

FIFTY YEARS OF GOLF GREENKEEPING

FOR a man who has been clouted, not once but many times, by a misguided golf ball, Mr Frank Gillett takes a remarkably kind view of the game. But golf, in spite of its painful moments, has not been bad for him. It has been his bread and butter for nearly 50 years.

And now, after that long familiarity with the rough and the greens and the fairways, Mr Gillett is leaving the links. He is getting on for 70 and next month this head greenkeeper at Parkstone Golf Club retires.

"I suppose I could go on for another 10 years if I wanted to but I think it's time to pull out and make way for a younger man," said Mr Gillett, who lives within driving range of the club at 30 Lilliput Road, Parkstone.

He is a fit, hardy man with a spring in his step. A cheerful man. These are attributes which must owe something to his job—a job that involves long hours every day in the fresh air and many miles of walking. "I couldn't stand an indoor job," he said.

Married, with one daughter and two grandchildren, Mr Gillett has never had much time for playing golf. "Years ago when we had 30 or 40 caddies here I used to get in an occasional round—the groundsmen used to take on the caddies—but really I prefer gardening to golf," he explained.

Followed Father

Mr Gillett, who served with the 5th Dorsets in the First World War, joined the outside working staff of Parkstone

Golf Club in 1919. His father was already on the staff and later became head greenkeeper. He carried on until he was 79. "I also had a brother working here for a time," he recalled.

In the old days the ground staff knew most of the members, if only by sight, but today with so many more players around things are different. Working conditions, of course, are better with mechanical equipment contributing much to take the backache out of the job.

Among the famous people Mr Gillett has met on the course were Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald.

Humble Cottage

Mr Gillett was born in a humble cottage in Lilliput Road—the cottage is still there but it is no longer humble. Its desirable position, close to the golf course, and the extensive renovations carried out to it, have long since removed it from the category of working class dwellings.

However, as his present home in Lilliput Road is also close to the golf course he will be able to keep a friendly eye on those green acres of Parkstone in his retirement. And if ever he feels in the mood to swing a club or make a drive for the nineteenth hole, he won't have far to go. There will always be a welcome there for him.

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