



KEN KEARNEY GOLF DESIGN

NEWSLETTER

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2012..The year to date

Thankfully, 2012 has turned out to be a very busy year at Ken Kearney Golf Design. The early part of the year was dominated by the finishing of various projects carried over from 2011.

We were successful in the tender / competition process for the appointment of a golf architect to offer design solutions for the remodel / restoration of Belvoir Park GC. A course designed by Harry Colt in 1927, Belvoir Park GC is undoubtedly one of the finest parkland golf courses in Ireland. The scope of work which offers the design solutions is complete and it is hoped to commence with the remodel of the golf course in the very near future.

2012 also offered us the opportunity to design and supervise the "Kids Short Course" at Rathbane GC for Limerick City Council. The work is complete and although the summer has contrived to work against us, the facility is now grown in and the bunkers will be cored out and the area will be ready for play very soon. This project is very dear to my heart as the future of the game is with our young people and every effort ought to be made to attract them to our great game. The course is on a very small piece of ground where we built three holes with alternate tees and three large "rollercoaster" greens that will accommodate two pin positions. The holes may be played in any direction from the tees which offers great fun and shot options. The game is supposed to be fun.

We are now in the process of building designs for clubs like Bray GC where remodels will take place over the winter period. As well as Bray GC the remodel of Banbridge GC continues with two greens to be remodelled and 10 bunkers to be done. The first of the greens, the 16th is completed and turfed. Foxrock GC, an original Colt course, is also undergoing remodel works under our guidance.

We thank all of our clients who have entrusted us with their golf courses.

Enjoy your golf.

Ken.

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Short Course Schematic Layout Rathbane GC—Practice Area Limerick City Council



Your Practice Facilities

Most golf clubs in Ireland have good areas where golfers can practice their game with a view to improving skill levels. Most clubs have a practice putting green, some have a practice area for the short game and others also have a large area where one can practice longer shots. The aspiration of most golfers is to attain as high a standard as possible. Of course the game is far more enjoyable if one can improve and play to a decent standard. Regardless of the area available, whether it is one acre, or as visited recently, a 4 acre site there are so many opportunities to improve the facility and make a greater impact for members, current and prospective, and visitors.

Wouldn't any facility be more interesting if we designed the area to play as a short 3; 6 or 9 hole course while also providing target greens where golfers can practice an array of shots to various golf green targets. The greens might not be required to be built to a high specification and in fact the work may be undertaken in-house by the maintenance crew under the supervision of the architect.

Not alone will you provide an area with target greens but a facility where kids can be introduced to the game by parents, the professional or members, playing a short course of holes of +/- 100m. The concept is to make better use of the area and provide a short course where older members might prefer to play a 6 holer, where kids can be introduced to the fun, rules and skills of the game in a golf friendly environment. Members with only an hour to spare can play the short course and hone their wedge play.

A short course generates so many options and if designed well will provide great fun and an area that the club can promote as a "schooling ground" for kids and beginners. Surely the most intimidating shot in golf is the tee shot from the first tee for any beginner golfer, usually in full view of the clubhouse. Would they not be more comfortable on a short course starting out their life journey with golf.

A well designed practice facility is surely a strong selling point when it comes to retaining existing members and attracting new members to the club.

Why not create an exciting practice facility at your club. You will develop better golfers, a place for teams to gather and practice together, an area for new members / golfers to learn the skills and rules and ultimately an area where golfers can hone their skills and make the game of golf more enjoyable.

Foxrock GC

Following the completion of a Golf Course Improvement Plan that offers design solutions to improve the golf course, work has commenced at Foxrock GC.

An original Harry Colt / Hugh Alison golf course I am particularly pleased to be involved in this project. As a Colt enthusiast, I am very pleased to be associated with the club, who are showing a real appetite to improve the golf course, creating better strategies and restoring this beautiful course to the Colt style.

Works commenced recently and the new short game area with USGA green, pitching area, bunker area is completed and expected to be in play early next season.

Work on the 5th hole is complete with extensive work to the green complex including drainage, reshaping and the restoration of the Colt bunkers.

Foxrock GC is a very special place. It is an oasis of traditional golf in an urban setting. Harry Colt would be pleased to see the efforts to restore it to its glory days. I am pleased to be associated.

"Golfers... realise that there is no other pursuit in the open air which gives them the same relaxation from the worries of life. To some the healthy exercise, and the battle of the game played with a keen opponent, are the attractions; but to others the rest gained from a round played with a pleasant companion on a fine spring morning, on a course with beautiful natural surroundings, gives the greatest pleasure, and the actual result of such matches is not of paramount importance."
Colt, Some Essays on Golf Course Architecture, 1920.

Increase in Golf Course Remodel Work

The past year has seen a significant increase in golf course remodel work. There was of course a downturn over the previous two years. Clubs and golf course owners realise that golf courses must be fun, enjoyable, affordable and challenging, without beating up the golfer. Golfers do not want to pay good money, get beaten up and return to the club house... with 23 points and minus 4 golf balls...

Clubs throughout the country are looking to projects that will enhance the golf course and position the club to attract new golfers to play the course once we start to emerge from the current challenges. Issues related to maintenance are still the most sought after change with bunkers high on the list. Clubs cannot afford to have 15 – 20 hours per week spent on fixing sand, raking huge bunkers, pumping water etc. That day is over. Similarly clubs simply cannot afford to close their golf course because of water-logged greens. The conversion to USGA recommended specification is not the "mysterious" operation it once was. Clubs are converting with the work done in-house in some instances under the guidance of the architect. Clubs are also starting to see the benefits of offering a golf course that is "playable". Narrow tunnel fairways with no playing options or strategies are over. The monotony, not to mention the lack of challenge, of heavy rough surrounding greens, or every green, is over. Golfers want playability and shot options which will result in golfers enjoying their game of golf... and hopefully returning to play again and again. The ground game is making a return, thankfully.

I recently attended a club that gave a simple brief to offer solutions that will

1. Reduce hours in maintaining grass
2. Lower maintenance on bunkers but retain and enhance the golfing challenge
- and 3. Keep the golf course open during wet periods.

This might sound straightforward but I doubt that this is not the desire of most golf courses in Ireland. The golf course maintenance model has changed and the financials are critical to the sustainability of the game in the future. I also firmly believe that golfers' expectations are too high and need to be managed.

The future of golf, golf courses, and clubs, is dependent on affordability, playability and critically, providing **fun** in the challenge. More and more clubs are requesting A Master Plan that will move the club and golf course into the future with sustainable management and a fun golf course. The brief changes slightly from club to club, but the goals are mostly the same.

Why not have your golf course audited today and allow a professional golf course architect to offer your club A Master Plan to bring your course forward and provide a better facility for your members and visitors. This is the future. Those who sit on their hands will be lost... the best clubs in Ireland and throughout the world are master planning now to ensure a sound future.



Harry Colt
Architect to some of our best.



4th hole Co. Sligo
A Harry Colt gem



6th hole Foxrock GC
Note the contouring to
the green surrounds...
Typical Colt.

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The amazing chocolate drop
and stunning green complex
2nd Hole Foxrock GC

Harry Shapland Colt (1869 - 1951) In Ireland

Few, if any golf course architect has influenced the art of golf course architecture as much as Harry Colt. Colt arrived at a time when inland courses were being considered as an alternative to seaside courses. In advance of Colt's arrival the inland courses were crude attempts. Having left his mark on courses like Royal Lytham and St. Annes, Royal Portrush and Co. Sligo to name but a few, Colt set about making his single biggest contribution to golf course architecture at the heathland and parkland courses. The simple courage of moving from links sites to inland sites cannot be underestimated in its impact on the game as we know it today.

Educated in law at Cambridge, the word most associated with Colt's work is "natural". His courses always looked like they "fitted into" the landscape, both in scale and style. He probably tested himself early in his career at Sunningdale GC where he was the Secretary Manager till his departure in 1913. It was about this time that he visited Foxrock GC and it might be safely assumed that he also visited Castle GC during this trip.

Colt pioneered strategic golf course design. His philosophy was to encourage the golfer to think strategically on every shot. Colt moved golf design on from the penal school to the strategic school. He wanted his courses to be host to championship golf, which they still are, but that the average golfer may also enjoy their time on the fairways. This is the ultimate challenge for golf course architects today but we must agree that Colt succeeded better than most. His oft used quote.. *"the real test of a golf course; is it going to live ?"* is more applicable today than ever. Colt's courses have survived, although he may not approve of the way some have evolved.

To understand Harry Colt's work one must be expertly familiar with the man, his style and his writings. Although he only left us with about 100 pages of the written word, they are a valuable source of information for the interested golf course architect. However, to fully understand his work, one must get out on the ground and study his golf courses. In studying the courses in which he had a hand, the astute architect may identify the design principles within which he worked.

Colt was a daring designer for his time. In his strategic design philosophy he moved the hazards, bunkers, in many cases, from the direct line of play to the sides of the fairways. He designed golf holes to fit the sites, working with the landscape and not imposing the golf on the land. How many architects might have the courage to finish a golf course today with two par 5's as Colt did at Wentworth, still considered a "championship" standard golf course. He worked with the land, not against it.

Based on my studies I have developed a set of principles that suggest the design philosophy that guided Colt throughout his career. In any remodel to a Colt course these principles must be embraced and make up a critical aspect to any works being undertaken at a course fortunate enough to have had the influence of Harry Colt.

Courses where Harry Colt did work in Ireland include: Belvoir Park, Cairndhu, Castle GC, Clontarf, Co. Sligo, Dun Laoghaire (original), Foxrock, Greystones, Knock GC, Rosapenna, Royal County Down, Royal Belfast, Royal Dublin and Royal Portrush.

Happy golfing to all... particularly those fortunate to play on a Harry Colt gem !!!