

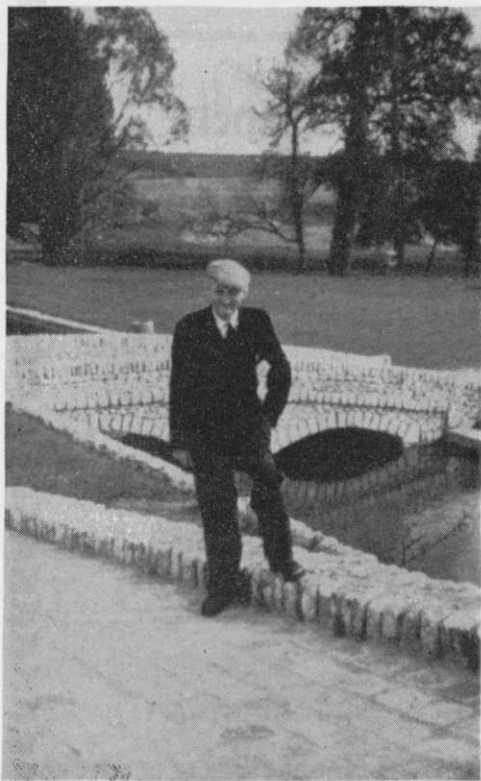
JOHN STOBBS GOES TO PARIS

THERE was something inspiring about the Canada Cup, held at the new course at St. Nom la Breteche, near Paris. It certainly was not the play; since although the event came alive on the Saturday during the third of the four rounds scheduled (but in fact never played, for fog reduced the final round to 9 holes played one day late), the format of the teams of two from all the world taking part in fourballs played at snail's pace made the first two days pretty dead golf to watch. Even the brilliance of a handful of players, notably the Spaniards Sota and S. Miguel and the American Nicklaus, could hardly redeem the laboriousness of the whole event.

What was inspiring was the feeling of innovation, of newness, of coming expansion. France took a great responsibility in playing host to the event, since French golf has still hardly got beyond

the state of being a minority game amongst only the rich. It has in no sense yet become a nationally enjoyed game as, for instance, it is in Scotland. Yet the bold experiment worked. For the first time, the French Press took liberal notice of golf. For the first time, crowds of the size and interest we are accustomed to came out to see it. For the first time it began to look as if the ordinary Frenchman began to become aware of the game. France abounds with land upon which glorious courses could be laid out for popular enjoyment. The Canada Cup at St. Nom may be looked back to in years to come as the event from which golf began to expand in France.

It was all inspiring, too, because the setting was so serenely beautiful. The club house is a converted farmhouse and buildings—it once supplied to French Kings at nearby Versailles. Of mellow



Jim Ellis was the first Head Greenkeeper at St. Nom and supervised the construction of both courses. He was just bringing them into good order when he met with a fatal car accident in France on his way back to England for the B.G.G.A. Tournament at Bridlington in 1961.

porridge-coloured stone, the buildings run on three sides around an area of flower beds and putting green, dropping in terraces towards the old moat, upon which swans glide unconcerned at the missing of putts on the adjacent 9th and 18th greens.

But perhaps the most inspiring thing about it all was that this great event was taking place upon land which less than half a dozen years ago was still farmland, and which, moreover, is itself hardly the sort of land to lend any help to designer and greenkeepers in creating a course. It is clay, of the kind that can seem both wet and hard simultaneously, and upon which it will take many years of settling and mowing to produce fairway turf of sufficient body and

But the impression most of the spectators from overseas took away with them was of the general charm and grace of the course. The land, a fairly simple, shallow, broad valley with a stream down the middle, and ground available on the uplands along one side, was not such as to inspire an architect to monumental excitement or illusions of possible grandeur of golf. Featureless, smooth, bare, lacking almost entirely in the runs and slopes and crannies which make so many parts of Britain naturally suitable for golf, the land presented a passive and unco-operative face to the innovators who founded the club. Yet the Red Course, and its companion Blue, both just over 6,700 yards, have come



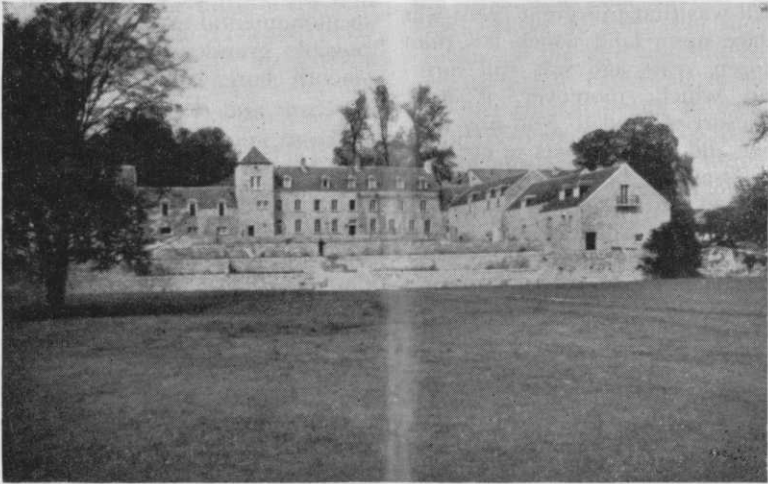
Looking towards the Blue Course from the Red.

springiness to suit the game. The greens, too, still young and immature, had to face a really tremendous ordeal of wear and pounding. That they came through it in a state in which critical putts could still be holed and were (it was Nicklaus' final nine holes, including a run of five consecutive 3s, which settled the event), was really a bit more than might reasonably have been expected of them.

into being in a way which suggests they will mature in about twenty years into a delightful place to play. They have not interfered with the country. You can stand and look down the wide valley and feel that the nature of the land, the atmosphere of the place, has not been changed or violently assaulted in the making of the holes. It will always be "golf where the old farm used to be".

At the same time, many of the holes are unobtrusively strongly definite in character. The first short hole on the Red Course, No. 3, is a fine one, from a tee perched above an artificial lake

members will become very fond. First a short-hole hops downhill to a tightly bunkered, built-up green; then a long 17th marches patiently towards and then up the slope to the little hill before the



The Noble Nineteenth.

created from the stream, played over the lake to a wide green: with the green of the previous drive and pitch hole just uncomfortably near enough to the water. The plateau green of the medium-length 5th, perched against the side of a little hill, will obviously always be a devil to find for the average player, yet entirely fair and receptive to the bold, high, pitch. The short 9th, down the hill to the moat by the club-house, is one of those holes which look remarkably difficult from the tee, without any obvious reason for doing so, although the bunkers are, aggressively placed on either side. This hole proved itself in the vast number of shots from the world's experts which missed the green: including all four players in match after match.

The finish of the course is admirable. Take an area of absolutely bare, much-too-gently sloping ground and make a great finish?

Impossible! But a very good one has been made, and one of which the

club, with acres of space between a few large magnetic bunkers, but ending with another uphill pitch to a slightly plateau'd green. Then the 18th, a drive to a right-curving wallop-and-pitch hole downhill at the end, which tempts the aggressive player to cut off as much as he can over the curve along the right-hand side: only to leave him, if he takes too bold a line, a perfectly devilish pitch over a bunker tightly biting into the right front of the green, from a lie probably in thick grass amongst a lot of old cooking-apple trees.

Clay soil can never give golf another Sunningdale, or Rosemount. But as the trees planted all over the course grow and mature, St. Nom will settle down into a very pleasant place for ordinary men to play golf.

Where one succeeds, others follow. In fact, there are already four more courses being made on the same side of Paris at this moment.