

## EIGHTEEN HOLES WITH HAWTREE

### *The First*

We are about to embark on a round of golf lasting two years or more.

Talking golf course layout and design can be a sterile occupation unless it is pinned down to actual example, but actual examples seldom unite all the relevant factors. So these 18 holes will be types—the short holes, the par-5, the dog-leg and so on—and the discussion round them will be general. The round will last a long time because each hole will take this magazine a month to play and sometimes two. But that is not so unusual nowadays.

Now we can drive off.

No. 1. Some like it tough. Think of yourself starting your round at Hoylake where drive or second can so easily be out of bounds into The Field. Now stop thinking about it. The Royal Liverpool Golf Club was founded in 1869 and although this hole was not the first at that time there are things flowering on ancient battlegrounds which do not survive transplanting to a fertile garden.

I shall return to the question of Out of Bounds later in the round. Here it is only used as an example of difficulty. The point to be made is that unless there is some natural obstacle which obliges the first hole to contain the risk of playing three from the tee, it is cynical to introduce it. There are still 17 holes to go, your golfer is probably stiff and cold. Let him dig his own pits—there is no need yet to dig them for him.

The warm humanity of the designer of golf courses is best demonstrated at the first hole. Mr Sam Snead said, "The golf architect can't play golf himself and makes darned sure nobody else can". Even if this were true in the first part it is certainly not true in the second. This is our only chance to beat Sam Snead on the first tee.

Next, the question of length. There have been people who advocated a par-5 at the first hole. There are two

mild comments to make on that recommendation. Firstly it is a waste of time; secondly it is rubbish.

It is a waste of time to make any generalisation whatsoever about the length of the first hole because the clubhouse site, the land round the clubhouse, the land beyond that and the ultimate ideal layout for the whole site, are, together, the factors which will determine how long the first hole will be. The man who starts work on a layout by saying "I must have a par-5 at No. 1", is either ignorant, feckless or both.

It is rubbish because the normal layout of, say, 6,300 yards will only tolerate two or three par-5's in either half if the total balance and variety of lengths in the sequence of holes is to be agreeable. Moreover the par-5 itself is a delicate matter. It demands, as we shall see when we play that hole, something more than sheer length to make it acceptable.

It may well be that the geography of the site requires a par-5 to open the round. In the same way a par-3 may be inevitable. But these necessities come from the site itself not from any academic decisions beforehand.

A few years ago I planned two 18-hole courses for a club near Paris called Le Prieure. The East Course ended with a par-3. The West Course began with a par-3. Only in this way was it possible to connect the clubhouse naturally to the courses. An intimate relationship of course with clubhouse is a vital consideration. Old monastic foundations like this priory were mostly sited near running water and often therefore, in a valley which in this case was narrow with steep sides, inaccessible for a longer hole except in one direction. They were also remote from the distractions of Paris. That is another matter.

But normally the par-3's and 5's are better woven into the pattern of the round at a later stage. They are too valuable to be used on the edge. And if they have to be used, the proper balance of the remainder presents additional problems.

Therefore I am inclined to affirm even at the risk of wasting your time by generalising, that a par-4 of no special difficulty is the desirable opening for nine or 18 holes if there is any choice. And if the speed of despatching players from the first tee is also of consequence then a length of 350 yards would be appropriate. In principle the shorter the walk to the green after the tee-shot, the longer the time available for putting on the green before those following reach their drives. But the proper tee and green positions will generally determine length and leave little choice.

One other small point. I believe that the flag on the first green should, if possible, be visible from the tee and the clubhouse. We shall be talking about dog-legs and blind holes after and somehow one feels that they should come later, when standing on the first tee. The visibility of the flag brings the course to the player before he drives off and as he reflects in the clubhouse afterwards. In the same way all the

bunkers on the first hole should be handsome and well in evidence even if one or two might be superfluous on a strict interpretation. On an inland site especially, the views from the first tee ought to epitomise the golfing landscape and inspire eagerness to get out into it with a bag of clubs.

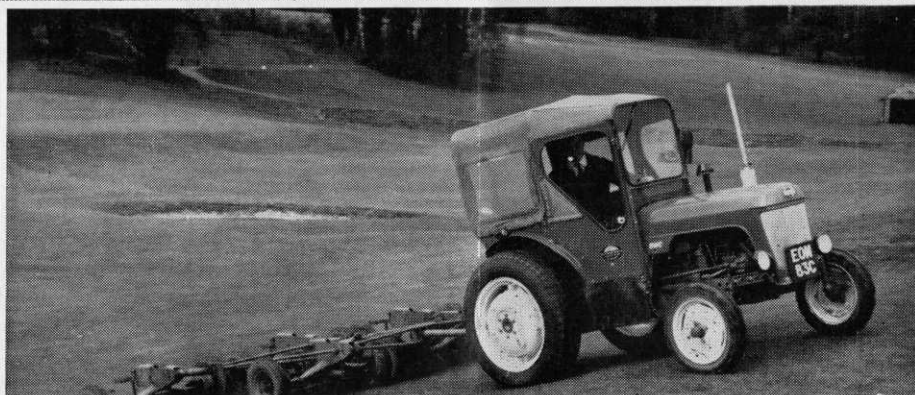
There only remains the window-dressing. The neat white rail, the broad expanse of immaculate teeing-ground, the waste-paper basket cleared of yesterday's ball wrappings, bright tee-markers, ball-washer, notices simple and to the point. The whole effect proclaims that this course is well cared for.

This first impression is probably as important as the hole itself. Provided the design looks good and the impression of the course is favourable that is as much as we need expect at the start.

For most golfers, the first hole is only a way of getting from the clubhouse to the second tee. Come to think of it, that is about all we have done here.

*Get on to*

**GIBBS**



The B.M.C. Mini Tractor is ideal for golf courses, playing fields etc. 950 c.c. B.M.C. diesel, 9 forward gears P.T.O. live hydraulics etc. Get on to Gibbs for demonstration.



BY APPOINTMENT  
TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN  
SUPPLIERS OF  
AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY  
& IMPLEMENTS  
AND MOTOR VEHICLES

**J. GIBBS LIMITED**

Bedfont, Middlesex  
tel. 01-890 5071

Ripley, Surrey  
tel. Ripley 3101

Bracknell, Berks.  
tel. Bracknell 4222