



Just one word needed – stunning!



Environmental expert Kate Torgersen recently visited Queenstown, NZ and caught up with Jack's Point superintendent Simon Forshaw to discuss the course's recent international environmental accolade.

# Proving a Point

PHOTO: JACK'S POINT

sustainability initiatives that played a part in them winning the IAGTO award. The land upon which Jack's Point resides, on the shores of the stunning Lake Wakatipu, was previously a sheep station and to honour that history some sheep still graze on select areas of the property. Walking into the pro shop and looking at a photo of the parcel of land that was paddock after paddock and to see it now in its current state, is a testament to all involved in its design and construction.

I could not believe the transformation that had occurred, especially with the course being completed in 2008. Since the land has been converted to a golf course, many fauna species, especially birds, have returned and now use the native scrublands, wetland areas and native pasture areas as habitat.

Apart from a small minority, all course furnishings have been made from recycled materials either from the existing farm or from nearby sources. The tee and fairway markers are crafted from the dead stems of the endemic Matagouri tree which can be found throughout the course. These trees have a special significance to Jack's Point. They are extremely slow growing with some specimens on the course being over 100 years old.

Driftwood that is washed up along the lake shores is collected and used for course furniture, signs, rubbish bins and stakes (as seen in photos far left). Even the rope that is used to keep golfers out of significant areas is made from hemp! Select cart paths around the course are made from sleepers recycled from a local source. By using the sleepers it keeps wear to a minimum, especially with the amount of cart traffic that the course receives. The more permanent tracks are made from recycled gravel from the site, while the famed stone walls (above right) are made up of materials that were mined from the site. The old farm gates were not discarded either but instead utilised in the design and are now featured throughout the course.

While playing Jack's Point you really feel like you are right among nature. Apart from the select houses that are built on the course, the maintenance shed and half way house have been built out of eye site to ensure that whatever direction you look you take in the wonderful vistas of the surrounding Remarkables mountain range and lake.

Turning up to play, I knew that there were good sustainable practices in place. Each golf cart had a glass bottle you could fill with filtered water in the pro shop, reducing the amount of plastic bottles. But I was even more impressed when we stopped at the half way hut! Needing to improve my golf, I tried some of New Zealand's finest gin which was served in a plastic cup that had been made from plants and vegetables! Swapping to more sustainable products like these can be small adjustments by a club but can make a huge difference to the environment.



Jack's Point employs a horticulturalist who manages the native areas. Revegetating with locally indigenous plants is common practice with the majority of plants being grown on site from cuttings and seeds collected on course. Grass clippings are collected from the course and taken to an area where they are regularly turned, creating a compost mix which is then reused throughout.

From a turf management perspective, Simon and the club are focused on sustainability. A programme is currently underway to convert all tees from bentgrass to fine fescue due to the latter's lower input requirements, but at the same time ensuring no reduction in the quality of the playing surfaces. Simon also ensures boom spraying is kept to a minimum, with the majority of weed control being applied using dabbers or knapsacks. There is also a two-metre buffer zone around any sensitive native areas and waterways.

Given its location Jack's Point is also utilised by many hikers, with several tracks throughout the course allowing not just the golfer but also the wider community to enjoy this special piece of land. This was a major factor that course architect John Darby was intent on featuring when designing Jack's Point and as a result there are 35km of hiking, mountain biking and horse riding trails. Darby wanted the best part of the land to be kept for the golf course and wider community to utilise for hiking and other leisure activities and not given over to developers.

While designing the course, it was important to retain the natural character and this was achieved by threading the holes through the shrub land and native pastures. And it wasn't just the golf course that Darby wanted to keep natural. The clubhouse design philosophy was to keep it real and honest by using natural materials which would allow the clubhouse to grow old gracefully.

In a day and age where the environment and sustainability is in the limelight, Jack's Point is a great example of how you can manage a golf club in a sustainable way, working with nature and not against it and continually putting new practices in place for the greater good of the game and environment without taking away any enjoyment for the golfer. 🏌️



Driftwood washed up along the shoreline is used for course furniture, while select cart paths are made from locally sourced sleepers. Even the fairway ropes are made from natural hemp fibre

In January I was fortunate enough to visit Queenstown, New Zealand and play some of the fantastic golf courses which have made this region one of the best golfing destinations in the world. The likes of Queenstown Golf Club, Jack's Point, Millbrook Resort and Arrowtown Golf Club are all very unique in their own way and are a must-see not only for golfers but turf managers as well.

The one course that I was very interested to visit from an environmental management perspective was Jack's Point. Recently honoured internationally for its efforts in sustainability and commitment to protecting the environment, I was eager to find out how they had taken out the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) Sustainability Award for 'Nature Protection'.

The IAGTO Sustainability Awards represent the pinnacle of a strategic partnership between global golf tourism trade association IAGTO and non-profit golf sustainability body, the GEO Foundation, with the awards recognising excellence in environmental and social responsibility.

In announcing Jack's Point as a winner, IAGTO and GEO representatives commented:

*"Jack's Point wins the 2019 Nature Award category due to its extraordinary preservation of the breathtaking natural landscape. Completed in 2008, the course construction was so sensitive that only five per cent of the entire 3000-acre site will ever be touched. A range of natural materials were utilised, with recycled on-site materials incorporated as much as possible, including local wood and stone. Man-made structures were sited appropriately below sight lines and away from natural bluffs and elevated areas.*

*"The legislation was in place to ensure the open grassland habitat and rocky terrain (appropriately named 'The Remarkables' mountain range) will always be protected and the club is absolutely committed to the preservation of the environment. Wetland habitats were created and existing ones regenerated with improved water quality, previously degraded by pollution from livestock farming. The course has its own irrigation supply and wastewater treatment system."*

Course superintendent at Jack's Point is Simon Forshaw who took me on a tour of the course to look at current and future works, explain how they maintain the course daily while being environmentally aware and the