

# Just a glimpse of the past

Patrick Smartt

The road to the village, a side road, passes between the 1st green on the left, and the teeing ground for the 2nd hole on the right.

A circumstance liable to cause delay in our progress. I have the perhaps unusual habit of stopping to allow golfers to cross the road from one to the other. Besides, the whole length of the 1st hole is visible, and the drives to the dog-legged 2nd, therefore important, can be watched.

Driving along that road in February, my rheumy old eyes looked upon a scene that was so unexpected and pleasurable, I stopped in wonder.

Every golfer had his bag slung over his shoulder. Not a trolley in sight. The years slipped back. It is part of life, that pauses in habit leave a gap in memory. Present custom takes over. We have, except in moments of nostalgia, come to accept the trolley and the absence of caddies. Come to think of it, I have never pulled a trolley. Unable to stop, there had to be a caddie to tee the ball. It was as well that it had to be called a day, before that race has nearly disappeared.

A sudden glimpse of a past world, when golfers had but few clubs in drainpipe bags, carried one farther back than actuality. An old picture had burst into life. It was some time before the mind returned to the immediate, and we drove on again.

A little piece of history revived.

Should anyone have suspicions, let it be known, that unlike the Irishman who: "T'ought I was took bad again" when he saw a hare among

the runners in a steeplechase, the cause of this delightful return to old golf was the wettest February known. Trolleys had, rightly, been banned.

Thinking on this, memory went back twenty years, and while granting those weeks of rain, I had strong doubts that in that era the course would have been so soggy.

It is a high course, topping the 700 feet contour at the home green, and a little more from where we start. It was until the early 1960s, a typical heath and heather golfing ground, though with clay not far beneath the surface. The fairways, like those at Walton Heath, and at one time the Old Course at St. Andrews, were of thin growth, meaning tight lies, and therefore skilful execution of the second shots. Worm casts were unknown. Indeed you could play two hours after a downpour.

During a wet spell, members from a course at a nearby town, would come over because theirs was too muddy.

Changes in a course's nature, not to be confused with architectural alterations, are also handmade. My opinion which doubtless will bring scorn from some greenkeepers, in particular green committees, is that 'progress', or the inverse in the art of shot-making, demands grassy lies for the second shot. No take it as it comes, even after a good drive. The ancients got on with it, even the professionals playing for their living.

Those who have done me the honour of reading my effusions before, will know what is coming. Yes. Those infernal chemicals. Years of application have produced what is unquestionably a good playing surface, but to one old reactionary it is park course golf. It takes longer to dry out, and requires more mowing. There is another cause of this surface water retention. The cutting of the heather. It is seldom recognized that heather roots act as drainage channels.

There has been no notable improvement in the scores. When there are, it could be attributed with some surety to shorn rough. It is the old question of whether the figures returned on the card take precedence over the fun of accepting a real challenge.

After that grouse, it is a pleasant surprise to record the unexpected consequence that many bag carrying players enjoyed themselves. My wife, for one, said she had never felt so relaxed. Do not ask me to explain that one. It may be significant that all had to discard some clubs, to lighten the bag. Thus, the favourite ones were chosen, and the difficult ones left out. Apart from the problem, during the round, which to choose from the caboodle of fourteen, they would play better with the clubs with which there is sympathy.

Anyone with a knowledge of golfers will be certain that the whole load will come out, when trolleys are permitted again. A lesson wasted.

There must be gratitude that, contrariwise, modern methods should evoke old golf, even briefly. I was glad: Somehow, it brought the course alive.

ation, for a limited number of 50 golf enthusiasts who wish to become Tournament Patrons of the Association.

The privileges, which will cost an annual subscription of £100, will include free entry to all tournaments; reserved parking accommodation; admission to the Clubhouse; a place as guest at the Association's Annual Dinner in London at the end of the season; and a copy of the P.G.A. Annual Tournament Guide with its facts, figures, and pen portraits of professionals who regularly play the Circuit.

The new band of P.G.A. Tournament Patrons will also receive a £26.40 season ticket for the Open Championship—the R. & A.'s top-price ticket—with reserved seating accommodation, and while they are at the Open Championship they will be able to use the P.G.A.'s own Private social marquee.

Colin Snape, Secretary of the P.G.A., in making the announcement, said: "A modest Tournament Patrons' Scheme has existed in the past, but the Association has held it in abeyance in recent years. We believe that what we are offering for £100 is extremely good value to the many golf enthusiasts who attend several of our events and the Open Championship itself during one season.

"Our aim is to give them 'V.I.P. treatment'. They will be easily identifiable on arrival at a tournament by their special badge and permanent car windscreen label. We feel it will be a popular move, and in granting membership we will work strictly on a first-come-first-served basis with those who apply.

"Our 50 Tournament Patrons will be a quite separate category from the Association's existing Vice-Presidents. Anyone who is interested should write to me here at the P.G.A. Headquarters, Kennington Oval, London S.E.11."

---

## **BIG CHANCE FOR WELL-OFF GREENKEEPERS**

### **V.I.P. TOURNAMENT PATRONS FOR £100**

Prestige facilities at all professional golf tournaments, and at the Open Championship, are announced today by the Professional Golfers' Associ-