the dastardly front left trap.

The 7th was, until fairly recently, a marginal short par-5. Now it's a testing par-4 that Neil is particularly happy with. The idyllic greens complex and surround bring to mind Birkdale, or Nairn. The feel is completely natural, but in fact these dunes were man-made and also function as screening as the course border lies just beyond them.

I wasn't going to single out any holes myself as my lasting impression of Glenelg is one of a project which has maximised its potential. It's hard to imagine the course much better than Neil and his cohorts, over the years, have made it. But I must mention two.

The opener is an elegant delicate hole, with water short left and long right but neither should trouble a decent shot. It's a drive and a pitch, or a long iron then a short one. The green is nestled below a pair of dunes to the left with bunkers and a pond right. All I will say about my performance on this hole is that I'm not drinking red wine with lunch and then trying to play golf directly afterwards ever again. Coming up the home hole I was swinging a little better, I'd lost – Mike had put on a shot-making clinic, as usual – and it had been a real privilege and insight to play the course in the company of its guardian.

Neil's bunkering needs mentioning. All 93 are revetted-edge style – like the Old Course – but shaped more in the Alistair MacKenzie sandbelt style. No hole showcases them better than the 18th. A stunning array of them, cut into a large dune with the clubhouse above, must be negotiated if the long hitter is to reach this par-5 in