

# 18 HOLES WITH HAWTREE

## No. 8—THE ROUGH

by FRED HAWTREE

When we drove over the water at Hole No. 6 we noticed that our grandparents were either made of sterner stuff or took a cheerful view of the hazards of golf. Incidentals like walls, rocks, and dykes added zest to their round and the rougher the rough, the merrier the contest.

Features which are nowadays omitted from travel agents' invitations to 14 days golf in the sun were put forward as positive attractions. Open a Golfing Annual from the 1890's almost anywhere and you will find something like this:—

“The chief hazards are gorse bushes, large bunkers filled with whins and water, roads, and cart ruts.”

Or again:—“Last year the club took in some extra ground . . . this giving the additional hazards of two deep pits, one full of water, a running stream, a road and a quantity of rushes.”

Who cut down all the rushes?

In the current ecology of golf, the player adapts his environment to the game instead of his game to the environment. If the rough *can* be cut it *will* be, at any rate within slicing and hooking distance of the fairway.

On any course an imperceptible change also occurs daily as disciples hack hopefully about. And it is occurring more quickly as year round play increases and the natural processes of regeneration cannot keep pace. Eventually the stage is reached where grandfathers can say that the rough is not what it used to be. You will have known for some time that the fairways are not what they used to be.

Setting aside speeding play (which we

can only do for the sake of simplicity) your golfers will accept deep rough if it is an obvious part of the landscape. Ground Willow beside sea-side fairways, heather in heathland, these may bother them in play but do not offend their sense of justice. Give them, however, a foot of deep grass in smooth meadowland and the inevitable discussion will follow.

A. Unplayable only a foot from the fairway (green).

B. Teach you to play straight (short.)

A. Best shot of the day and lost the ball.

B. Wasn't quite good enough, was it?

A. What have the ground staff been up to?

B. Rained every day for a fortnight.

A. Penalises the rabbit.

B. What's his handicap for?

A. Should have thought the course was difficult enough already.

B. Too easy by half.

A. Discourages visitors.

B. Don't want them. Ruin the course.

A. What are you going to have?

B. The same again.

Most people expect the tournament performer to put up with a specially roughened layout. The spectacular recovery is exciting and memorable. But he will have a great deal of help in marking and finding the ball. In a caddie-less Sunday Medal with another match hard on your heels, losing a ball is not an enticing aspect of the game if you can reflect that another turn of the gang-mowers would have left you in the clear.

On the other hand the roughless golf

course is a tremendous bore. The unity of each hole is destroyed, its scale lost and the landscape emasculated. These considerations apart, we have seen before how few elements are available to the designer of courses in extracting interest from a dull piece of ground. Do away with the rough and you have only got contour, sand, water and trees left. On a flat site with no water, you are left with sand and trees. And if the trees die . . .

So keep a reasonably hairy fringe as a framework if only to preserve the

lark's nests. Beyond that do everything possible to encourage the local flora even if you do not go as far as the golfer who telephoned his local newspaper correspondent to say that while playing 18 holes he had counted 140 Ladies Tresses. (If he was counting his strokes as well, he must have been an awkward man to have in the match ahead). "Our greens are botanical deserts", said the *Manchester Guardian Weekly Country Diary*. "But the rough, the lovely rough, is full of treasures.

Do you still want to cut it all down?

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