

# THE HISTORY OF MILLBROOK RESORT & SELF GUIDED TOUR



  
**MILLBROOK**  
QUEENSTOWN | NEW ZEALAND

*Escape the everyday*



MILL FARM, HAYES CREEK  
AND THE BUTEL BROTHERS

The land on which Millbrook now calls home was first discovered by Māori, then rediscovered much later by Europeans lured to the region by tales of a gold rush.

In the mid 1800’s the young and adventurous Butel brothers set sail from Normandy, France and eventually arrived in Australia in 1858. Their time in Australia didn’t last long and in 1861 Peter Butel set sail for Dunedin, New Zealand with two companions, Tom McEntyre and William Paterson. John stayed behind in Australia and married his wife Catherine Gorry that same year.

Arriving in Dunedin at age 24, Peter and his two companions proceeded to walk to Arrowtown (at the time known as Fox’s) a mining town barely in its infancy. The journey from Dunedin to Arrowtown took them six weeks. Their first sighting of the town was as they stood at the top of the Crown Terrace and looked down on the valley below. They arrived only three years after the first European settlers to the region looked down on the same valley.

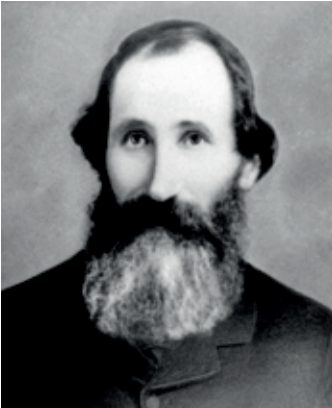
Peter then encouraged his brother to join him and in 1864 John and his wife Catherine arrived in Arrowtown. The two brothers were sons of a French Farmer and together they established a 450 acre wheat farm to feed hungry miners. This became known as Mill Farm and the rustic remains live on in Millbrook’s restored buildings, farm machinery, and the avenue of trees that welcome visitors, just as it did more than 150 years ago.



Peter Butel



Bridget Butel (nee Flannery)



John Butel



Catherine Butel (nee Gorry)

The brothers built a flour mill on the farm and also ran a sawmill at the bottom of Coronet Peak, where they cut down beech trees for timber. This timber was used in miner’s props, the flour mill at Mill Farm and the homes of both Peter and John Butel.

The Butel brothers were engineers at heart and helped create Arrowtown’s first water race, evidence of this race can still be seen around the resort today. It was originally thought to have been built as a service to miners, however it quickly became the main water supply for the emerging township.

However, their partnership didn’t last long and in 1880 the Butel brothers agreed to part company and started managing their own businesses; with Peter keeping Mill Farm and the flour mill and John focusing on farming and sawmill operations. John established a farm at Hayes Creek which was adjoining Mill Farm, and is now known as Mill Creek which runs through the resort. John and his wife Catherine had five children (Catherine, John, George, Robert and Louisa) and lived in a stone house that John built on the south bank of Hayes Creek. The homestead is still standing and has been restored by the current owners. Peter married Bridget Flannery in 1872, however the couple did not have any children.

It appears that Peter Butel had the first electricity in the district at Mill Farm, running his generator off the water wheel he used for the mill (the same water wheel you can still see turning at the Millhouse Restaurant). According to the history books Peter then offered to provide the whole of Arrowtown with electricity. However, the councillors of the day refused his offer. Arrowtown residents had to wait nearly another 60 years before power became available to them in 1945.



The old stables and granary, now the Stonebarn Kitchen and Hole In One Café



The old flour Mill in the 1970s, now the Millhouse Restaurant



In the early 1880's Peter spent most of his time attending to the flour mill, together with the grounds around it. Peter and his wife travelled back to France where they brought back numerous cuttings to plant new tree species across their land. At one time there were at least 100 walnut trees on Mill Farm. Hazelnut trees grew near the homestead and there was also a stand of Oregon pines which were cut down many years later for timber. He also planted numerous orchards around the property. Amongst the many varieties of fruit that Peter grew were grapes, of which he had several vines growing near the house. Peter stored bottling equipment under the mill, and bottles of wine were still standing there long after his death. It is possible that he was the first to make wine this far south, beating the current vineyards by more than a century.

It seems that the Chinese miners were also welcome at Mill Farm where they were allowed to stay in the loft above the stables. During this period, Chinese miners were not warmly welcomed in the region.

John mainly grew crops of wheat, barley and oats. He also had three acres in orchards and a dairy which seems to have been his wife Catherine's domain – she was famous in the district for her butter making, with orders being taken months in advance. It was said that John Butel, like his brother, possessed an extraordinary amount of mechanical talent, being able to fix everything onsite himself, including all the farm machinery, watches and sewing machines, to plough repairs. In 1883 a journalist from the Otago Witness described John and Catherine as, “the kind of settlers which go to make a colony wealthy and prosperous.”

John Butel ran a very successful sawmill business and invested in a steam threshing engine and chaff cutter about the same time as they built the sawmill. As far as can be ascertained, it was probably the first steam engine and threshing mill in the district. In the 1880's John had 500 acres of freehold land across the valley, and leased 1,200 acres of hillside from the Arrowtown council for grazing sheep. Today, it can be seen across from Millbrook as a hillside of pines planted by the council.



Workers at Peter Butel's Mill





A view of Malaghans Road with the Avenue Trees and Lake Hayes in the background

## MILL FARM AFTER PETER BUTEL

In 1908 Peter who was not getting any younger and not having had any children, leased Mill Farm to a neighbour, Michael Feehly, keeping his 10 acre homestead block. The lease was for five years and before it expired Peter died in 1912 aged 75. His wife Bridget continued to live at Mill Farm until her death in 1930. Once Micheal Feehly’s lease expired the land transferred to Peter’s nephews.

During WWII Mill Farm became a hospital for injured Kiwi soldiers returning from the war in Europe. It was believed that the soldiers were nurtured by the natural amphitheatre of the farm and that the soothing majesty of the surrounding mountains helped to heal the body and soul. It wasn’t until after WWII ended that the land was returned to its farming roots.

After WWII, Peter’s nephews sold Mill Farm to the government as a “rehab” farm for returned servicemen. They left behind many of the antiques and treasures that had been collected from around the world by Peter and Bridget. Fortunately, they also left the old farm equipment and buildings as they were. It was on this rather sad note that the Butel family’s 83-year association with Mill Farm ended. When Bobby and Peter Butel (Peter’s nephews) sold Mill Farm in 1947, it was probably for very little as the price of land had been frozen to ensure that there would be reasonably priced land for the men returning from the war.

In 1947 George Rennie Campbell, a returned soldier, purchased the land. Seven years and two daughters later George and Doreen gave up the struggle of running the farm and sold it to Fred Hill.

In 1954 Fred Hill purchased Mill Farm for £8,000. Fred and Marge Hill and their three children, Freda, Dick and Geoff, came from a farm just outside Invercargill. They made the move as land was cheaper in the Wakatipu. The pond in front of the mill was a great source of entertainment for the Hill children. Not only did they catch trout in it and float log rafts on it, but they skated on it in winter. However after the Catchment Board had cleaned up Mill Creek above their boundary, all the silt came down and turned it into a settling pond. After that it was as Dick said, “stuffed” and no longer any use to play in.

In 1970 John Heenan paid \$200,000 for the farm and they renovated the original homestead adding a second level. The Heenan family had no intention of ever selling Mill Farm, and had even selected a spot for their retirement home. But over the latter years times were very difficult for farmers and they decided to sell the farm.

In 1987 when John Heenan decided to sell Mill Farm the idea of a new golf course development was pursued. The farm was passed in at auction, but a local entrepreneur started negotiations that were to result in the ultimate purchase and the formation of the Millbrook Country Club. Mill Farm’s farming days ended after the purchase in 1989: green fairways replacing pastures, and not a fence to be seen, other than the boundaries.



# LANDMARKS

- 1 RECEPTION BUILDING
- 2 STONEBARN KITCHEN
- 3 HOLE IN ONE CAFÉ
- 4 SMITHY'S SMOKE HOUSE
- 5 HORSE GIG AND BELLOWS
- 6 HORSE WASH
- 7 MILLHOUSE RESTAURANT
- 8 DRAY
- 9 THE AVENUE AND RESORT CENTRE TREES
- 10 SICKLE MOWER
- 11 REID & GRAY PLOUGH
- 12 THRESHING MILL
- 13 GRINDSTONE
- 14 DRIVING RANGE
- 15 HAY RAKE AND TEDDER
- 16 ORCHARD HILL
- 17 ARROW IRRIGATION SCHEME
- 18 DRAY

PLEASE SEE PAGE 10  
FOR A DETAILED  
RESORT CENTRE MAP



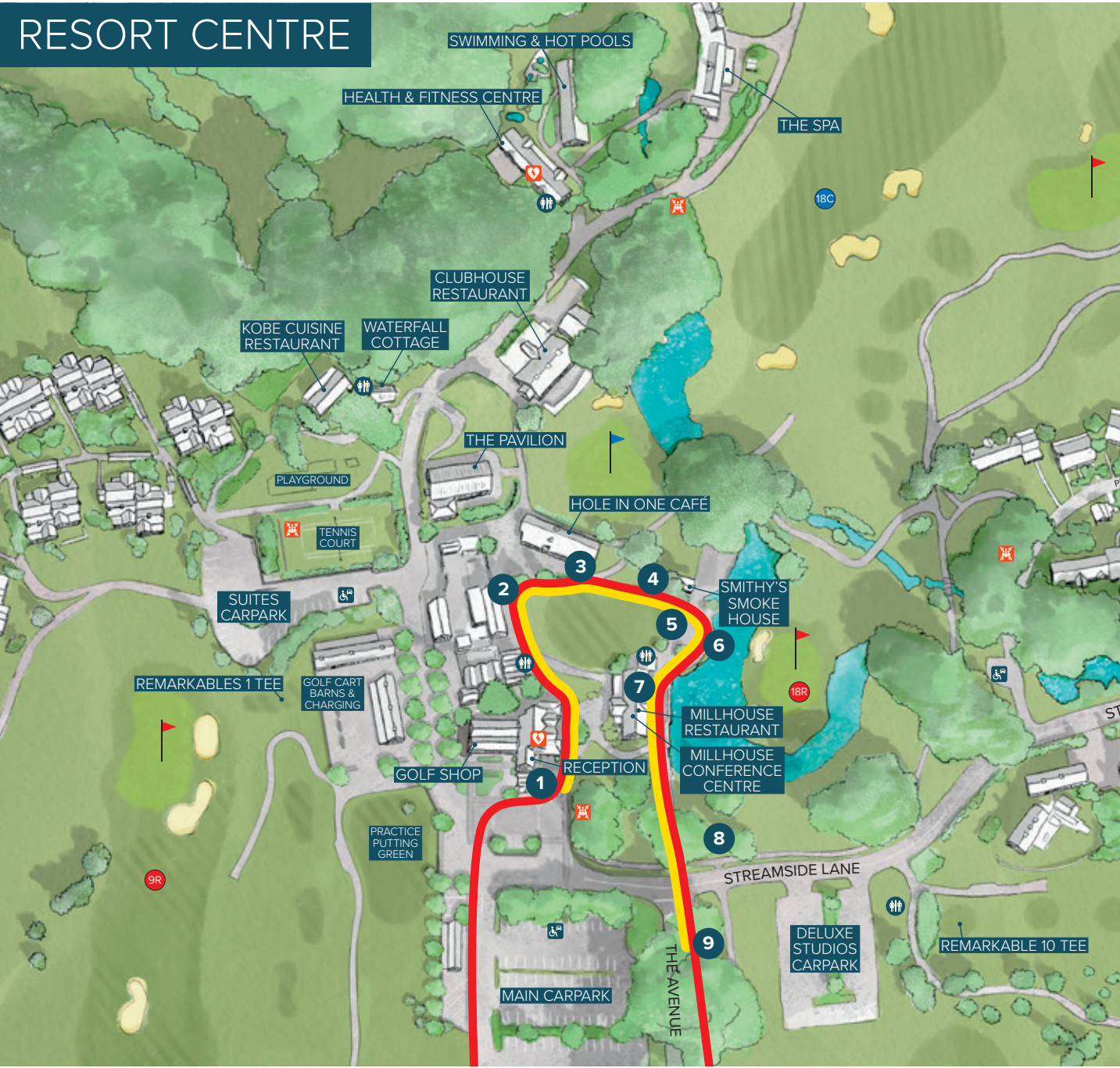
Enjoy the splendour of Millbrook's rich history whilst exploring the resort's picturesque grounds. We have developed two self-guided history trails for you to either walk or bike. Choose from our 'yellow trail' anticipated to take 20 minutes to walk, or the 'red trail' which will take approximately 90 minutes to walk.

Each landmark includes additional information about Millbrook's heritage.

- Short Millbrook self-guided history trail
- Long Millbrook self-guided history trail
- Millbrook to Arrowtown biking and walking trail
- Millbrook to Lake Hayes biking and walking trail



# RESORT CENTRE



## BEFORE PHOTOS



**1 Reception Building**  
Come and enjoy the ambience of the original homestead which is now Millbrook's inviting reception area.



**2 Stonebarn Kitchen**  
See from the outside the impressive stonework on the building which once housed the farm's horses.



**3 Hole In One Café**  
Stop by the Hole In One Café for a coffee in what used to be the granary.



**7 Millhouse Restaurant**  
Visit the historic water wheel which was constructed in 1873. This water wheel gave Mill Farm electricity 60 years before the residents of Arrowtown received it.





The Millhouse Conference Centre then and now

### HAYES CREEK FARM AFTER JOHN BUTEL

In 1902 John Butel transferred Hayes Creek to his son John before passing away in 1903, aged 69.

When the farm was sold by Peter Butel (2nd gen) in 1945, it was almost as if it had stayed in the family, as the buyer, Archie McEntyre, was the grandson of the Tom McEntyre who had arrived in Arrowtown with Peter Butel in 1861.

In 1958 Jack Dagg, who had farmed in the district for many years, bought the farm for £9,500, which with the 60 acre school lease totaled around 300 acres.

Jack then sold the farm in 1988 to Graham Harrex and was disappointed when Harrex cut the farm up into smaller blocks to sell.

In 1990 Millbrook Resort - of which Mr Eiichi Ishii was the main shareholder - purchased approximately 250 acres from Graham Harrex, all of which had been owned or leased by the original John Butel when it was part of Hayes Creek Farm.



Hayes Creek Farm with John Butel's original homestead



THE BEGINNING  
OF MILLBROOK RESORT

When the Ishii family made their initial investment in the land, their vision was to establish a lifestyle resort of international standing that existed in harmony with its surroundings. Included in the master plan was the design of an 18-hole golf course. In March 1987 Sir Bob Charles was flown to Arrowtown where he evaluated the suitability of the land. Within a few days he had effectively laid out the design of the first 18-holes. During the rest of the year the resort's name had been chosen and the first of the land was purchased (Mill Farm). In 1990 another 250 acres of land was purchased for future development (part of Hayes Creek).

In 1993 Millbrook Resort was officially opened by former Prime Minister Jim Bolger. Sir Howard Morrison, a New Zealand entertainer, and Sir Bob Charles, professional golfer and golf course designer, were also in attendance. At the time of opening Millbrook had 20 Villas (now known as One and Two Bedroom Suites), an 18-hole golf course, Golf Shop and Clubhouse Restaurant. Over the next decade the resort continued to develop. Since its opening Millbrook Resort has hosted many prominent guests, most notably in 1995 Nelson Mandela and John Major, followed by Bill Clinton and John Travolta in 1999.

When the Health & Fitness Centre opened its doors in 1996 it was Queenstown's largest hotel gymnasium complex and featured the town's only 25m indoor lap pool. The Spa opened its doors in 2001 only to burn down in 2003 due to an electrical fault. It was rebuilt a year later with a major extension added. The spa foot bridge is built from beams from an old West Coast bridge and recycled railway sleepers.



Mill Pond



2007 GOLF COURSE EXPANSION

In 2007 construction began on a new 9-hole golf course, which would become The Coronet Nine: leaving the resort with three 9-hole courses for guests and members to choose from. In 2010 the new course was officially opened by then Prime Minister John Key.

Hosted each year at Millbrook is the biggest event on the New Zealand golfing calendar - the New Zealand Open. This is an event for golf aficionados and casual spectators alike. It is a great opportunity to check out the championship courses at Millbrook Resort and take in the beautiful Central Otago surrounds.

MILL FARM DEVELOPMENT

In 2014 Millbrook Resort gained an additional 67 hectares when they purchased neighbouring Dalgleish Farm.

On this land Millbrook has since built an additional nine holes, as part of a \$50 million residential and golf development that is now known as Mill Farm.

These new nine golf holes added to their previous 27 hole world-class offering, has enabled Millbrook to operate two full 18 hole courses. The original Sir Bob Charles course is now known as the Remarkables Course while the new Mill Farm holes combined with the Coronet Nine has become the Coronet Course. Nestled in and around the new Coronet Course are 42 premium house lots available for high end residential homes. Greg Turner and Scott Macpherson, who co-designed the Coronet Nine, are also behind the design of Millbrook’s latest nine holes which became playable in 2021.

Nowadays, Millbrook is a five-star golf and lifestyle resort and a pioneer in the luxury resort industry of New Zealand. The award-winning resort offers luxurious, beautifully appointed accommodation, five onsite dining venues, a 36 hole championship golf course, award winning day spa, health & fitness centre and various conference venues.



Aerial of Millbrook Resort, 1997





The Avenue, early 1900s



The Avenue, now



# MILLBROOK

QUEENSTOWN | NEW ZEALAND



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