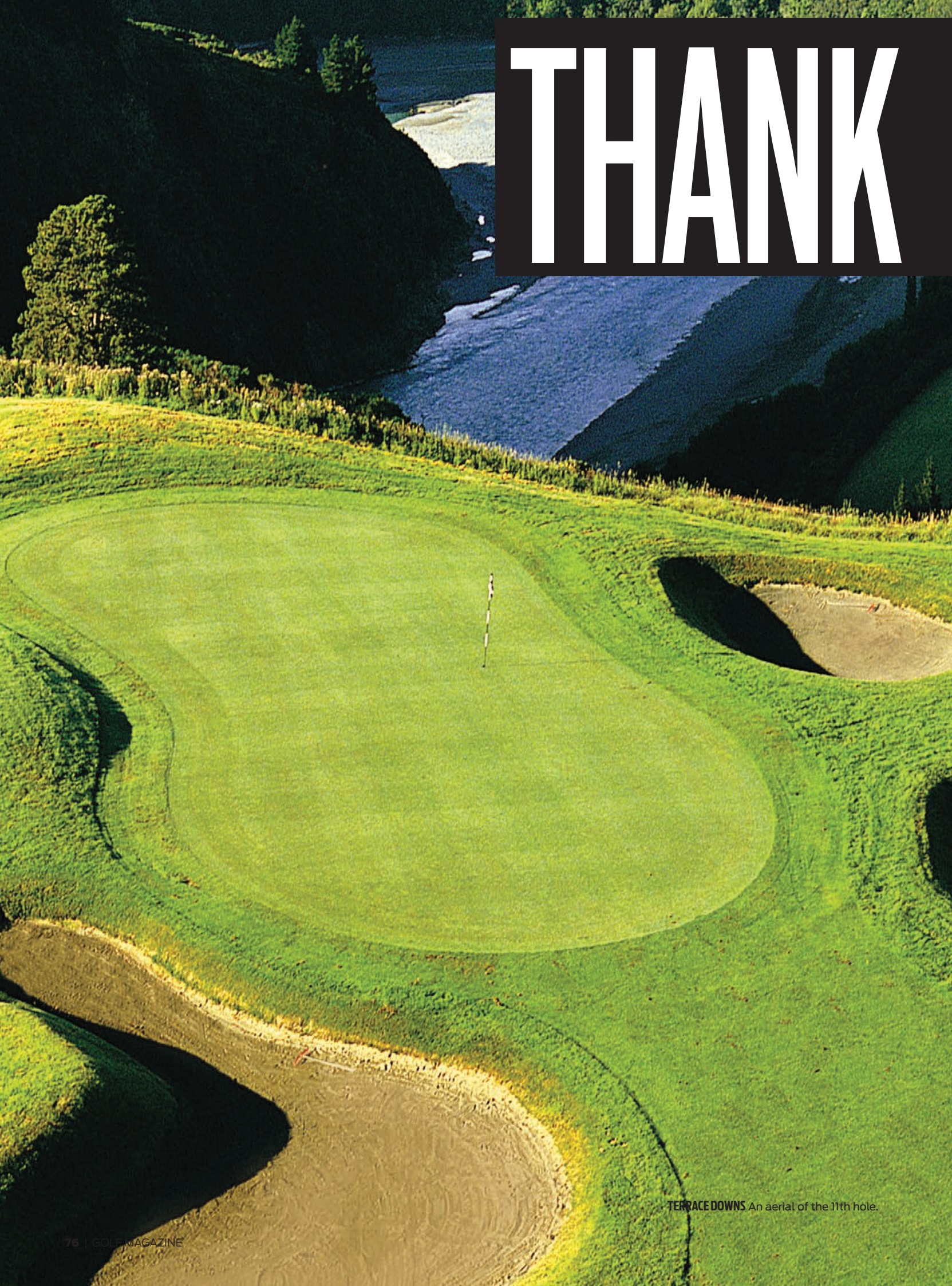


# THANK



**TERRACE DOWNS** An aerial of the 11th hole.

# CHRISTCHURCH

The capital of New Zealand has been through a lot these past couple of years. But don't pray for Christchurch—go there. **Luke Dodemaide** found a delightful holiday spot and a recovery bolstered by the game of golf. And, oh, the occasional glass of wine.

**G**olf is a game best played looking forward; forgetting what just happened and worrying about what is now happening. Ben Hogan would tell you that in candour. Tiger Woods will tell you that in covert press-conference quips. Geoff Dreury, the manager of Christchurch's Hagley Golf Course, will tell you that in earnest. His course, like so much in the earthquake-affected region, was shaken. But he, like they say in the rest of Canterbury, is undeterred. "The water underneath the soil, and any gray area you see, the soot comes up with it. And I'm not talking little bits, I mean 400 tonnes of the damn stuff," says Dreury. "We've had two lots of it; it was on the 22nd of February [2011] which was really bad. The worst thing about it is you get a huge hump in the middle of the green, and you have to slice it open and take it all out." And take it out they did. Hagley Park, somewhat of a novelty 12-hole course that manages to play over 18 holes, is located at the centre of the city. From here the crispest shots can be heard as far as the 'red zone'—the closed off quarters of the city where buildings are still given gentle nudges to finish off Mother Nature's tantrum. "Can you imagine if they had a golf course in London's Hyde Park? Or Melbourne's Botanic Gardens?" Dreury says. Where the locals used to walk by after work and have a cup of coffee or a chardonnay. On this day, a flock of tourists play the course as Dreury watches from a seat outside his makeshift clubhouse. He stays silent. "It is just the white elephant in the room," Kelly Wilkes, an executive for Canterbury Tourism, says on our drive out of the centre. "There are times when I can't remember what we talked about before it."



## OTAHUNA LODGE

Further out, in the mute-inducing fringes of Christchurch, the beauty is untouched. It is perhaps misfortunate where the founding fathers chose to place the mini-metropolis, as the quakes had little effect on privileged fringes of the region. The sloping hills are just as spectacular. The journey through the mountains truly engrossing. And there is no finer place to arrive than Otahuna Lodge. With its early 20th century driveway it offers a transporting classical charm right from the get-go. Steep in history, and built in 1895, this mansion was the residence of Kiwi royalty, the lawyer and politician Sir Heaton Rhodes. A turn-of-the-20th century hangout for King Edward III, otherwise known as the character played by Colin Firth in last year's Oscar winner *A King's Speech*, Otahuna Lodge has a distinguished British feel. Like something Jane Austen would have dreamt up, or a what a Dickens character would have longed for, that has somehow found

itself in the New Zealand countryside. Purchased by two transplanted New Yorkers, Hall Cannon and Miles Refo, \$4 million has been spent on the property to restore the estate to its former glories since purchasing it in 2006—in a manner that is as classic as it is creative. While they lost 11 chimneys in the earthquakes, those bricks have been laid down outside to frame Otahuna Lodge's lavish garden. And out here, that was really the only effect. "The quivery has ceased," says Hall with a smile. And at Otahuna Lodge, there is quite a bit of 'ceasing' to be done. This, after all, is a place to stop what you *were* doing. Because clearly, you are not there anymore—the chandelier in the dining room may give that away; the varnished wood which you see your reflection in; the collection of stunning antique furniture that almost leaves you guilt-ridden to occupy. What you read, drink and eat at Otahuna Lodge is entirely up to you. On hand, Otahuna Lodge has its own boutique library. And,

## CHRISTCHURCH

of course, it's own cook. Jimmy McIntyre, in fact, is one of the treasures of the Lodge. Peckish after my flight, this writer inquired about a bite to eat. Minutes later, a smoked salmon bruschetta-style sandwich was served up, sitting on a bed of rocket, avocado and baby tomato. With the lodge boasting its own herb and vegetable garden, which itself deserves recognition as a feature, much of the food comes picked directly from the garden. A delightful mix of canapés pre-empt the main meal, which ranges from tender Canterbury lamb to exotic French-influenced cuisine, in a five-course dinner that comes with the room. When dinner is served, Miles and Hall often sit down and offer delightful tidbits on the region and all it has to offer. Eventually, you will have to leave Otahuna Lodge, remembering you—in fact—are not actually a regal figure nor have any reason to be treated as such every minute of the day. But even if you cannot stay at Otahuna Lodge, Otahuna Lodge will stay with you. It is worth every rustic penny.

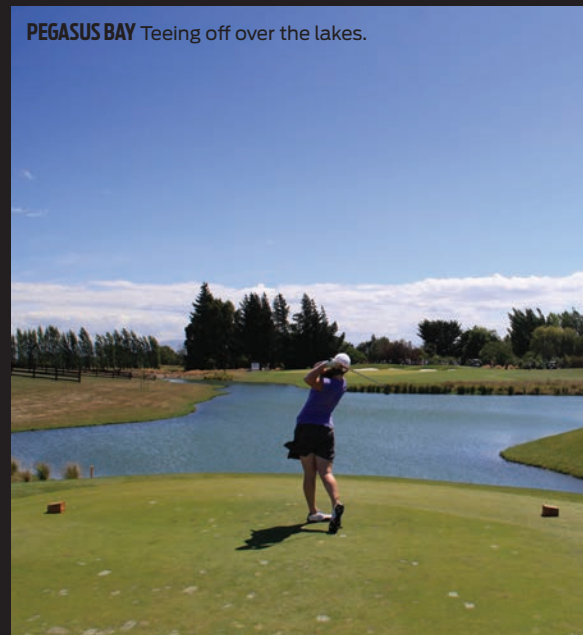
### PEGASUS BAY WINERY

No more than an hour and a half from Otahuna Lodge—past a sleepy course called Tai Tapu, which makes for a quick-fire 18 if you need a break—lays Pegasus Bay Winery, complimented by the close-by Pegasus Golf & Sports Club. Ideally, you shouldn't visit them in that order. Yet of course that is the exact order *Golf Magazine* did. On grounds overlooking the Southern Alps of North Canterbury, the restaurant is tucked behind a beautifully manicured garden. Pegasus Bay is a popular emerging wine of the region, and for what its worth is a handpicked degustation selection at the aforementioned Otahuna Lodge, and they boast a superb array of red and white wines. The South Island, such is its climate and geography, lends itself particularly to white wines. Think the popular Oyster Bay, which has become an Australian favourite over the years. Here in the Waiapara Valley, one of the fastest growing wine regions in New Zealand, Pegasus Bay's Sauvignon Semillon is a signature taster. It's a traditional Bordeaux blend that finds its *sui generis* in a Turkish mix of spices that dazzle the tastebuds. The pleasant acidity, which is a feature of white wine of the South Island, makes it a joy to drink. For red lovers, the Pegasus Bay pinots are a rather light red wine option, perfect for the dryer Australian months. The "Burgundian methods" ensure a very pure,

**ODE TO OTAHUNA** A Jimmy McIntyre delicacy accompanied by Pegasus Bay wine.



**PEGASUS BAY** Teeing off over the lakes.



**BUNKERING DOWN** Clearwater Golf Course.



crisp flavour—with no preservatives—keeping the "wood-smoked" taste of the blackberry, mulberry, black cherry and raspberry aroma exceptionally intact. For the sweet tooth, Pegasus Winery also offer a good selection of dessert wines, one pick of which is the aptly named 'Encore'. It is the sweetest dessert wine on offer, yet the flavour reaches you in a rather inoffensive, less blunt, manner. A great way to finish a tasting session and/or evening.

### PEGASUS GOLF

Pegasus Golf, directed by Queenslander Brett James, describes itself as "resorts links golf course", and it plays something like what you might find on Queensland's Sunshine Coast or Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, occasionally reminiscent of Moonah Links' Legends' course. Although some of the fairways can be quite tight, it is by and large a very playable course—

designed to offer a tourist-happy player an enjoyable 18 holes rather than a gruelling day's work. The par-72 sandbased course plays 6300 metres from the championship tees and 5000 from the forward tees. The bunkers and lakes—the latter of which are a particular feature of the course—force a brand of strategy that is sure to keep players on their toes. The 15th has a rather unique split fairway, separated by a gully, that tempts players straight over the water option or a safety-first shot onto the fatter fairway. The top of the hill from the signature 17th offers a great view of the nearby Pegasus, and the 340-metre par-4 is somewhat of a signature hole—as it hugs a lake and features one of the wider fairways of the course. The resort, which opened in 2007, quickly moved to establish itself as a place of prominence in New Zealand golf—hosting two European Tour sanctioned Women's New Zealand Opens,



**PROUD OWNERS** Miles Refo and Hall Cannon of Otahuna Lodge.



won by England's Laura Davies in 2010 and Australia's Kristie Smith in 2011. In late February, Pegasus Golf again hosted the New Zealand Women's Open for the third consecutive year. An estate course, whose properties are burgeoning along with 107 retail stores soon to accompany the surrounds, James' course is instilled with sunshine-happy Queensland feel.

### **TERRACE DOWNS**

An hour out of Christchurch city, and a continent away scenically, lies Terrace Downs. Tucked underneath the Southern Alps, this place offers postcard views from near to every angle. There is a definitive Austrian or Swiss setting to this retreat, yet the brand of golf is decisively Scottish. Certainly an intriguing cocktail of elements that add up to a memorable 18-hole play. Not unlike the rest of the Canterbury region, Terrace Downs is

generally played with a crisp air in your face, which is not too unpleasant, and only adds to the challenge of the sweeping Sid Puddicombe design. With 11 lakes and 70 bunkers—not to mention a cliff edge on the turn—you have to keep a watchful eye in the distance. Coming down the feature 18th, which plays into an amphitheatre green and is lined by the resort apartments, your game will be spectacularly on show. However, experiencing that vantage point—on your balcony, particularly during the twilight—you will quickly forgive those who may have gawked at your game. After all, there is a lot to see at Terrace Downs. The clubhouse has been recently refurbished, and the bar boasts excellent food and wine choices to steer your mind away from even the most hazardous of links rounds. Archery, skeet shooting and horse riding are also on offer,

assuring Terrace Downs provides the quintessential country club experience. Just with better views. And better golf.

### **CLEARWATER GOLF COURSE**

Clearwater has established itself as the cream of New Zealand's courses, and has really emerged as the 'first pick' of places to host New Zealand's signature golfing events. It is the home of the BMW New Zealand Golf Open, recently won by Australia's Brad Kennedy in a dramatic finish over Craig Parry, which was a tournament of particular significance. After the earthquakes stripped Christchurch of the Rugby World Cup, with the devastated Lancaster Park in no state to host the any tournament matches, Clearwater Golf Course provided a great moral boost for the Canterbury region as the first major sporting event since the disasters. And what a stage Clearwater is. Less than five minutes from the airport, Clearwater is a par-72 6500-metre championship course that has been open since 2002. The back nine and front nine are somewhat circular, bringing you virtually back to the clubhouse halfway through your round—which may just suit if you are staying at the immaculately kept nearby resort suites and only want to sneak out for a nine. The par-3 174-metre 11th is certainly a scenic and rather tricky hole—especially to those who can't keep their eyes off the water. Plenty of balls find their way into the lake—and your balls won't get much respite coming into the par-4 366-metre 12th. This hole demands precision off the tee to navigate onto a narrow fairway and away from the pesky bunkers that lay either side of the fairway. The 18th, the 407-metre par-4, where Parry lost his footing in the New Zealand Open, can tempt you into the lakes if you really attack the pins early. Clearwater is a tough out-and-out championship course. Although on the day *Golf Magazine* visits, former New Zealand Eisenhower representative Geoff Clarke accompanies the round and tames Clearwater through a brisk afternoon of golf—which although a treat to watch, exemplifies this is a course where local knowledge, along with superb bunker play, proves vital.

In Christchurch, paradise is not lost. The region, like Dreury in his Hagley Park hangout, is just waiting for you to rediscover it. Where are you going next? ■