

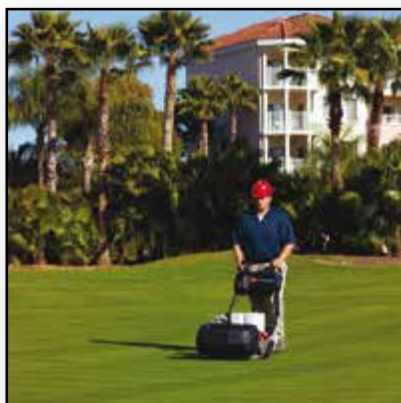
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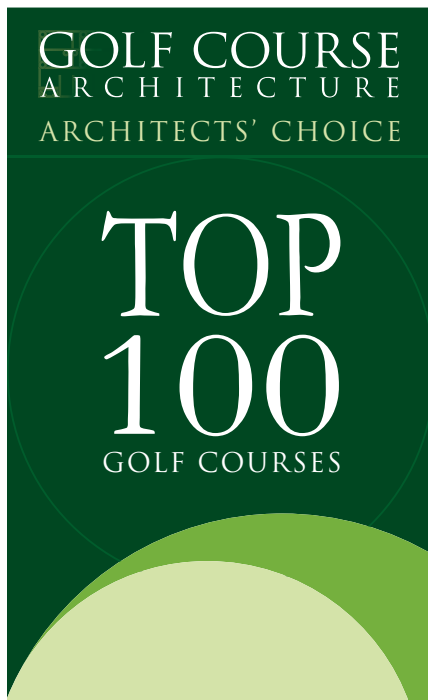


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Welcome

July 2013

www.golfcoursearchitecture.net



Many thousands of words, in magazines and across the Web, are devoted to the ranking or rating of golf courses. So, on one level, readers might wonder why we at GCA felt the need to start another list.

Fundamentally, the reason is that we believe golf architects have a unique perspective on what makes a course great. It's a common criticism that many, perhaps even most golfers, judge courses on factors such as the turf condition or the quality of service in the clubhouse; well, if anyone is best placed to look beyond that at the design of the course itself, it ought to be the architects.

There are a number of architects on rankings panels around the world, though some magazines, notably *Golf Monthly* in the UK, specifically exclude them because of a perceived conflict of interest. This conflict was an issue for us when compiling these rankings; we considered banning designers from voting for courses with which they have been involved, but eventually decided doing so was too complex. Should every architect who has ever worked for a particular firm be barred from naming every course on which that firm has ever worked? If not, where should the line be drawn? Should we say 'You cannot vote for courses on which you personally worked'; if so, how would we verify that, especially in the case of larger design firms who have or had multiple associates? Eventually we concluded that the simplest option – to trust people not to hype their own work and to reserve the right to disqualify ballots that we felt broke

this rule – was the best. The fact that, almost 250 ballots, those we threw out could be counted on the fingers of one hand, more than justified our confidence.

Producers of lists of all kinds love to claim objectivity for the results. That's as true in restaurant or travel guides as it is in rankings of golf courses, but it is just as spurious in each. Even if one can agree set criteria against which voters should make their judgements, one doesn't have objectivity, partly because those criteria are themselves subjective, and partly because the individual voters have to be trusted to apply them in the same way, which is impossible. We chose the opposite route: to define no criteria and to say to our voters, in true Potter Stewart fashion, 'We believe you know what good is when you see it'.

Yet, even accepting that lists are subjective, there is value in the collective opinions of informed observers. With lists compiled by a single judge, the subjectivity smashes you in the face; a restaurant ranking compiled by someone who hates spicy food is hardly likely to guide you to the best Indian or Mexican restaurants. So we feel, although every single reader will find something they object to in our list, that it is of interest and of value. We hope you agree.

Adam Lawrence
Editor

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Photo by: Iain Lowe

What *it* takes to be TOP

Just what is it that makes a golf course great? Is it strategic golf holes, a breathtaking setting, immaculate conditioning, or something else? Toby Ingleton finds out what the architects think.

In compiling the Top 100, golf architects were free to select their favourite courses using whichever criteria they felt most appropriate. It wasn't an easy task, as Peter Matkovich highlights: "I spent many hours debating in my mind the various values and credentials of the courses. It's almost like asking to rank your children in order of preference." But over 240 golf course architects completed it, and many who participated shared their thoughts on what made a golf course great.

Location was most frequently cited. Scottish-based architect Sam Thomas says: "My choices are special primarily due to location, location, location. The sites of each would be any architect's dream."

Brit Stenson of IMG Golf Course Design says: "To me, the very best courses are great routings on unusual or maybe even unique sites. The Golden Age architects often had the opportunity to select from and design on truly outstanding sites, and they had the limitations imposed by the construction equipment and methods of the day. It is that

combination of opportunity and constraint that fostered their genius, their adaptive flexibility, and hence that gave us so many truly unique journeys in golf."

And, almost uniquely in sport, this diversity of playing surface is what makes golf special. Ian Andrew adds: "One of the great joys in golf is that each setting for the game is completely unique. When the golf course fully integrates and incorporates the setting right into the architecture we are left breathless. Royal County Down and Prairie Dunes are the two best examples I know of where the line between golf and landscape beyond is so blurred that you don't know whether to grab a sketch book, a camera or you golf clubs. While there 'may' be a handful of better designs, there is no grander experience and no place I would rather be than either of those two courses."

Location also encompasses another crucial factor – the weather. David Johnson said: "A great golf course is not only defined by having superb strategy and conditioning, but it offers intangibles that result in a



Photo: Gary Lisbon



A black and white photograph of golfer Arnold Palmer in the middle of a golf swing. He is wearing a white polo shirt and dark trousers, looking upwards with concentration. The background is a blurred crowd of spectators.

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“One of the great joys of golf is that each setting for the game is completely unique. When the golf course fully integrates and incorporates the setting right into the architecture we are left breathless”

Ian Andrew

remarkable golf experience. One such intangible is the weather, perhaps the most variable element in golf. Many of the courses I hold in the highest esteem are near a coast, where the wind has the ability to change playing conditions in the blink of an eye. My first round at Royal Dornoch started under cold, grey skies, followed by several holes with brilliant sunshine, then a brief hail storm, followed again by glorious sunshine. The perfect day!”

And location dictates the playing surface, or what lies beneath. David McLay Kidd explains: “You could give me a site devoid of meaningful contour, too small by convention, remote from a golfing public, a near penniless developer but make it sand and I promise I can make you something very special! Every course in my list shares that key ingredient!”

Regardless of the site though, the golf course must stand up. For Steve Smyers, who himself has a successful amateur golf record, the golf course must provide a good test. Smyers says: “The tipping point

for me is if a course occupies a landscape in a very harmonious manner while providing the ultimate examination of one’s golfing talents and abilities. A truly great course should test the most talented in the game. It should identify one’s ability to execute an infinite variety of shots with every club in the bag. A great course must require the best to be precise off the tee and to have a balance of long and short approaches into the putting surfaces. A superior course puts a great emphasis on decision making, that is, it will not only ask a player to hit a good shot but hit the right shot for the occasion.”

And the putting surfaces themselves are crucial to many. Tom Mackenzie says: “My selections are generally highly influenced by the quality of the green designs providing a thorough examination of the short game. That is the lifeblood of the game and the only cure for the power game. Give me any course with eighteen creatively shaped, challenging and fair green complexes and I would be happy.”

The fact that over 75 per cent of the courses in our Top 100 were built over 50 years ago suggests age might be important. Tripp Davis says: “I am one who likes the history of a course and the club, but more than that I think great golf courses are in part a product of ageing, much like wine. That ageing results in tweaking to correct flaws and make strong points stronger.”

But perhaps the most frequently cited factor in a great golf course was fun. “Unparalleled fun factor,” says Todd Eckenrode, of Cypress Point. “Fun to play,” says Mike Hurdzan, about TPC Sawgrass. North Berwick is “easily the most fun golf course I have experienced,” says Mary Armstrong. “Incredibly fun to play,” says Brandon Johnson, of Tobacco Road.

It’s a reminder that for the vast majority of golfers, the sport is a recreation, a pleasure, a pastime. It’s what we do in our free time and for many, it’s what we would do all the time if we could. If golf architects keep designing courses that golfers enjoy, the sport has a strong future.





Photo: Marcus Lovelock PinPoint Golf

#100

#100 Woking

Surrey, England
Tom Dunn, 1893

The first of many classic heathland courses from the south of England to appear in our Top 100, Woking was first laid out by Scottish golf professional Tom Dunn, with Stuart Paton and John Low's subsequent work making the course what it is today. The club is currently working with golf course architects Thomson Perrett & Lobb and is set to unveil a new sixteenth hole in the coming weeks.

#99 The Honors Course

Tennessee, USA
Pete Dye, 1983

Created by American businessman Jack Lupton to honour the game of amateur golf, this private club is known for its compelling blend of a Pete Dye golf course and the natural plants and wildlife painstakingly nurtured by greenkeeper David Stone.

#98 Shadow Creek

Nevada, USA
Tom Fazio, 1989

Having transformed a parcel of desert into a pine tree-lined golf course, complete with lakes and streams, Shadow Creek is recognised for its feat of landscape engineering. "What Fazio and Wynn did there expanded everyone's idea of what man can do," says Armen Suny of Suny Zokol Golf Design. Neil Haworth of Nelson & Haworth says: "With money, talent and creativity anything can be built!"

#97 Peachtree

Georgia, USA
Robert Trent Jones, 1947

"As near like Augusta National as possible, and better, if possible," Bobby Jones is quoted as saying in the planning of Peachtree. Robert Trent Jones was hired and the Jones's partnership produced a course that is known for its use of contour, with barely a flat lie to be found.

"With money, talent and creativity, anything can be built!"

Neil Haworth on
Shadow Creek



#96

#96 Torrey Pines (South)

California, USA
William F. Bell, 1957

With expansive views over the Pacific Ocean, this public golf course was redesigned by Rees Jones and Greg Muirhead in 2001 to meet the contrasting requirements of public play and professional tournaments, including the 2008 US Open.

#95 Olympic Club (Lake)

California, USA
Sam Whiting, 1927

When the original 1924 Lake and Ocean courses designed by Willie Watson were damaged in landslides, superintendent Sam Whiting remodelled and rebuilt both. Robert Trent Jones reworked the Lake course, which is characterised by its severely sloping fairways, for the 1955 US Open, the first of five it has hosted, and Bill Love oversaw work in advance of the most recent, in 2012.



Photo: Larry Lambrecht



#93

#94

The Kinloch Club

Waikato, New Zealand
Jack Nicklaus, 2007

One of only six courses built in the last ten years that made our Top 100 list, Kinloch, designed by Jack Nicklaus's firm, brings a rustic feel to the volcanic hills overlooking Lake Taupo in the North Island of New Zealand.

#93

Loch Lomond

Dunbartonshire, Scotland
Tom Weiskopf,
Jay Morrish, 1993

Scotland's first entry into the Top 100 is one of only two inland courses from that country to make the list. This parkland layout visits the lochside on multiple occasions including its fine finishing hole.



#94

Special site

Of the four Nicklaus Design courses in our Top 100, Kinloch is the newest. We asked Chris Cochran, senior design associate for Nicklaus Design, about the experience of creating the golf course

What really struck us about Kinloch was how beautiful the site was. The course is on high ground overlooking Lake Taupo, and comprised of organic, highly erodible soil with the land simply cascading towards the lake. It's a spectacular setting with very rugged terrain. In designing the course we sought to mimic the surroundings, creating natural, distressed looking bunkers and

greens that blended perfectly into their surroundings.

There were definite limitations in how we could route the course. There was only one place to put the clubhouse and this dictated our opening and closing holes, but when a routing comes naturally it's probably a sign of how well suited the land is for golf.

In terms of playability, we managed to achieve a lot of variety – uphill and downhill shots, doglegs left and right – and this diversity of challenge for the golfer makes the course a huge amount of fun.





#92 Fishers Island
New York, United States
Seth Raynor, 1926

Students of golf design will find much to admire at Fishers Island, with the course featuring Raynor's take on numerous classic designs, such as Redan, Alps and Biarritz holes.

#91 Capilano
British Columbia, Canada
Stanley Thompson, 1937

Routed among fir trees in the hills between the Pacific Ranges and Vancouver Harbour, Capilano is a little-touched insight into the work of Canadian architect Stanley Thompson.



#90 Wentworth (West)
Surrey, England
Harry Colt, 1926

Although the routing remains the same, the recent renovation of Wentworth's West course by Ernie Els with architect Greg Letsche has transformed this Harry Colt layout, now characterised by its deep, muscular bunkering.

Restoring shot values



It's five years since the team at Ernie Els Design embarked on the huge transformation of Wentworth's West course. Ernie Els reflects on the experience.

Restoration of a classic golf course is a challenging process, but it's also an immensely rewarding one, especially as in this case you take into account my connections with the West course at Wentworth.

This Harry Colt design has an incredible tournament pedigree – having hosted World Matchplays, BMW PGA Championships and a Ryder Cup – and its popularity is well documented. However, by the turn of the 20th century the course wasn't playing the way Colt intended. That was the starting point for our design solutions. We needed to restore a lot

of the course's original shot values, while at the same time not straying too far from Colt's philosophy – a delicate balancing act but one that we feel has been successfully resolved.

In fact we believe this restoration, which included completely new green complexes and bunkering, has enhanced this wonderful course in every conceivable way. It is improved aesthetically, strategically and just as significantly in the quality of the playing surfaces.

And as a designer, my own view is that the likes of Colt, Donald Ross and Alister MacKenzie would have willingly been engaged in such restorations. Great men such as this have great vision. They designed courses for 30, 40 and 50 years or more and in that time they evolved as architects. Had they lived long

“We needed to restore a lot of the course's original shot values, while at the same time not straying too far from Colt's philosophy – a delicate balancing act”

#89 St George's Hill

Surrey, England
Harry Colt, 1913

Perhaps the first example of an integrated golf and housing development, St George's Hill set a standard that is unmatched since. Colt designed two courses here, the first of which still exists in full, the second reduced to nine holes (the current 'Green' nine) in the 1940s.

#88 Cabo Del Sol (Ocean)

Baja California Sur, Mexico
Jack Nicklaus, 1994

Combining the best of desert and coastal golf, Cabo Del Sol's Ocean course is one of just two Central American courses in the Top 100 list. In 2010/11 the club made significant changes to the fifth, sixth and seventh holes, taking play closer to the sea. Jim Lipe, who worked with Nicklaus to create the new holes, said: "With water crashing all around you on the sixth green and seventh tee, the connection to the ocean is greatly enhanced".

enough I have no doubt they'd have been the first in line to update their old courses, using their considerable skills and wonderful imagination to ensure that these courses continued to be a test for the best players.

From the feedback we've had, there's no question the players now appreciate the changes we've made. The course doesn't need to be tricked-up; it's just a very balanced and fair test of golf, with a well-judged risk-reward component. If you play well then there are opportunities to make birdies and score well, but if you're doubting yourself or slightly off your game then the golf course will penalise you. That's the way championship golf is meant to be.

#87 The Berkshire (Blue)

Berkshire, England
Herbert Fowler, 1928

Both courses at The Berkshire received votes from architects, but it was perhaps surprisingly the Blue that made it into our Top 100. Famously opening with a tough par three over a deep heather-filled hollow, the course winds its way through the pine that has matured since the golf course was first laid out on open heath.



Photo: Larry Lambrecht

Photo: The Berkshire Golf Club

Exciting the senses



#86



We asked Martin Ebert, whose firm Mackenzie and Ebert provide architectural services to Rye, to give us an insight into the course

What are the characteristics which makes Rye so special? Harry Colt and Tom Simpson's involvement with the layout and detail of the design is a good start!

The main spine of gravelly dunes has been used extremely imaginatively in the routing of the course. The layout uses it in so many different ways. Holes run alongside it, along the top of it in the case of the classic fourth,

from peak to peak at the fifth, up and over it for the sixth and 13th, and from high tees to crumpled fairways on the ninth and 15th.

There are so many holes which excite the senses. The five par threes are rightly renowned but the fourth, 16th and 18th, the latter passing hard by the clubhouse, are world class par fours.

Most importantly the greens at Rye enjoy that combination of superb condition, both winter and summer, and the most beautiful contours. It is hard to find a better set. And all with a par of just 68.

“There are so many holes that excite the senses”



#84

#86 Rye

East Sussex, England
Harry Colt, 1895

Harry Colt was a young solicitor when he was elected captain of Rye and laid it its original course, before going on to become one of the most influential golf architects of all time. Rye was subsequently reworked by Tom Simpson and Sir Guy Campbell and is now a par 68, with five par threes and a single par five.

#85 Chantilly
(Vineuil)France
Tom Simpson, 1909

Tom Simpson arrived at Chantilly in the 1920s to design a second 18 holes, and at the same time reworked the original Vineuil course. The course is severely damaged during the Second World War, but was subsequently restored and later, in the 1980s, reworked by Donald Steel. The course is characterised by its challenging bunkering and, despite the surrounding forest, spacious feel.



#84 Bandon Trails

Oregon, USA
Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw, 2005

A journey through dunes, meadow and forest, Bandon Trails was the third eighteen built at the Bandon Dunes resort. "In the profession of golf architecture all one can ask for is to be given an extraordinary site and the freedom to work with it. Mike Keiser has afforded both at Bandon Trails," says Bill Coore on the club's website. "We have tried to tread softly on this spectacular landscape, laying out a golf course that required little alteration to the site while providing golf as diverse as the land itself."

#83 Pasatiempo

California, USA
Alister MacKenzie, 1929

Following their design partnership at Cypress Point, Pasatiempo founder Marion Hollins presumably found the decision to hire Dr Alister MacKenzie to design a new course on the sand hills overlooking the Monterey Bay quite easy. Almost 70 years later, the discovery of a collection of historic slides prompted the club to embark upon a restoration of MacKenzie's original design, choosing Renaissance Golf Design for this ten-year project.

#82 Saunton
(East)Devon, England
Herbert Fowler, 1919

The East course at Saunton began life in the 1890s, but it was Herbert Fowler's work in 1919 that has the greatest impact on the course as we see it today. The course is typified by the holes that run through dunes, giving each a sense of happy isolation and providing a stern test that many feel is worthy of an Open Championship.



Photo: Frank Pont





Photo: Clive Barber



St George's

Canada
Stanley Thompson, 1929

Throughout its eighty-plus year history, the golf course at St George's has had a seamless design history, beginning with Stanley Thompson and passing first to his design associate Robbie Robinson, who oversaw significant changes to the course in the 1960s and, before his death in the 1980s, handed the reins over to business partner Doug Carrick. St George's rolling topography and outstanding routing, combined with the fine bunkering handled largely by then Carrick associate Ian Andrew, make it the highest placed Canadian course on our list.

“Each and every hole at St George's has its own unique look and personality”

Doug Carrick

Thompson's works of art



Stanley Thompson is Canada's founding father of golf and designed the two courses from the country that made our Top 100. We asked golf architect Doug Carrick, who has worked at both, to tell us more

“A little bit of England, far from England.” This was the vision of Robert Home Smith, the founder and developer of the prestigious Kingsway area in the west end of Toronto, which includes the St George's Golf & Country Club (formerly known as the Royal York Golf Club).

Robert Home Smith began purchasing land west of Toronto in the early 1900s and by 1928 had assembled over 2,000 acres for the development of a prestigious residential neighbourhood. Smith's plans also included the establishment of a first class golf course that would serve clients of the Royal York Hotel in downtown Toronto that was also being built at the same time, by Canadian Pacific Railways.

Stanley Thompson had just completed the Banff Springs course in 1928, also for CPR,

and was the logical choice to design the new course for the Royal York Hotel. Not only was Thompson commissioned to design the course, but he was also responsible for selecting the property for the golf course within the 2,000 acre land holding. Thompson's selection of the beautifully rolling and wooded landscape was brilliant, as it was ideally suited to the development of a world class golf course.

The property is intersected with a series of broad rolling ridges and dramatic valleys, covered in mature Oak savannah. Thompson's routing of the course takes full advantage of the dramatic terrain with holes that flow naturally through the valleys and across broad ridges, creating an infinite variety of shots from the heaving and undulating fairways.

Many of the green sites are elevated and framed with spectacular, artistically shaped bunkers that Thompson is so well known for. Each and every hole at St George's has its own unique look and personality and is easily remembered long after the round is finished. Such is the genius of Stanley Thompson.

My mentor and former partner, the late CE (Robbie) Robinson, began his career in golf course architecture with Stanley Thompson in 1928, during the building of St George's. Robinson recalled asking Thompson why he was building

such a difficult golf course and Thompson's reply was: “Young man, I'm not building this course for today, I am building it for posterity”.

Capilano's first golf professional Jock McKinnon, who served the club from its inception in 1937 until his retirement in 1979, said: “Capilano was and still is a tribute to the architectural genius of Stanley Thompson. There is no need for any tampering apart from taking care of the normal wear and tear. The members have a work of art in their care and possession.” To this day, Jock McKinnon still holds the world record eclectic score (which totals the best score made on each hole of a particular course by one person) McKinnon's total score of 33 includes hole in ones on four of the five par threes, eagles on all of the par fours and double eagles on all of the par fives except the 18th hole, where he made just a mere eagle.

Having served the club for more than 20 years as their consulting architect, I have come to know every inch of the golf course quite intimately and I can heartily attest to McKinnon's assessment of the course. It truly is a work of art.

Capilano is not the longest or most demanding golf course in Canada, however it may be the finest example of great golf course architecture in the country. The routing of the course alone is absolutely brilliant, especially when you consider



#77 Formby

Merseyside, England
Willie Park Jr, 1884

The northwest coast of England has rich pickings when it comes to links golf and Formby's, with its rolling fairways and tall pines, give it a unique character that elevates it into the company of its Open rota neighbours. "Visiting the course changed my life as a golf course architect," says Michiel van Der Vaart of Jol Golf Design in the Netherlands. "One hole after the other is breathtaking and full of character".

#80 Monterey Peninsula (Shore)

California, USA
Robert Baldock, Mike Strantz, 1960

Mike Strantz's extensive 2003 redesign of the Shore course at Monterey Peninsula would be his last work before cancer robbed golf of one of its most innovative architects. With an artist's sketchpad as his most powerful design tool, the Shore course provides a series of stunning landscapes. Strantz sandcapped the site to create a surface that would encourage a ground game and reversed many of its holes in the direction of its famous neighbour, Cypress Point.

that the mountain side property has over 300 feet of elevation change and yet it is still easily walked by the majority of members. The first, fifth and sixth holes each plunge downhill 100 feet before reaching the seventh hole at the lowest end of the course. The routing then makes a gradual ascent up the mountainside, however the climb never seems strenuous. It is also interesting to note that there is never a tee shot or an approach shot into a green that climbs more than 11 metres (36 feet). In other words the shots are always manageable. Not only did Thompson brilliantly manage the challenging elevation changes in the routing, but he also managed to capture and frame many spectacular views out over the city of Vancouver to the Burrard Inlet and also back to Grouse Mountain at the top end of the course. The finishing holes (15, 16 17 and 18) situated in the 'upper bowl' below the stately clubhouse and the soaring slopes of Grouse Mountain, are unmatched anywhere in the world for their combined challenge and beauty.

Over and above the brilliant routing, the green complexes and bunkers are works of art in and of themselves. Thompson's trademark high sand flashings and swooping grass capes give each hole a unique identity and distinct personality.

If a golfer had just one round left to play in their life, Capilano would be an excellent choice.

#79 Baltusrol (Lower)

New Jersey, USA
AW Tillinghast, 1922

From 1948 Rees' father Robert Trent Jones was retained to improve and modernise Tillinghast's dual courses at Baltusrol. Among the changes was the addition of seventy yards in length at the par three fourth hole on the Lower course, which some members feared made it too difficult. Trent Jones famously responded by stepping onto the tee, holing his shot and announcing: "Gentlemen, I think the hole is eminently fair".

Trent Jones' son Rees, along with design associate Steve Weisser, is currently helping prepare the Lower course for the 2016 PGA Championship.

Lyne Morrison says: "Baltusrol Lower gains a vote for providing the best-sited womens' tees on a traditional member course played to-date. It's so very satisfying to be engaged with the intended strategy from the tee – and clear confirmation that this can be done!"

#78 The Island

County Dublin, Ireland
Fred Hawtree, Eddie Hackett, 1890

The club's founding members, the 'Syndicate', made the original voyage from the village of Malahide to the linkland of The Island in the late nineteenth century, and it remained only accessible by boat for the first 80 years of its existence. The construction of a new access road in the 1970s prompted the relocation of the clubhouse from its original quayside location and a subsequent rerouting and redesign by Fred Hawtree and Eddie Hackett. Both Jeff Howes and Martin Hawtree have made revisions since, but the course's sense of natural evolution remains.

#76 Harbour Town

South Carolina, USA
Pete Dye, Jack Nicklaus, 1969

Pete Dye had given Jack Nicklaus his first taste of design with a consulting role at The Golf Club in Ohio. But at Hilton Head Nicklaus had a hand in every hole, working alongside Pete Dye to create a design that remains one of the most distinctive on the PGA Tour.

#75 The European Club

County Wicklow, Ireland
Pat Ruddy, 1993

Located on Ireland's fabulous coastline south of Dublin, the European Club has been the labour of love for architect and owner Pat Ruddy and his family for the past twenty years. Taking a long term view, the course has evolved over that time and is now recognised as one of Ireland's best.

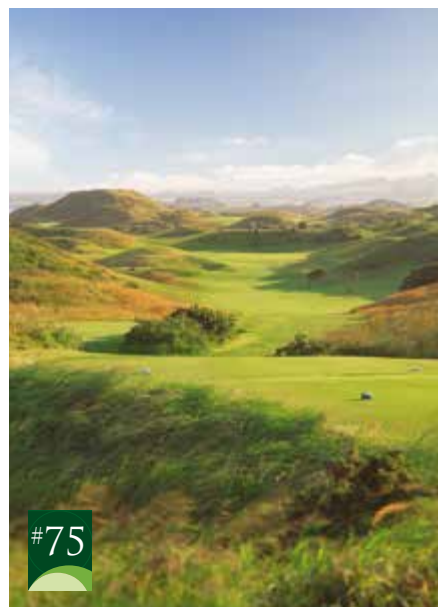


Photo: Aidan Bradley

#75

#74 Shoreacres

Illinois, USA
Seth Raynor, 1919

One of Raynor's first designs, the club has worked with Renaissance Golf Design to ensure that it remains as close to its original design as possible. The routing makes the best use of dramatic natural ravines found on the property and, like many Golden Age designs, makes the best use of classic hole designs from the UK's links courses.

#73 The Country Club

Massachusetts, USA
Willie Campbell, 1893

The Country Club introduced six golf holes in 1893 and appointed Willie Campbell as club professional. Campbell oversaw the completion of the first nine soon after and the subsequent increase to 18 holes, and William Flynn added another nine holes, the Primrose, in 1927. Few golf courses have such a rich championship history, from the 1902 US Women's Amateur and Francis Ouimet's historic victory in the 1913 US Open, to the infamous Ryder Cup of 1999 and this year's US Amateur. "The Country Club has a slew of challenging, scenic golf holes. However, it is the towering 100 year old oaks and timeless beauty of the rolling lands that make any round of golf here memorable," says Graham Cooke.



Photo: Gary Lisbon

#71

The genius of Thomas

In 2010, a full restoration of George Thomas's original design at the North course at Los Angeles Country Club was completed. Gil Hanse considered it an education

At LACC North, Jim Wagner, Geoff Shackelford and I set out to restore the course to the original design of George Thomas both in concept, execution and style. The result was that we received a doctorate level course in golf course architecture by studying his philosophies and how he implemented these thoughts on this marvellous property. The more we looked into the course and how it had evolved away from his intentions, the more convinced we became that we needed to restore it. His concepts of courses within a course (the linking of hole locations with specific tees is a simplified explanation), the use of the natural topography, the eccentric green shapes and the rugged beauty of the Southern California landscape all meshed perfectly on this site. This was truly a special project where we benefitted from this study of a true genius of golf course architecture.



#72 Los Angeles (North)

California, USA
George Thomas, 1911

LACC moved to its current location in 1911, with a course designed by the club's founders that was subsequently redesigned by Herbert Fowler and George Thomas. In 2010, a five year project to restore Thomas's design of the North course was completed, under the direction of Gil Hanse, "LACC is probably the most flawless course in California, offering a huge collection of wonderful holes on really perfect California golfing terrain, utilising the barrancas in a perfect, varied way," says Todd Eckenrode.

#71 Cape Kidnappers

Hawke's Bay, New Zealand
Tom Doak, 2004

Set dramatically on the top of huge cliffs overlooking Hawke's Bay and with holes separated by deep ravines, Cape Kidnappers offers a visual spectacle that has few equals either in golf or nature.



#68



#70

Photo: Mark Alexander

#70 Royal Lytham & St Annes

Merseyside, England
George Lowe, Harry Colt, 1897

While not in view, the influence of the sea is clear at Royal Lytham & St Annes, with rolling fairways that provide a stern but fair test. "It is not the most beautiful course in the world, but there is something about the challenge which I love. It's a course which rewards the intelligent golfer," says Ross McMurray of European Golf Design.

#69 Mid Ocean Club

Bermuda
Charles Blair Macdonald, 1921

Upon completion of the construction of the golf course at Mid Ocean Club, Macdonald wrote to his client the Furness Withy Steamship Company, describing the contours as “unsurpassed, delightful valleys winding through coral hills”. When Robert Trent Jones was called in to improve the course in the 1950s, his touch was relatively restrained, respecting the design of Macdonald.

#68 Noordwijk

Netherlands
Frank Pennink, 1972

Along with the golf courses at Kennemer and Haagsche, Noordwijkse sits in the west coast dunes that protect the Netherlands from the North Sea. Pennink’s course was created when the club’s original 1915 course in the dunes made way for a housing estate. The connection to Pennink remains as recent changes at the club have been handled by Mackenzie & Ebert, who previously worked for Pennink’s business partner Donald Steel.

#67 Machrihanish

Argyll and Bute, Scotland
Tom Morris, 1879

While its first hole, requiring a heroic drive over the beach, is one of its most famous, the fun at Machrihanish really starts from the third hole, when the course hits the dunes.

#66 Western Gailes

Ayrshire, Scotland
F. Morris, 1897

Western Gailes was a coastal retreat for Glasgow-based golfers made possible thanks to the train. The course is situated between the railway line and the sea, with out of bounds, pot bunkering, meandering burns and the coastal winds combining to make this a classic Scottish golfing experience.

“A bucket list must for all golfers”

Lee Schmidt on Casa De Campo (Teeth of the Dog)

#65 Casa De Campo (Teeth of the Dog)

Dominican Republic
Pete Dye, 1971

Christoph Städler says: “Teeth of the Dog, Pete Dye’s masterpiece in the Caribbean, probably was the most creative golf design in the 70s and is still outstanding today. In 1974, I was so fortunate to play the course on the occasion of the Eisenhower Trophy and it eventually became a real eye-opener for me. Bite-off holes across ocean bays, an island tee in the ocean, a ‘wadi’ alongside a hole, a green within a gigantic bunker, and many other unexpected features which I had never seen before on the dull, uninspiring German courses of that period suddenly evolved my dream of becoming a golf architect and of designing creative golf courses myself. However, it took another thirteen years and the boom following Bernhard Langer’s first Masters victory before I dared to make this dream come true.”

“Seven holes parallel the ocean, a par three entirely surrounded by sand... great strategy, fun, playable, scenic and challenging for all – a bucket list must for all golfers,” says Lee Schmidt of Schmidt-Curley Design.

#64 Royal Cinque Ports

Kent, England
Henry Hunter, James Braid, 1892

Hunter’s original links were redesigned and rebuilt by James Braid following the World War I and again by Sir Guy Campbell and Henry Cotton in 1946 following World War II. The course now stands proudly alongside its famous neighbour Royal St George’s as one of England’s finest.

#63 Trump International

Aberdeenshire, Scotland
Martin Hawtree, 2012

The newest course in our Top 100 opened just last year, its presence in the list a huge achievement given the relatively small number of architects that will yet have seen it. The development was fraught with controversy, but the end result is a sensational golf course amid huge dunes, that will improve further once the ground settles.

#65



Photo: Aidan Bradley

#66





Woodhall Spa (Hotchkin)

Lincolnshire, England
Harry Vardon, Harry Colt, SV Hotchkin, 1905

While Vardon created the original design and Colt's subsequent routing of 1915 stays largely intact, the design of Woodhall Spa surely belongs to Colonel Hotchkin, who was instrumental in its formation and worked on the course from the 1920s to his death in 1953. Nothing compares to its bunkering, with hugely deep pits, both in fairways and alongside greens, staying long in the memory.



Barnbougle Dunes

Tasmania, Australia
Tom Doak, Michael Clayton, 2005

Despite its remoteness on the northern coast of Tasmania, golfers from Australia and beyond travel to Barnbougle Dunes to experience a seaside links formed by a combination of nature and skilled designers.



Photo: Gary Llaben

#61

Allure of the ocean

With three courses in our Top 100, we asked Tom Doak of Renaissance Golf Design for his thoughts on those that had made the list

I've been blessed to work on many beautiful sites over the years, but it seems that the courses along the ocean are always the most highly regarded. Certainly, that's not because of the views alone; oceanfront properties tend to have breezy conditions that make the golf more interesting, and

those same winds are responsible for creating the perfect undulations of links courses over time. Still, it's too much of a coincidence to think that all of my best work has been done when I'm closest to the ocean, so I'm sorry that more of my fellow architects have yet to see Ballyneal or Rock Creek.

Working on true links sites at Pacific Dunes and Barnbougle was a dream come true, but any links must be compared against the best of the UK and Ireland, and it's hard to feel worthy

in such company. By contrast, Cape Kidnappers did not have that perfect links terrain; the land tilts gently toward the water, and instead of carving it into more windswept shapes, we used that subtle tilt as the main feature of the design. When you stand on the fifth tee or twelfth green and look out toward Hawkes Bay 150 meters below, you know that there is no other place in golf like it. And the more great courses you see, the more you appreciate one that is different than the rest.





#59



#58



#57

“Prestwick reminds us that some blind shots and unique bunkering add character and adventure to the game”

Vicki Martz

#60

Maidstone

New York, USA
Willie Park Jr., 1922

Willie Dunn had laid out the first few holes at Maidstone in 1894, but the course as it is now really took shape in 1922, when Willie Park Jr. oversee the redesign of the course to include the newly acquired sand dunes that are home to the current stretch from hole four to the fifteenth.

#59

Prestwick

Ayrshire, Scotland
Tom Morris, 1851

When Willie Park Sr edged out Old Tom Morris in the first Open Championship at Prestwick in 1860, the course was a loop of 12 holes. By 1882, Old Tom had extended the course to 18 holes and it remains an eccentric and unique insight into the traditions of the game. “Prestwick reminds us that some blind shots and unique bunkering add character and adventure to the game,” says Vicki Martz.

#58

Royal Liverpool

Merseyside, England
Robert Chambers, George Morris,
Harry Colt, 1869

Originally laid out in 1869 by Robert Chambers and George Morris, and extended to 18 holes in 1871, Hoylake was built on a racecourse and the land was used for both golf and horse racing in its first few years. Following its successful return to the rota in 2006, after almost 40 years of absence, the club will again hold the Open Championship in 2014.

#57

Spyglass Hill

California, USA
Robert Trent Jones, 1966

One of four courses in a five mile radius along the northern California coastline to make our Top 100, the opening five holes at Spyglass Hill occupy the same dune system as neighbouring Cypress Point, before the routing takes golfers back into the Del Monte forest.

#56 **St Andrews**
(New)
Fife, Scotland
Tom Morris, 1895

“The New Course at St Andrews ticks every box for challenge, variety, beauty, charm, accessibility and history. It is ranked as my number one as it combines more of these qualities than any other course I have seen, without losing anything in the process. And its par four tenth is the finest hole I have yet played,” says William Swan of Swan Golf Designs.

#55 **Utrecht De Pan**
Netherlands
Harry Colt, 1929

Colt's expert routing at De Pan makes the most of the surprisingly undulating heathland, with holes weaving among the sand hills and pine forest.



#56



#55

Following Colt's footsteps



Harry Colt has left his mark on more of the courses in our Top 100 than any other architect. Frank Pont has worked at both De Pan and Swinley Forest, and considers their appeal

One of Harry Colt's biggest strengths was his ability to discover great routings for the sites he got to work on. The routing of De Pan might well be one of the best he ever created. On a site

of less than 125 acres he was able to create a golf course that feels as if it were 300 acres. What helped Colt in his efforts was the fact that De Pan lies in a landscape of 50 feet high sand hills, remnants of the glaciers that occupied these lands during the last ice ages. It is these landforms that give the player a sense of seclusion. Built in 1928, De Pan is considered by many the prettiest inland course in Holland. The sandy soil

allows for firm playing conditions, and the heather and pines surrounding the course give it the traditional heathland look so prevalent in Surrey. A place still largely undiscovered!

Swinley Forest has perhaps the best endorsement of any course, in that it is where Harry Colt preferred to play his own recreational golf. Those that have been fortunate enough to play Swinley Forest will probably have a good sense



Photo: Aidan Bradley

#53

#52



Photo: Frank Pont

#54

Morfontaine

Senlis, France
Tom Simpson, 1927

Simpson's philosophy was that a course should ask tough questions of the good golfer, but remain playable for those with less ability. This is exemplified at Morfontaine and the work done by Kyle Phillips over the past ten years, including a new green on the twelfth, has been handled with great sensitivity to Simpson's original intentions.

#53

Sunningdale (New)

Surrey, England
Harry Colt, 1923

For those familiar with the Sunningdale of modern times it is quite a shock to see historic photos of the wide open common land with barely any trees in sight. In recent years the club has worked to take the New course back towards this more open heath feel, with tree clearance helping the heather to prosper and providing greater differentiation of character between the two courses at Sunningdale.

#52

Royal Aberdeen

Aberdeenshire, Scotland
Archie Simpson, Robert Simpson,
James Braid, 1888

Formed in 1780, Royal Aberdeen is one of the oldest clubs in the world, and had been in existence for over 100 years before moving to its current site at Balgownie. Niall Glen says: "I am yet to see a more stunning sequence of golf holes than the front nine at Balgownie."

#51

Walton Heath (Old)

Surrey, England
Herbert Fowler, 1904

The Old course at Walton Heath was Fowler's first design, commissioned by his brother-in-law and club founder Sir Cosmo Bonsor. Known for its heather, beautiful and terrifying in equal measure, Walton Heath is also home to Fowler's New course, which remains relatively untouched from its original design.

why. As we are used to from Colt, it has a great routing, a set of great short holes (five in total) and many outstanding green complexes. And the course is no pushover, with a par of 68 you have to play well here to get a good score, especially when the greens are firm. Couple that with the beautiful heather-clad bunkers and the famous rhododendrons surrounding a number of the holes and you understand why it passed Colt's own critical judgement: "The ultimate test of any golf course is will it live?"

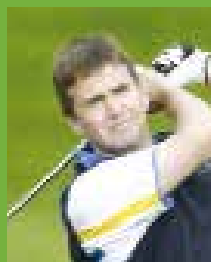
"I am yet to see a more stunning sequence of golf holes"

Niall Glen on the front nine of Royal Aberdeen

The Evel Knievel of golf architecture



#50



Robin Hiseman of European Golf Design explains why he voted Tobacco Road as his number one course

I'm giving my number one vote to Tobacco Road, because it was the course that transformed what I understood to be possible with golf architecture. There are several very creative contemporary golf architects recognised on my list, whose egos really don't need stoking. Creative and imaginative they may

be, but Mike Strantz was all that and a genius to boot. He had the nerve and commitment to try things that others would never dare to. He was the Evel Knievel of golf architects, always looking to jump more buses than anyone thought possible. Sometimes he didn't make the jump and metaphorically splattered himself all over the field, but he never stopped trying to push the boundaries and 'The Road' is his masterpiece. The most entertaining and inspirational course I have ever played.

#50 Tobacco Road

North Carolina, USA
Mike Strantz, 1998

Tobacco Road is a thrilling and unconventional neighbour to Pinehurst on the site of a former sand quarry. Brandon Johnson of Arnold Palmer Design Company says: "This is the most fresh and unique twist or interpretation of golf course design I have experienced. I love how the reinterpreted aesthetic vision balances sound strategic principles with new or daring ways to play the course and holds this truly remarkable vision together. It is also incredibly fun to play. The visual intimidation or 'play on optics' burned images in my mind that are still crystal clear almost ten years later. Truly a masterpiece."

#49 Friar's Head

New York, USA
Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw, 2003

Friar's Head is the newest of the cluster of Long Island courses that feature in our Top 100. First viewing the site in 1997, it took Coore and Crenshaw multiple visits and many months to finalise the routing, which transitions between natural rolling sand dunes and former farmland.

"I consider it the best relatively flat golf course I have ever played"

Randy Russell on Metropolitan

#48 Metropolitan

Victoria, Australia
JB Mackenzie, 1908

Metropolitan was initially designed by a lesser known Mackenzie, JB, but Dr Alister left his mark after visiting in 1926. Randy Russell says: "I consider it the best relatively flat golf course I have ever played. Its bunkers not only create interesting strategic choices but are some of the most interesting and beautiful I have ever seen."



#47

#47 Whistling Straits (Straits)

Wisconsin, USA
Pete Dye, 1999

Sculpted along two miles of Lake Michigan coastline, the distinctive bunker-riddled Straits course became globally recognised after its starring role in the 2004 PGA Championship, which it hosted just five years after opening.

#46 Bethpage (Black)

New York, USA
AW Tillinghast, 1936

The first publicly-owned course to host a US Open, the Black is severely bunkered and extremely long. Tillinghast designed three of the five courses at Bethpage State Park, and Rees Jones's firm conducted a thorough renovation of the Black in advance of the 2002 US Open.

#45 Valderrama

Cadiz, Spain
Robert Trent Jones, 1985

The highest placed course from continental Europe in our Top 100, Valderrama is the legacy of Jaime Ortiz-Patino, the industrialist who in 1985 bought the Las Aves club and worked with Robert Trent Jones to transform it into Valderrama. Its famous cork oak trees frequently dictate playing strategy.



#48

Photo: Gary Lisbon



#45

Photo: Club de Golf Valderrama

#44



#44

Castle Stuart

Inverness, Scotland
Gil Hanse,
Mark Parsinen, 2009

Known for its wide playing areas which don't overly punish the higher handicap golfer, but still provide a test capable of challenging the world's best. Of the courses built in the last ten years, Castle Stuart ranks highest in our Top 100. Architect Gil Hanse has since been awarded the most talked-about contract in golf design, for the 2016 Olympics course in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

#43

New South Wales

New South Wales, Australia
Alister MacKenzie,
Eric Apperly, 1928

Set among sand hills that slope down to the Pacific Ocean, New South Wales really shows its teeth when the wind blows. MacKenzie created the routing and bunkering plan during his 1926 visit, but Australian amateur golfer-turned-architect Eric Apperly is credited for subsequent changes – including the famous par three sixth hole – that defined the course's character.

King Castle

At number 44 in our list, Castle Stuart is the highest ranked course built in the last ten years. We asked Gil Hanse to give us an insight into the development process

When Mark Parsinen first showed us the site for Castle Stuart we were hooked on the potential for this property. Working with Mark on the design was a wonderful collaboration as Mark is very organized and detailed in his planning and conceptualisation and Jim Wagner and I tend to be more creative and 'seat of your pants' in our construction approach. The common theme between the two was that you need to be on site to capitalise on both approaches, and that synergy led to the creation of the course you see today. Our design goals were to create a wide, playable, fun course that felt as if it had always been there on the shores of the Moray Firth. We coupled that with a desire to make the width relevant to the strategy of the course, so that the course would be capable of hosting the top players in the world, which it has done for the last three years at the Scottish Open.



#42

Chicago

Illinois, USA
Charles Blair Macdonald,
Seth Raynor, 1894

Having attended college in Scotland, Macdonald returned to Chicago with a set of clubs and in 1892 laid out the first 18-hole course in North America. Chicago Golf Club was formed and moved to its current site in Wheaton in 1894. To cope with advancing technology, Macdonald asked his protégée Seth Raynor to reroute and redesign the course in 1923. With classic hole designs and challenging greens on an otherwise relatively flat and featureless setting, Chicago exudes golf purity.

#41

Royal Troon

South Ayrshire, Scotland
George Strath,
Willie Fernie, 1888

This Open Championship venue was formed in 1878 and by 1888 had eighteen holes, with the first two club professionals Strath and Fernie instrumental in their design. Golf architect Stuart Rennie says: "A links course where the wind can play havoc. The natural dune landform and pot bunkers provide strategic challenge, the back nine is a fantastic stretch of golf especially on a windy final day the Open."

#40

Swinley Forest

Surrey, England
Harry Colt, 1909

Colt famously described Swinley Forest as his 'least bad' course. Our Top 100 suggests there are three more Colt courses that are even less bad, but there's something uniquely enjoyable about Swinley. At little over 6,000 yards and with a par of 68, it's the shortest course in our Top 100, and perhaps this – along with its wonderful heathland setting – is what makes golf here such a pleasurable experience.

#39 Riviera

California, USA
George Thomas, 1926

The \$250,000 construction cost was unheard of at the time, but this allowed George Thomas to create a magnificent design where golfers are constantly faced with strategic choices – typified by the famous short par four tenth hole.

#38 Muirfield Village

Ohio, USA
Jack Nicklaus,
Desmond Muirhead, 1974

The Memorial Tournament has been played here yearly since 1976, and the course design is modified on a regular basis to keep pace with the elite game. “Jack Nicklaus’s Muirfield Village surprised the heck out of me – every hole a very good hole and every hole very playable,” says Stephen Kay.

#37 Gleneagles (King’s)

Perthshire, Scotland
James Braid, 1919

“The King’s Course at Gleneagles is the one choice where I’ve let my heart rule my head. There is nothing that can beat a summer’s evening here, whether it be the views, the light, the quality of the turf or the variety of the design,” says Ross McMurray of European Golf Design.

#36 Portmarnock

County Dublin, Ireland
William Pickeman, 1894

The club’s original secretary William Pickeman laid out the links at Portmarnock, with the help of professional Mungo Park, on land leased from the famous Jameson distiller family. The course sits naturally in gentle dunes and is a true and fair test of shotmaking.

**#40**

Photo: Frank Pont

**#38**

Photo: Jim Manderville

**#37****#43**

Photo: Gary Lisbon

**#36**

Photo: Kevin Murray



#34



#33



#26

#35 **TPC Sawgrass (Stadium)**
Florida, USA
Pete Dye, Alice Dye, 1980

Constructed specifically for tournament play, TPC Sawgrass was the first 'stadium' design. Initially receiving quite a critical reception, with the help of subsequent tweaks by Dye, the course has become widely admired and – thanks to its famous seventeenth island par three – universally recognised. Mike Hurdzan says: "Off the charts creative, great visuals, demanding shot values, fun to play or watch, ground breaking".

#34 **Prairie Dunes**
Kansas, USA
Perry Maxwell,
Press Maxwell, 1937

When Emerson Carey commissioned architect Perry Maxwell to design a course in 480 acres of rolling Kansas hills, he replied: "There are 118 holes here, and all I have to do is eliminate 100". Nine holes were opened in 1937 and a further nine designed by Maxwell's son Press completed the eighteen in 1957.

#33 **Kiawah Island (Ocean)**
South Carolina, USA
Pete Dye, Alice Dye, 1991

Originally designed to sit behind the dunes, Alice Dye suggested raising the entire course to provide views of the Atlantic. This also means that golfers are more exposed to the unpredictable winds, making a difficult course even tougher.

#32 **Crystal Downs**
Michigan, USA
Alister MacKenzie, Perry Maxwell, 1929

Mike DeVries says: "I grew up working and playing there and even after thousands of days on the property, I still learn something about golf architecture every time I am there. The variety and intricacies of the layout and the green complexes make it worthy of consideration with the best courses." Arthur Hills says: "So delightful, a wonderful venue and amazing fit with the ground."



Photo: Mark Alexander

#31 Winged Foot (West)

New York, USA
AW Tillinghast, 1923

Perhaps the best test of a great architect is their ability to produce a fine course on relatively ordinary terrain, and Tillinghast's skill is demonstrated at Winged Foot, where he designed both East and West courses. The West's clever design provides a complete examination of golfing skills, demanding every type of shot and every club in the bag.

#30 Seminole

Florida, USA
Donald Ross, 1929

With the routing taking players into a large sand ridge, the combination of Ross's trademark crowned greens and strategically placed bunkers, coastal winds and typically very firm and fast playing surfaces define Seminole's challenge.

#29 Cruden Bay

Aberdeenshire, Scotland
Tom Morris, Archie Simpson, Tom Simpson, Herbert Fowler, 1899

The original Morris and Simpson layout was redesigned to the current layout by Tom Simpson and Herbert Fowler in 1929. It's a unique and unconventional journey among the links with everything from bathtub greens to blind par threes, but never a dull moment.

#28 San Francisco

California, USA
AW Tillinghast, 1918

Many consider this Tillinghast's finest work, and it is the highest rated of his courses in our Top 100. Renaissance Golf Design was commissioned to rebuild the club's greens in 2001, and they have also restored Tillinghast's original thirteenth to fifteenth holes.

#27 Royal St George's

Kent, England
Laidlaw Purves, 1887

14 Open Championships have been hosted on the severely undulating links at Sandwich in south east England. With two loops of nine, rather than the traditional out-and-back links layout, players will typically have to cope with wind from all directions.

#26 Royal Birkdale

Merseyside, England
George Lowe, Fred G. Hawtree, JH Taylor, 1897

The original George Lowe links was extensively remodelled by Hawtree and Taylor in the 1930s. Routed between the sand dunes, Birkdale is our architects' second favourite golf course in England. Jonathan Gaunt says: "Royal Birkdale is a great golfers' course where, if you play well, you get the favourable bounces. A great variety of holes and shapes."

#25 Kingston Heath

Victoria, Australia
Dan Soutar, Alister MacKenzie, 1925

Established in 1909, Kingston Heath moved from its Elsternwick site to Cheltenham in the mid-1920s. Built to stand the test of time, the then par-82 course was designed by 1905 Australian Open champion Dan Soutar and bunkered by Alister Mackenzie.

#24 Carnoustie

Angus, Scotland
Alan Robertson, Tom Morris, James Braid, 1850

David Whelchel says: "Carnoustie gets my top spot as it is a fine layout, wonderful change of direction and the golfer has to hit quality shots to post a good or great score. Having played it many times, each time only gets better and my respect for the course increases with each round and each hole played."



Photo: Gary Lisbon

#25



Photo: Mark Alexander

#28

San Francisco

California, USA
AW Tillinghast, 1918

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#23 Lahinch (Old)
County Clare, Ireland
Tom Morris,
Alister MacKenzie,
Martin Hawtree, 1894

"Lahinch is quirky perfection, beautifully restored and maintained," says David Krause.

"The Martin Hawtree remodel of Lahinch is the only case I know where a classic old links has been significantly improved by modern intervention," says David Jones.

#22 Sunningdale (Old)
Surrey, England
Willie Park Jr,
Harry Colt, 1901

The Old course at Sunningdale, laid out by Willie Park Jr, is the highest ranked English course in our Top 100. Club secretary Harry Colt's redesigned holes were warmly received, and the experience inspired him to develop his career as a golf course designer.

#21 Merion (East)
Pennsylvania, USA
Hugh Wilson, 1912

Architects Tom Fazio and Tom Marzolf helped prepare the Merion for the 2013 US Open, demonstrating that there is still a place for historic courses with quirk, character and charm, and without excessive length, at major championships.

One of America's icons



#21

No course has hosted more USGA championships than Merion East. The venue for Bobby Jones's unmatched Grand Slam, and Ben Hogan's spectacular return from life-threatening injury to win the 1950 US Open, Hugh Wilson's design remains, as the recent Open showed, one of America's iconic venues.

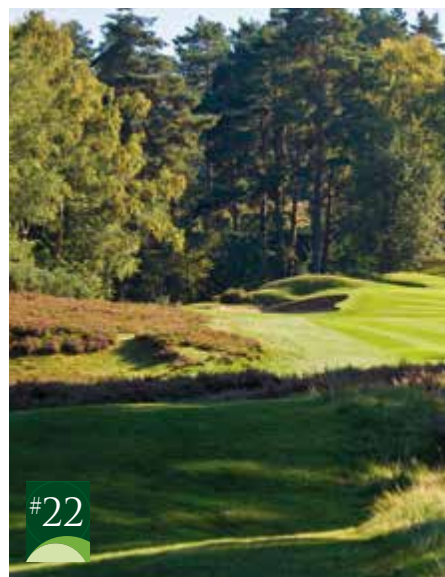
But what truly makes Merion iconic is its routing. Perhaps no other course on earth squeezes as much golf into so small and constrained a space, or extracts as much interest from property that is relatively low on natural features. Surrounded now by suburban housing, Merion no longer has holes

playing across Ardmore Avenue as the original course did, but it is still a pocket handkerchief of a site compared to many of the expansive properties elsewhere in this listing.

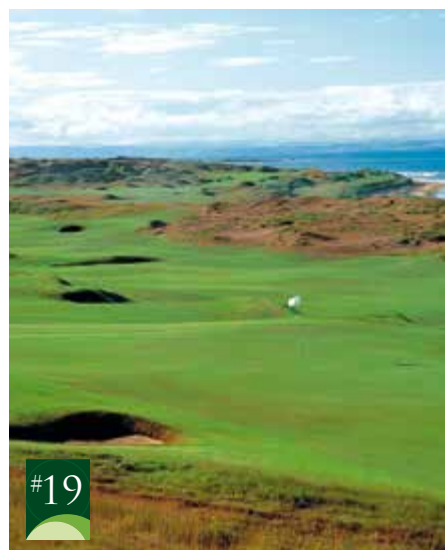
As well as the routing, Merion's greens are dramatic: putting on these heavily tilted surfaces is a true challenge. Architects Tom Marzolf and Tom Fazio have consulted at the course for almost fifteen years, stretching the 6,500 yards faced by David Graham in the 1981 US Open to nearly 7,000 yards today. But Merion remains the poster boy for the argument that good courses and long courses are not synonymous.



#23



#22



#19



Photo: Aidan Bradley

#20 Pacific Dunes

Oregon, USA
Tom Doak, 2001

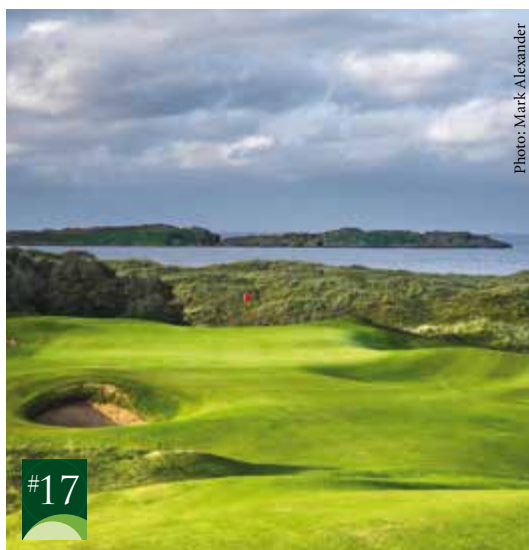
Thad Layton says: "I never tire of playing Pacific Dunes – it is also the course I borrow from more than any other when designing... the setting, strategy, and beauty are unmatched." Christian Althaus adds: "I've played Pacific Dunes four or five times and it has been different every time. It provides so many strategic options, variety and shot values, plus it is aesthetically a very beautiful design."



#20



#18



#17

Photo: Mark Alexander

#19 Kingsbarns

Fife, Scotland
Kyle Phillips, 2000

One of only three modern (post-1960) golf courses to make it into our Top 20, Kingsbarns stands alongside its historic neighbours as one of Scotland's finest links experiences.

#18 North Berwick

East Lothian, Scotland
Ben Sayers, 1832

Golf has been played on the site of North Berwick since the formation of the club in 1832, at which time the links extended as far as the March Dyke which runs across the third and sixteenth holes. Subsequent extensions followed and in 1932 Ben Sayers oversaw alterations which gave the course its present shape. Mike Hurdzan describes North Berwick as: "bold, innovative, memorable, exciting, unique and historic. An inspirational golf experience". Mary Armstrong adds: "North Berwick, I believe, is held back from being world renowned only by its lack of space for hosting a major event. It is easily the most fun golf course I have experienced."

#17 Royal Portrush (Dunluce)

County Antrim, Northern Ireland, Harry Colt, 1929

Major successes from Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell and Darren Clarke have put a spotlight on Northern Irish golf, with Royal Portrush credited in the development of their games. Kevin Ramsey says: "For too long Portrush has lived in the shadow of County Down and the Open rota courses in Scotland and England. Its time has come."

#16 Sand Hills

Nebraska, USA
Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw, 1995

Sand Hills earns the title of the highest ranked modern course in our Top 100. Dan Allen Blankenship says: "My biggest influence as an architect has been Sand Hills. The natural use of the land is genius. Every time I play there I see something different that makes me wonder if Coore and Crenshaw were just lucky or had an amazing insight on how every little nuance in the golf course would challenge golfers differently on every day. I can't imagine ever playing a better golf course!" Baxter Spann adds: "A fantastic setting, with the course melded perfectly into natural features."

#15 Pinehurst

(No. 2)
North Carolina, USA
Donald Ross, 1907

The 2010-11 restoration of Pinehurst's No. 2 course, by Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw, has returned it to what Donald Ross originally intended. "Along with St. Andrews and Dornoch, Pinehurst No. 2 is probably the most mandatory course study in design in the world," says Kyle Franz, who worked on the restoration. "Ross's imaginative use of the native sand barrens and width create incredible strategy. But its greens complexes are the eighth wonder of the architectural world for a student of design."

#14 Oakmont

Pennsylvania, USA
Henry Fownes, 1983

"Oakmont is easily the best course I have ever played," says Joe Jemsek. "It requires exacting shotmaking every hole, every shot." David Krause adds: "Oakmont was a jaw dropping experience, beauty and terror all rolled into one."

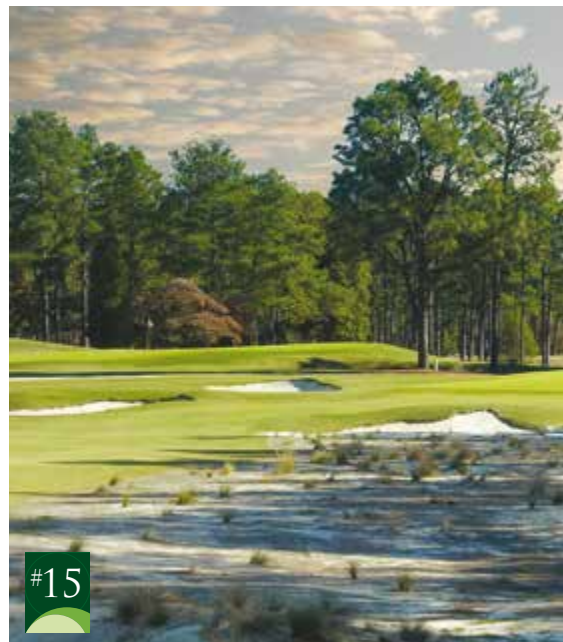
Setting the standard



Bill Coore acknowledges the role that Sand Hills has played in their ongoing design work

Ben Crenshaw and I have been fortunate beyond imagination with regard to the sites we have been given to design our courses. In particular, we have had opportunities to create courses on spectacular, seaside dune sites from the shore of Long Island (Friar's Head) to magnificent landscapes on the coasts of Oregon (Bandon Trails, Bandon Preserve), Tasmania (Lost Farm), China (Shanqin Bay) and currently, Nova Scotia (Cabot Cliffs).

While any one of these opportunities would constitute a designer's dream, none would likely have occurred if not for their predecessor, the Sand Hills Golf Club, set in one of golf's most amazing dunescapes, albeit far from any sea.



#13 Ballybunion (Old)

County Kerry, Ireland
Lionel Hewson, Fred Smith, Tom Simpson, 1906

The original layout of the links is thought to have been undertaken by officers of The Black Watch Regiment in 1893, but Lionel Hewson in 1906, Fred Smith in 1926 and Tom Simpson in 1936 all made significant contributions. Mike Hurdzan says: "Golf as it was meant to be played among giant dunes, with shifting winds and great elevations." Joe Jemsek adds: "It's been nearly 20 years since I played Ballybunion. It was my first experience of links golf and was akin to playing on the moon for someone who grew up in the middle of the US."



#12 Turnberry (Ailsa)

Ayrshire, Scotland
Philip Mackenzie Ross, 1951

Where many courses on the Open Championship do not even offer a glimpse of the sea, Turnberry's dramatic coastline, from beach to cliffside, sets it apart. Formal golf on this site began in 1906 with a design by Willie Fernie of Troon, but the land was required for both the First and Second World Wars, after which Mackenzie Ross created the current layout.



Photo: Mark Alexander

#11 Muirfield

East Lothian, Scotland
Tom Morris, Harry Colt, 1891

Tom Morris laid out the first 16 holes in 1891 and added two more for the following year's Open. In 1923, with more land acquired, Harry Colt was consulted and his recommendations defined the current course. Dr Arthur Spring says: "Each and every hole is a strong one. I rate golf holes on the overall layout, the changes of direction and the avoidance of visual and auditory interference on each hole in normal playing conditions. Muirfield ticks all the boxes in every regard."



Photo: Aidan Bradley



Photo: Mark Alexander

Golf around the world...



New South Wales GC - Australia



Ballybunion (Old) - Ireland



St Andrews (Old) - Scotland



Diamante Golf - Mexico



Arrowtown GC - New Zealand

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#10



Photo: Gary Lisbon

Placed at
No.1 by
2%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
25%
of architects

Royal Melbourne (West)

Victoria, Australia
Alister MacKenzie, Alex Russell, 1931

“As a proud Australian I feel confident that my assessment of Royal Melbourne’s West course as the world’s best is not simply a jingoistic knee-jerk, but rather a worthy assessment of a brilliant course design by MacKenzie and Alex Russell,” says Neil Crafter.

“A true classic, Royal Melbourne with its enviable pedigree has a refined but commanding air. Exceptional in every regard, it is a privilege to study and play this superb course,” says Lyne Morrison.

#9



Photo: Mark Alexander

Placed at
No.1 by
3%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
28%
of architects

Royal Dornoch

Inverness, Scotland
Tom Morris, John Sutherland, 1886

Ron Kern of Golf Design Group says: “No question that Royal Dornoch’s Championship course is my choice for the number one golf course in the world. Never would I tire of playing golf across these links on this historic, timeless golf course. Dornoch’s fourteenth, Foxy, is hands down one of the greatest natural golf holes in the world.”

Stuart Rennie says: “Growing up in the Highlands and being a member at Dornoch inspired me to the career path I am now on. Dornoch is my ‘home of golf.’”



AIDAN BRADLEY

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805.962.8466

#8



Photo: Joann Dost

Placed at
No.1 by
3%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
32%
of architects

Pebble Beach

California, USA
Jack Neville, Douglas Grant, 1919

Jack Neville and Douglas Grant were amateur golfers hired by Samuel Morse to design a one-of-a-kind golf course at Pebble Beach. Neville told the San Francisco Chronicle: "Years before it was built, I could see this place as a golf links. Nature had intended it to be nothing else. All we did was cut away a few trees, install a few sprinklers, and sow a little seed." A long roll-call of designers – including Herbert Fowler, the team of Robert Hunter, Chandler Egan and Alister MacKenzie, then Jack Nicklaus and most recently Arnold Palmer – have since also left their mark.

#7



Photo: Russell Kirk

Placed at
No.1 by
5%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
34%
of architects

Shinnecock Hills

New York, USA
Willie Davis, William Flynn, 1894

The original 12 hole course laid out by Willie Davis in 1894 was expanded and altered by Willie Dunn, then Charles Blair Macdonald and Seth Raynor. A more substantial redesign, and to some extent relocation, was undertaken by William Flynn in 1934. W. Bruce Matthews says: "Shinnecock Hills is situated on the bluff of Long Island where wind is always part of the game. The three-hole sequence routing, that takes advantage of various wind directions, is the best I have seen. The course is challenging but not overly difficult. It just feels good playing on a cool windy day. For those reasons Shinnecock is number one for me."

#6

Photo: Aidan Bradley

Placed at
No.1 by
6%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
33%
of architects

#5

Placed at
No.1 by
5%
of architects

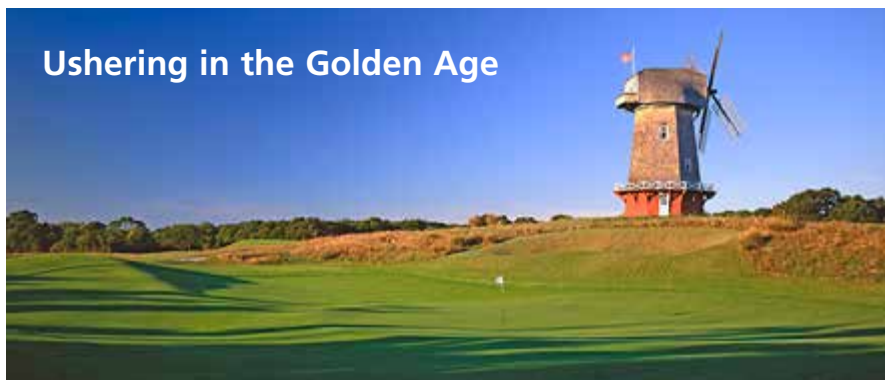
Placed in
top ten by
37%
of architects

National Golf Links of America

New York, USA
Charles Blair Macdonald, 1911

With painstaking attention to the strategic merits of golf holes and drawing on the influences of his trips to the UK, Macdonald created the National and spent 30 years of his life refining it. "CB Macdonald found such a perfect site for the course, exposed yet beautiful, and created an unforgettable golfing experience," says Kristine Kerr of Kura Golf Design. Richard Mandell adds: "Macdonald showed the world how fun golf can be and how important it is to derive strategy from the ground."

Ushering in the Golden Age



For golf architect Richard Mandell, National Golf Links of America represents the beginning of the Golden Age of golf course design

One early October day back in 1993, I had one of the best times of my life on a golf course. I had trekked to Southampton to walk Shinnecock Hills and National Golf Links of America armed only with an old Nikon manual camera. Upon finishing my day under perfectly blue, cool skies buffeted by cottony clouds, I had the pleasure of meeting the golf professional at NGLA. To my surprise, he told me that few ever came to visit NGLA to discover its golf course architecture. In fact, to his knowledge, the only two people he could recall visiting for that sole purpose were Tom Watson and Ben Crenshaw.

Almost twenty years to the day, I returned to NGLA but this time I was armed with my clubs and a bunch of my golf architecture

brethren from around the world. Much to the chagrin of my caddy, I took every daring route that Charles Blair MacDonald afforded me more than 100 years before. I wasn't interested in taking the safe route anywhere (since just breaking 85 was in doubt anyway, course management was far from my mind). I was more interested in remembering why National Golf Links of America is such a textbook for golf architects (present, past and future).

It is no surprise that NGLA would rank so high among golf architects the world over. It stands at the crossroads of our profession, breaking the art from utilitarian to what we all came to understand as the golden age.

Charles Blair MacDonald set about to show Americans what great golf was all about with a set of self-imposed rules to accomplish a full eighteen holes "of an exemplary nature". Through a device known as replication, MacDonald taught us not to over-think in

Royal County Down

County Down, Northern Ireland
George Baillie, Tom Morris, 1889

Mike Wood says: "Its quirks, including the blind drives, are all the result of the original dune landscape, not from the hand of the architect. The golfing landscape works at every level: in detail – the distinctive bunker style with fringes of dune grasses and heather (the template for mostly inferior imitations throughout the world), on a larger scale – the almost total visual isolation of each hole, each within its own topographic setting, and at the largest scale – some of the most inspiring off-course views imaginable, perhaps uniquely combining coastline with immediately adjacent and impressive mountains."

Graham Cooke adds: "Royal County Down is a wondrous course, each new hole greatly anticipated by the golfer. At any time the scenery of deep wind-blown vegetation, startling, powerful dunes or the quiet procession of gentle waves reaching the Irish coast are there for the golfer to absorb."

design through his warning not to "seek an original idea in designing a golf course". Instead, seek out the natural ground and find inspiration in what has worked in the past while also making each site its own.

Through adapting sound golf architecture principles found in such famous holes such as Sahara, Alps, Redan, The Road Hole, and Eden, Macdonald showed the world how fun golf can be and how important it is to derive strategy from the ground. Ironically, though, it was his original holes (composed of bits and pieces elsewhere) such as Short and his Cape hole which were the more successful and long-lasting. In fact, MacDonald's Cape was the precursor to Robert Trent Jones' heroic school of design long before RTJ made the idea his own.

Before NGLA, most golf designers in America simply placed rudimentary features on the ground with little regard for the natural features of a property. The result was less than exciting. Frankly, it was mostly penal and dull.

MacDonald's goal was to take the art of golf architecture in America out from what Tom Simpson referred to as the Dark Ages of golf architecture and into something else – the Golden Age. Golf architects the world over have responded ever since. He hit a nerve for us all that lasted more than a century. Is it any surprise we all think so highly of the place? Thanks Mr. MacDonald for the everlasting lesson in golf course design known as the National Golf Links of America.

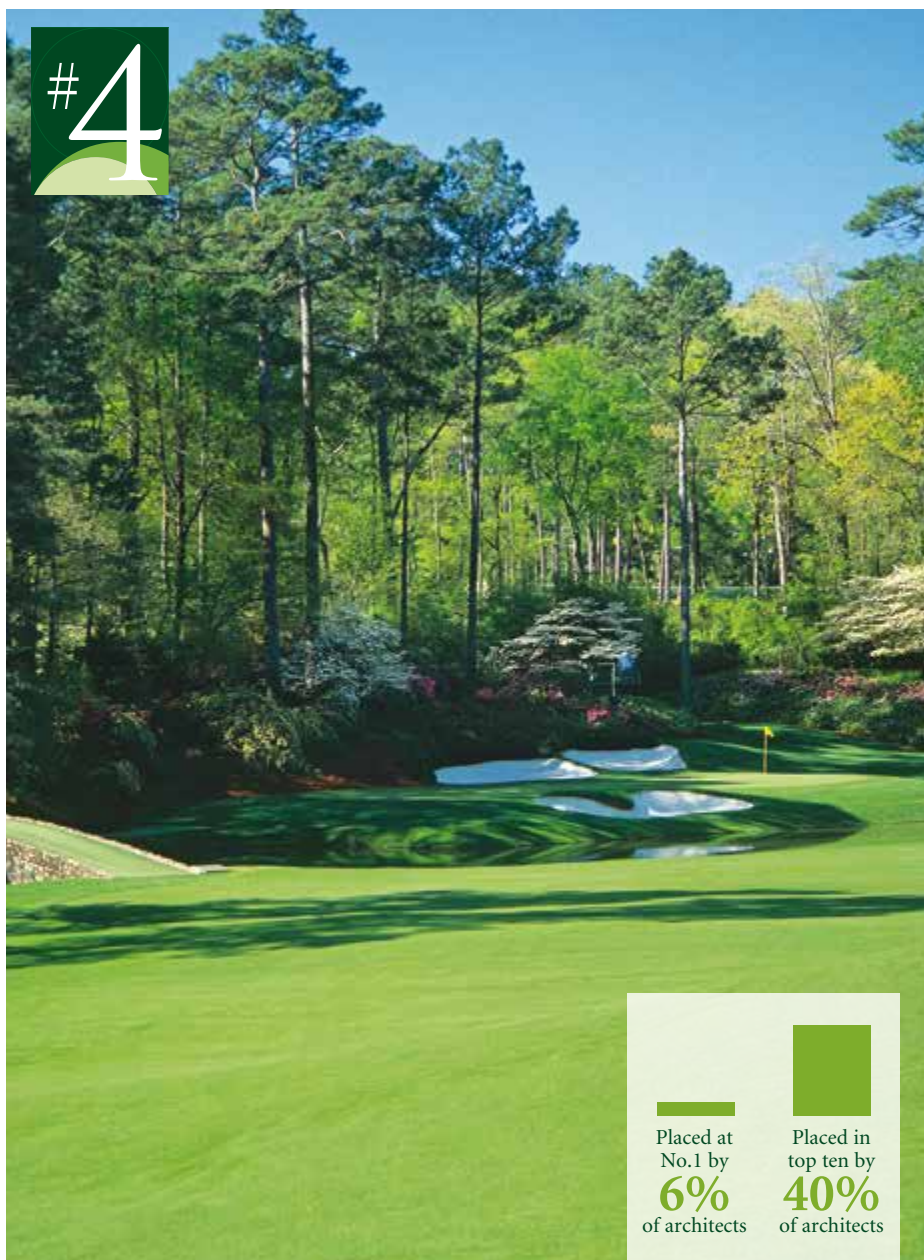


Photo: Evan Schiller - www.golfshots.com

Placed at
No.1 by
6%
of architects

Placed in
top ten by
40%
of architects

Augusta National

Georgia, USA
Alister MacKenzie, Bobby Jones, 1933

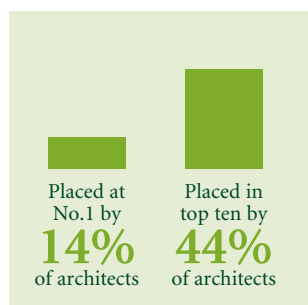
Eric Iverson of Renaissance Golf Design says: "At its core is a brilliantly routed course that uses topography, in large scale as well as contours in and around greens, to drive the strategy of the course, with very few bunkers, particularly in its earlier iterations. Ignore the azaleas, dogwoods, perfect turf, all of which have had a questionable impact on golf. What I see is the rare golf course that can reward superior ball striking from the likes of Nicklaus and the creativity and swashbuckling recovery style of Seve in equal measure – all the while providing a thoroughly enjoyable experience for the members immediately before and after the event. Any 18 handicappers care to have a go at Muirfield or Oakmont two weeks before those Opens? Although unspoken, the idea of Augusta remains among the strongest inspirations for our work: finding and playing one's ball from nearly anywhere, contour rather than hazards the primary driver of strategy, and abundant short grass from which to craft creative shots for recovery play."



Photo: Larry Lambrecht

Pine Valley

New Jersey, USA
George Crump, Harry Colt, 1919



Upon the foundation of the club and acquisition of the land in 1913, the design of Pine Valley became Philadelphia hotelier George Crump's obsession – consulting with Harry Colt and numerous other architects for his one and only design. Fourteen holes were complete by the time of his death in 1918, with 12-15 completed by the following year, when the full 18 opened. Brandon Johnson of Arnold Palmer Design Company says: "This course confirmed a lot of my beliefs about what great golf course architecture could be. It is an original rustic, natural aesthetic golf course that was created. The golf course is a great combination of routing, site, beauty, design, variety, strategy, challenge and fun."

Crump wanted to create a course to form champion golfers, believing the tracks of the day were insufficiently testing to build true skill. To this day, Pine Valley retains a fearsome reputation for difficulty, even though golfers who have played there regularly point out its wide fairways and relative lack of length

"A great combination of routing, site, beauty, design, variety, strategy, challenge and fun"

Brandon Johnson

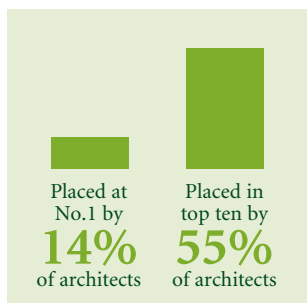
by modern championship standards. Yet no course intimidates more: the first timer, raised on tales of Hell's Half Acre, the Devil's Asshole and the impossibility of the fifth hole, will do well to remember how to swing a club through his fear. One golfer described the course, after his first visit, thus: "Imagine the best hole on your favourite of the Surrey heathland courses. Now, make it twice as good. Now imagine a course with eighteen holes of that quality. That's Pine Valley."



Cypress Point

California, USA

Alister MacKenzie, Robert Hunter, 1928



By some distance, Cypress Point was the highest ranked American course in our Top 100. Mike Benkusky says: “Cypress Point Club is just an amazing golf course on a great piece of property. Nowhere else could you find a mix of ocean, dunes and forest. Mackenzie broke all the rules of architecture. Back to back par fives (and three par fives in the first six holes), back to back par threes, even teeing off over 17-Mile Drive on the opening hole. He let the land dictate the routing and produced one of the finest courses on the planet. Hands down my favourite!”

Cypress Point to me is unrivalled in its combination of beauty, unique design and unparalleled ‘fun factor,’ says Todd Eckenrode.

“MacKenzie and Hunter crafted a brilliant course on the Pacific coast that takes the golfer on an enticing journey through pines, into dunes, back to pines, then dunes again before the fabulous and famous coastal holes. Routing royalty,”

“Fills every human sensory faculty”

Mike Hurdzan

says Neil Crafter of Crafter + Mogford Golf Strategies.

Ken Moodie of Creative Golf Design says: “As a real fan of Alister MacKenzie I had to include the course where I believe he achieved the peak of his design prowess, and particularly the fine detailing of the bunkers and greens which blend beautifully with the landscape character of the Monterey Peninsula.”

Mike Hurdzan says: “Fills every human sensory faculty, repeatedly with pleasurable memories and damn fun to play.”



St Andrews

The Old Course

Fife, Scotland

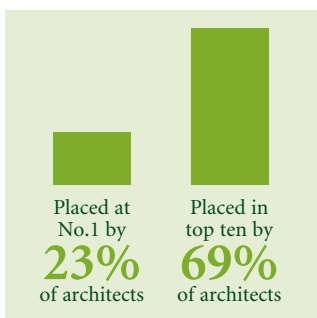
“The Old Course, incomparable, sits atop – forged by Mother Nature,” says Paul Mogford of Crafter + Mogford Golf Strategies.

Golf has been played at St Andrews for over 600 years, originally with players going out and then playing the same holes back in the reverse direction. The course evolved naturally, but Tom Morris, greenkeeper between 1865-1903, is generally regarded as having had the most influence on the current eighteen hole layout. Old Tom’s predecessor, Allan Robertson, though, deserves credit too, as it was in his reign that the Road Hole took shape, and the fearsome green was constructed.

Every golf designer owes something to the Old Course. Alister MacKenzie mapped it; Harry Colt sat on the Green Committee for many years; CB Macdonald learned the game there; Tom Doak caddied on it

for a formative year. The creation of the strategic school of design, at the turn of the twentieth century, came about because golfers who loved St Andrews reflected on why the newer courses of the day fell short of the original, and learned its lessons: width to give options, hazards in the line of play and holes that only reveal their true nature over repeated plays. It is a stretch to say that the measure of a golf course’s quality is how it matches up to St Andrews, but not a huge one.

The Old Course’s place in the hearts of golf architects could clearly be seen by the furore that arose late last year, when plans to modify the course for the first time in almost a century were announced. For many, the question of whether or not the changes would be an improvement was an irrelevance. The Old Course, they said, is the original, and therefore by definition the best.





“It is a place that is endlessly complicated, mysterious, intriguing, strategically challenging and stimulating under all circumstances and simultaneously breaks and defines all the rules of design. It stands in a category of its own.”

Brandon Johnson,
Arnold Palmer Design Company

“The Old Course not only has such enormous tradition but in all respects has stood the test of time in regards to strategy of play and challenge to golfers. The fact that this icon of golf is open for all to play and is playable by all is an added bonus.”

Rick Robbins, principal, Robbins & Associates
International and president, ASGCA

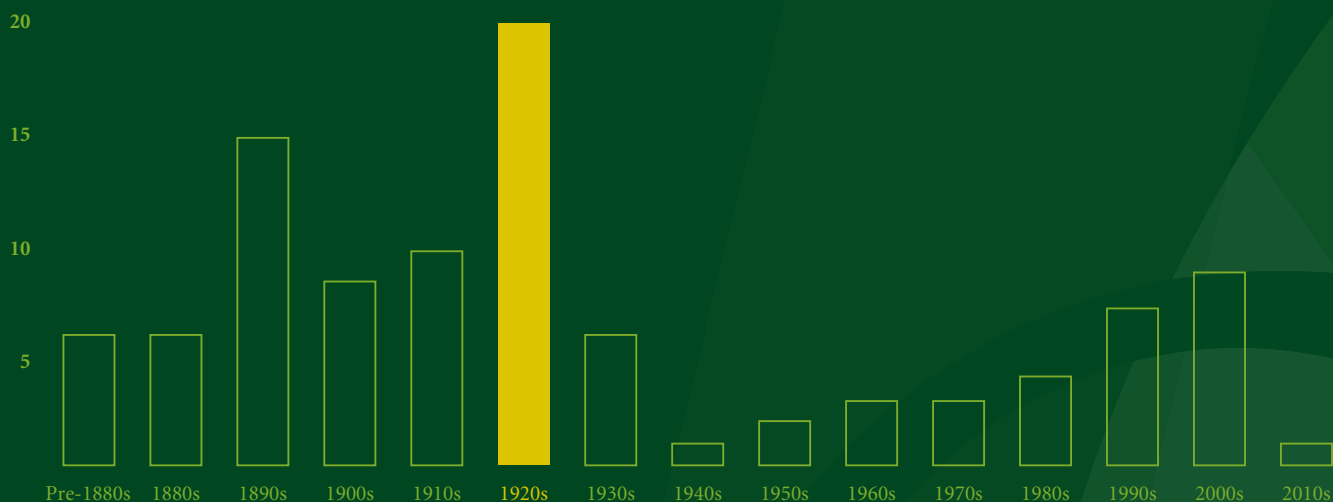


“During the history of the profession, so many ideas and so much inspiration was taken from this course. I can’t think of any other course that has influenced design and the game more.”

Chad Goetz of Nicklaus Design

Golden age

Conclusive proof that the 1920s was the golden age of golf course architecture! The 1890s was also a good vintage, with 15 courses that opened in that decade making the Top 100. There's also a promising upward trend that might suggest we are entering a new golden age.



Where in the world?

Unsurprisingly, the UK and USA dominate the list. Asia is conspicuous by its absence, although there should be honourable mentions for new designs such as The Club at Nine Bridges in South Korea, the Blackstone course at Mission Hills Haikou and Shanqin Bay in China, all of which received votes. Courses like Hirono, Tokyo and Naruo in Japan should possibly make a Top 100, but they have only been seen by a few of the world's architects.



Architects' architect



Harry Colt

Colt's work dominates our Top 100, including Pine Valley, Muirfield, Royal Portrush and both courses at Sunningdale.



Tom Morris

The St Andrews greenkeeper and golf professional has ten entries, all in Scotland and Ireland.



Alister MacKenzie

Eight MacKenzie courses make the list, including three in our top ten.



Pete Dye

With more entries than any other modern designer, Dye's highest ranked course is Kiawah Island, at number 33.



Tom Simpson

Four courses on our list are the work of Simpson, including two in France.



AW Tillinghast

San Francisco leads the quartet of Tillinghast courses that made it into our Top 100.



Herbert Fowler

Fowler's first design, Walton Heath, is one of four of his courses that make it onto our list.



Jack Nicklaus

Arguably the world's best ever golfer, also responsible for four of our Top 100 courses.

A number of architects have three courses in our Top 100, including James Braid, Tom Doak, CB Macdonald, Willie Park Jr, Seth Raynor, Robert Trent Jones and the team of Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw.

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Mark Alexander
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Award-winning photographer and freelance journalist

Top regions

There are a handful of locations around the world where four or more of our top 100 courses are within a few miles of each other.

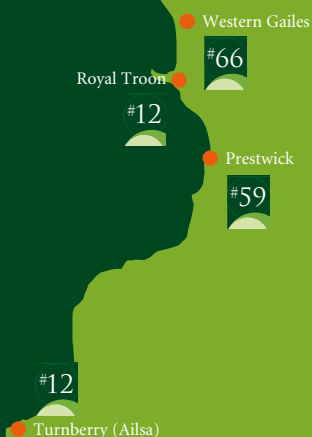
Monterey, USA



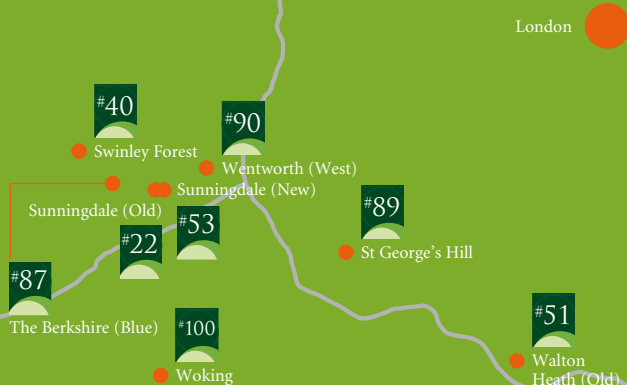
Fife and Angus, Scotland



Ayrshire, Scotland



Surrey and Berkshire, England



Long Island, USA



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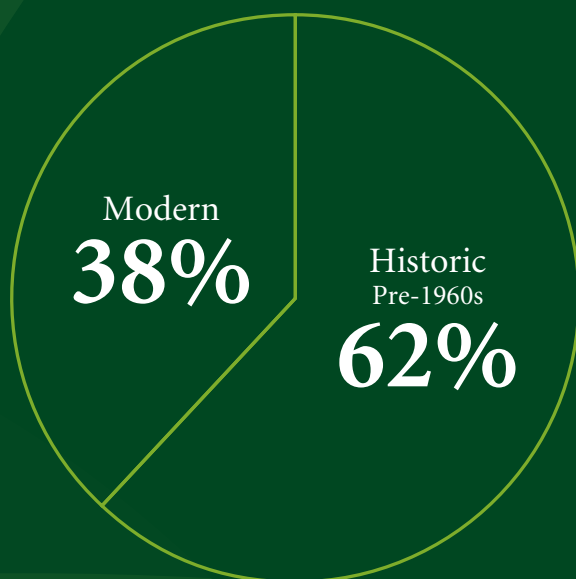


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New vs Old

Architects certainly weren't afraid of voting for their contemporaries and competition, with modern courses receiving their fair share of votes.



Best modern (post 1960)



- 1 Sand Hills
- 2 Kingsbarns
- 3 Pacific Dunes
- 4 Kiawah Island (Ocean)
- 5 TPC Sawgrass
- 6 Muirfield Village
- 7 Castle Stuart
- 8 Valderrama
- 9 Whistling Straits (Straits)
- 10 Friar's Head

Regional top tens



North America

- 1 Cypress Point
- 2 Pine Valley
- 3 Augusta National
- 4 National Golf Links of America
- 5 Shinnecock Hills
- 6 Pebble Beach
- 7 Oakmont
- 8 Pinehurst (No.2)
- 9 Sand Hills
- 10 Pacific Dunes



UK & Ireland

- 1 St Andrews (Old)
- 2 Royal County Down
- 3 Royal Dornoch
- 4 Muirfield
- 5 Turnberry (Ailsa)
- 6 Ballybunion (Old)
- 7 Royal Portrush (Dunluce)
- 8 North Berwick
- 9 Kingsbarns
- 10 Sunningdale (Old)



Rest of the World

- 1 Royal Melbourne (West)
- 2 Kingston Heath
- 3 New South Wales
- 4 Valderrama
- 5 Metropolitan
- 6 Morfontaine
- 7 Utrecht De Pan
- 8 Barnbougle Dunes
- 9 Casa de Campo (Teeth of the Dog)
- 10 Noordwijk



The ones that got away... and the ones that didn't

Adam Lawrence highlights some of the lesser-known courses in our Top 100, and picks out a few that might have made the list

At the start of the 'Architects' Choice' project, we anticipated that, because of the electorate, our rankings would probably differ a fair bit from most of the other polls published by magazines or online. That turned out to be true, though not always in the ways we had anticipated. But certainly, there are courses that, for obvious reasons, resonate more with golf designers than with the golf world in general.

First on the list is North Berwick, which, at number 18 in our list, is significantly higher than in any other ranking I have seen.

It's easy to see why for a profession that, in general, claims devotion to the mantra of fun golf, and to MacKenzie's thirteen principles. Few courses offer a more fun day out than the West Links, with quirk aplenty and two or three of the most famous holes in golf. The Pit hole, which requires players to pitch over an ancient stone wall to get to the green, is perhaps the epitome of quirk, while the legendary fifteenth, the Redan, has surely inspired more imitations than any other hole in golf. Few architects have not built a Redan-type green at some point in their careers.



Three contenders from left: Yas Links, Cabot Links and Stone Forest

Another quirky Scottish favourite, Cruden Bay, comes in at 29th, again significantly higher than in most rankings. Like North Berwick, Cruden appeals more to the golfer looking for smiles rather than a rigorous and ‘fair’ championship examination, with blindness aplenty among its towering dunes.

At number 50, Mike Strantz’s Tobacco Road in North Carolina is perhaps the modern equivalent to North Berwick and Cruden Bay. Here, though, the quirk is created, with huge rolls in greens, blindness and forty foot deep waste bunkers. British architect Robin Hiseman, who is working on a biography of Strantz, wrote that the Road was an inspiration to him, and for anyone who has played the course, it is easy to see why.

Finally, at the very end of the list, comes Woking in southern England, one of the most important courses in the history of golf architecture. It was at Woking that members Stuart Paton and John Low did so much to create the strategic school of design, with features such as the famous central bunker complex on the fourth hole. Woking inspired the great Tom Simpson to become a golf designer, and has continued to inspire architects ever since.

On the flipside, what of the courses that might have made the list and didn’t? The glaring omission is the entire continent of Asia; this was a source of some disappointment to us. We did receive votes from Japanese golf architects, but even so, the most famous clubs in that country, Hugh Alison’s Hirono, Kawana and Tokyo, failed to place highly enough. Clearly, relatively few of the architects who

participated in our poll, have been to Japan.

China, where golf has boomed in the last ten years, is starting to open courses that look like realistic World Top 100 contenders. Most obvious among these is Coore & Crenshaw’s Shanqin Bay, which has been placed in at least one such list. But Shanqin Bay is neither easy to get to, or to get on. Another contender, Schmidt-Curley’s Stone Forest course, has received little play (though much photo-driven publicity), and our stricture that architects must have seen courses in the flesh to vote for them obviously made it less likely that those off the beaten track, especially new courses, would poll highly. In future lists, who knows? Chinese golf is clearly starting to mature, with developers identifying sites more inherently suited to golf, such as the exhilarating sand dunes of Inner Mongolia that play host to Schmidt-Curley’s new Dalu Dunes course (and where architect Dana Fry is also at work). There were Chinese courses named on our list, but they failed to score sufficiently highly to make the Top 100: maybe next time?

Another boom area for golf, the Middle East, also failed to register. Here, there are a few possible contenders: The Emirates Club, which to some extent paved the way for golf in this region. And Kyle Phillips’ magnificent Yas Links in Abu Dhabi, which did indeed receive some votes. But with Gil Hanse and team now at work on the Trump Dubai project, and rumours of more courses being considered as the region’s economy picks up, who knows what the future will yield?

“Chinese golf is clearly starting to mature, with developers identifying sites more inherently suited to golf”

It is inevitable in a poll of this kind that fame and publicity help a course score well: if a place is high profile, and ideally close to other well-known courses, it’s easier for people to pay a visit without having to travel many hours just to get there. To that extent, it is testimony to their quality that remote courses such as Prairie Dunes in Kansas, or Cape Kidnappers in New Zealand scored so well. On a personal level, therefore, I hope that, when we next produce this list, my personal favourite omission does better. That’s Stanley Thompson’s Highlands Links in Cape Breton, Canada, my vote for the single best walk in golf, but unarguably one of the most isolated great courses in the world, at least until recently. Now, though, with the opening of Rod Whitman’s Cabot Links, and, before long, of its sister course, Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw’s Cabot Cliffs (both of which are or will surely be strong contenders for this list in their own right), maybe Highlands will grab more visits... and next time I can write happily that my own favourite has made it in!

#1

St Andrews (Old)
Scotland

2 Cypress Point
USA

3 Pine Valley
USA

4 Augusta National
USA

5 National Golf Links of America
USA

6 Royal County Down
Northern Ireland

7 Shinnecock Hills
USA

8 Pebble Beach
USA

9 Royal Dornoch
Scotland

10 Royal Melbourne (West)
Australia

11 Muirfield
Scotland

12 Turnberry (Ailsa)
Scotland

13 Ballybunion (Old)
Ireland

14 Oakmont
USA

15 Pinehurst (No.2)
USA

16 Sand Hills
USA

17 Royal Portrush (Dunluce)
Northern Ireland

18 North Berwick
Scotland

19 Kingsbarns
Scotland

20 Pacific Dunes
USA

21 Merion (East)
USA

22 Sunningdale (Old)
England

23 Lahinch
Ireland

24 Carnoustie
Scotland

GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE ARCHITECTS' CHOICE

TOP 100 GOLF COURSES



25 Kingston Heath
Australia

26 Royal Birkdale
England

27 Royal St Georges
England

28 San Francisco
USA

29 Cruden Bay
Scotland

30 Seminole
USA

31 Winged Foot (West)
USA

32 Crystal Downs
USA

33 Kiawah Island (Ocean)
USA

34 Prairie Dunes
USA

35 TPC Sawgrass
USA

36 Portmarnock
Ireland

37 Gleneagles (Kings)
Scotland

38 Muirfield Village
USA

39 Riviera
USA

40 Swinley Forest
England

41 Royal Troon
Scotland

42 Chicago
USA

43 New South Wales
Australia

44 Castle Stuart
Scotland

45 Valderrama
Spain

46 Bethpage (Black)
USA

47 Whistling Straits (Straits)
USA

48 Metropolitan
Australia

49 Friar's Head
USA

50 Tobacco Road
USA



51 Walton Heath (Old)
England

52 Royal Aberdeen
Scotland

53 Sunningdale (New)
England

54 Morfontaine
France

55 Utrecht De Pan
Netherlands

56 St Andrews (New)
Scotland

57 Spyglass Hill
USA

58 Royal Liverpool
England

59 Prestwick
Scotland

60 Maidstone
USA

61 Barnbougle Dunes
Australia

62 Woodhall Spa (Hotchkin)
England

63 Trump International
Scotland

64 Royal Cinque Ports
England

65 Casa de Campo
Dominican Republic

66 Western Gailes
Scotland

67 Machrihanish
Scotland

68 Noordwijk
Netherlands

69 Mid Ocean Club
Bermuda

70 Royal Lytham & St Annes
England

71 Cape Kidnappers
New Zealand

72 Los Angeles (North)
USA

73 The Country Club
USA

74 Shoreacres
USA

75 European Club
Ireland

76 Harbour Town
USA

77 Formby
England

78 The Island
Ireland

79 Baltrusol (Lower)
USA

80 Monterey Peninsula (Shores)
USA

81 St George's
Canada

82 Saunton (East)
England

83 Pasatiempo
USA

84 Bandon Trails
USA

85 Chantilly
France

86 Rye
England

87 The Berkshire (Blue)
England

88 Cabo Del Sol
Mexico

89 St George's Hill
England

90 Wentworth (West)
England

91 Capilano
Canada

92 Fishers Island
USA

93 Loch Lomond
Scotland

94 Kinloch
New Zealand

95 Olympic Club (Lake)
USA

96 Torrey Pines (South)
USA

97 Peachtree
USA

98 Shadow Creek
USA

99 Honors Course
USA

100 Woking
England

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