

Museum and golf clubhouse combined under one roof

Stephen Crafti SMH 18 June 2022

With building budgets often being lean, combining two functions under the one roof makes economic sense.

In this case, combining a museum and a golf facility was the starting point for a modest building at Tuncurry.



Timber-framed bi-fold glass doors can be pulled right back to allow for the indoors and outdoors to blur. *CREDIT: JAMES BOWMAN*

Recipient of an architecture award from the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter), the Tuncurry Museum and Golf Facility elevates the simple clubhouse.

Designed by Michael Fox Architects, this simple yet elegant building speaks to the many period homes framed by verandahs that have become integral to Australia's architectural vernacular.

"The project was initiated by the discovery of golfing memorabilia at Homebush that goes back over a hundred years or more. Some memorabilia was archived at the Strathfield Golf Club with the other material displayed at Tuncurry," says architect Michael Fox, pointing out some of the earliest golf clubs, clothing worn over the decades and video material recording some of the most eventful golfing competitions.

While Tuncurry, adjacent to Forster (approximately 300 kilometres north of Sydney), is blessed with a professional 18-hole golf course, the former clubhouse, plonked in the middle of the car park, was well past its use-by date.

So given there was a need for a new clubhouse and a museum, the call went out for a new design.

"That one was over 50 years old and it was also poorly sited," says Fox, who was keen to ensure the new building would take advantage of seeing golfers at the first tee, the ninth green and eighteenth green.



A limited palette was used – recycled brick, spotted gum for the internal beams (and expressed externally) and steel trims, painted black. *CREDIT: JAMES BOWMAN*

To ensure unimpeded sight lines to all three holes, Fox and his team elevated the newly sited clubhouse and museum approximately one metre above the ground creating a new berm.

To ensure the green and surrounding trees were given the appropriate status they deserved, Fox used both a simple form and a limited palette of materials – recycled brick, spotted gum for the internal beams (and expressed externally) and steel trims, painted black.

The architects were also keen to ensure natural cross ventilation, without a reliance on air conditioning.

So, highlight louvred windows purge the warmer air, and to the west, to reduce heat overload, is a solid recycled brick wall.

Timber-framed bi-fold glass doors can also be pulled right back to allow for the indoors and outdoors to blur – the verandahs are approximately four metres in depth.

Rather than create separate spaces for the clubhouse and for the museum, the two functions have been thoughtfully integrated.

Treated as oversized window boxes that pierce the perimeter, one of the museum spaces is approximately 60 square metres in area and the other 15 square metres.

And while both areas can be secured by timber and glass doors, they were both designed to appear as extensions to the clubhouse.

"I wanted members to feel connected to the history of golfing, not tuck it away where material wouldn't be seen," says Fox, who included a display cabinet in the foyer/entry that greets visitors upon arrival.

Fox also included a large service wing in the design which contained a large commercial kitchen together with change rooms.

There's also a large canteen-style window in the pro shop in the northern corner, framed by a black steel portal to diffuse the light.

Mindful of the club's audience, with the intent of creating a relaxed and casual ambience, Fox used Thonet chairs with loose tables, together with comfortable armchairs for members and the wider public to enjoy this magical setting.

Unlike the previous clubhouse, where the primary view was the bitumen car park, it's now shared between the course's three most significant putting holes.

The architects also included separate structures for buggy storage on one side of the clubhouse and a protected barbecue area, also made from spotted gum and steel, on the other.

While this building was conceived as both a clubhouse and a museum, it was also designed for functions such as weddings, hence the sophisticated kitchen and amenities.

And for those keen to reflect on the sport's illustrious past, there's the ability to enjoy seeing some of golfing's curated equipment, objects and artefacts.