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39th Annual

MANSHIP INSTITUTE OF GROUNDSMANSHIP  
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The Royal Windsor Racecourse, Maidenhead Road, Windsor, Berkshire.

Dates:

18th, 19th and 20th September 1984

Times:

10 am till 5 pm daily.

Entrance:

By Catalogue £1. Complimentary admission to IoG Members.

**How to get there:** (Windsor is just 22 miles west of London.)

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# This Issue

July 1984

Front cover: The new Ransomes Triplex 171 Mark 2 is designed to give a fine finish on greens - whatever the conditions. New wide grasscatchers give excellent collection and increased ground clearance at the rear of the chassis makes manoeuvring on plateau greens easier than ever before. Optional accessories are available to mow tees and green surrounds, verticut and spike - all fitted in seconds.

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**Editor:** Robin Stewart

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**Contributors:** Jim Arthur, John Campbell, Jack McMillan, Eddie Park, Donald Steel and Walter Woods

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## Out·On·The·Course

### Walter Woods

John Campbell went back to St Andrews where he witnessed the build-up to this month's Open Championship and talked at length to the man-in-charge—Walter Woods.



"Preparing for the Open Championship is a tremendous responsibility, which entails a great deal of hard work and long hours for the greenkeeping staff. You will understand what is involved, for you have had this kind of experience at St Andrews," Walter Woods, links supervisor, said as we talked together in the Links Trust office tucked in the lee of the Royal & Ancient clubhouse overlooking the impressive sweep of St Andrews Bay.

I had returned to *The Home Of Golf* and was interested to see what changes had taken place in the preparation and organisation for this great event. "I think you would find quite a difference since your last Open here in 1970," Walter added as we compared notes while all around us was a beehive of activity with huge prefabricated stands being erected to transform the 1st and 18th fairways on the Old Course into a gigantic auditorium for the big event.

Behind the weatherbeaten features and serious gaze of Walter Woods lurks a warm and friendly character who chooses his words carefully. He is extremely capable and with his wide knowledge of all aspects of golf course management he has proved himself to be fully competent to manage the most famous golf links in the world.

He is highly respected locally for his knowledge of the finer points of the game and his ability as a first-class golfer. He has also distinguished himself in many local club championships and two years ago reached the final of the Eden Tournament, which is one of Scotland's oldest amateur events.

I am probably one of the few people in greenkeeping who can understand how Walter feels on the eve of this important event as the pressure and enormous responsibilities begin to mount. "My main worry at the moment with the approach of the Open Championship is the weather, which has not been very kind to us this spring," he said. "It has been cold and dry, which is not conducive to good growth.

"Our second biggest problem is the amount of play.

*Continued on page 15...*



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# In·My·Opinion

## Fred Hawtree

WHO said golf is too cheap? Pretty well everyone at some time between 1960 and 1980. Now they should think again.

Last May, I ploughed round a new course under construction in North Carolina in a Jeep. It looked as if something over 100 acres had been stripped of topsoil. When the golf course architect had redesigned the contours to provide his favourite humps and hollows, all that soil had to be spread again and something like £350,000 would have been spent before they asked the bank to pay for the greens and tees.

There were some notable humps and hollows made at Royal Mid-Surrey in 1911 and they did not take the whole course up to build them. They were constructed to the instructions of the resident professional J.H. Taylor by the greenkeeper Peter Lees who was described in 1910 by Bernard Darwin as a 'transcendent genius among greenkeepers.' Not a bad epitaph!

There was a time when the golf course architect took each site as he found it and used every scrap of natural feature it contained to enhance his layout. His signature was not important. He modelled the ground here and there to produce the green and the golfing interest he wanted, but, basically, the local topography dictated the style. Thus, every golf course had its own character and even though trees grew taller and frills were added, you could still tell one resort course from another.

Today, each new venture tries to outdo its neighbours. (The longest, the hardest, the greatest). Unless it generates publicity, its associated activities, such as housing, hotels and holidays, do not bring in the cash necessary to pay for it. So, the golf course designers (who also feed on this publicity) tend to apply their own artificial formula, preferably with a few 18th century Scottish archaisms, which are reintroduced as novelties.

Whoever heard before of all the greens on a new course being recontoured after a year's play? It happened last year. This singular event received much attention,



**Hawtree & Son, golf course architects, are based in Woodstock, Oxford.**

meetings were held, articles written, but the saddest aspect of all was that nobody seemed to find it odd.

Worse may be yet to come. There is now talk of 'this modern trend towards a wilder natural look.' (I quote from *Golf Digest*, May 1984.) So, having spent a few millions on denaturing a site, no doubt they will now spend a few more putting it back as it was.

How natural should nature be? Perhaps the sensible approach is to leave it alone in the first place. There are plenty of environmental conservationists who will applaud.

The next most effective way to achieve a natural look is to cut the budget. The designer will then throw the artificial lakes and waterfalls out of the window, plan his greens with a

couple of wing bunkers instead of a sea of sand and generally stop tampering with the landscape in the hope of getting his baby into the Top Fifty. We shall then be able to know whether we are playing in Malaga, Bermuda or Chorlton cum Hardy without reference to the scorecard.

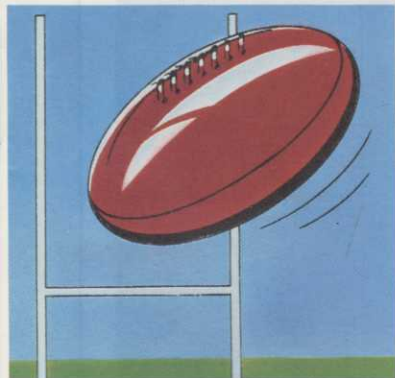
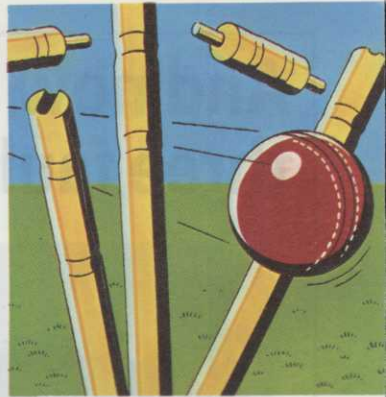
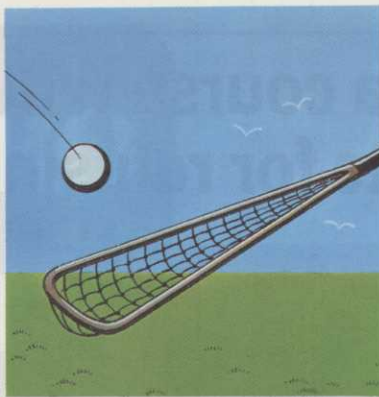
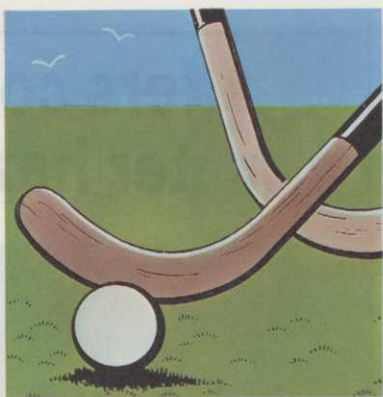
We shall even be able to concentrate on the game itself. Those who yearn for swaying palm trees can go a few degrees south in January to sharpen up their game for the bets at home in the summer. The rest of us can always muffle up and temper the east wind with thoughts of a warm clubhouse and the elixir known in Ulster as 'a hot one.'

Cutting the budget, however, has to be linked to demand. The new course has to attract golfers even in its simpler form. It will do so provided there is pressure on the existing courses in the vicinity.

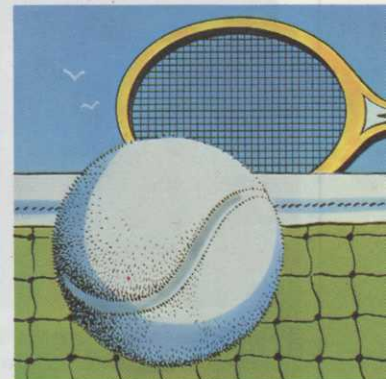
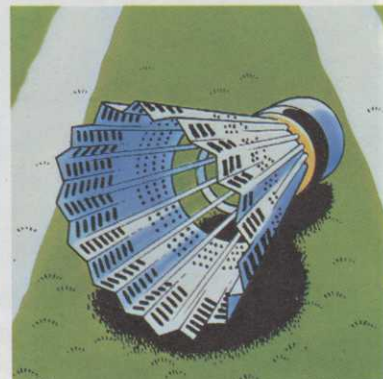
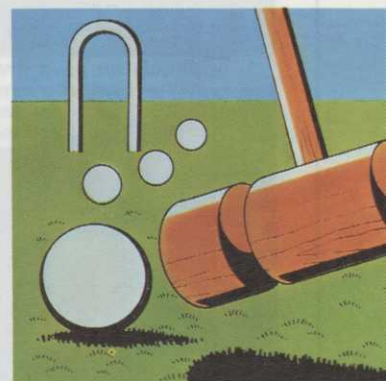
Mistakes arise more often from applying the luxury formula in areas already well served in that respect. The Sports Council, in one of its first regional surveys, affirmed that one part of its territory needed no more private courses. Only public courses were needed. It was right. Three superior ventures never really took off while four public courses, three driving ranges and even short nine-holes and par-threes are busy every day.

Golfers move up all the time through the socio-economic grades, but requirements at the top levels are soon satisfied because of the law of 'the higher, the fewer.' In the 1960s, in a short and somewhat premature boom in golf round Paris, ten new 18-hole courses followed each other in quick succession. The first one was very grand and creamed off the odd duke, bankers, big business, couturiers and film stars. It never looked back.

The rest, with one exception, blindly followed the same formula and found that there were simply not enough marquises to go round. They needed another boom 15 years later and golf on television to fill them up. The exception achieved a good compromise between price and style



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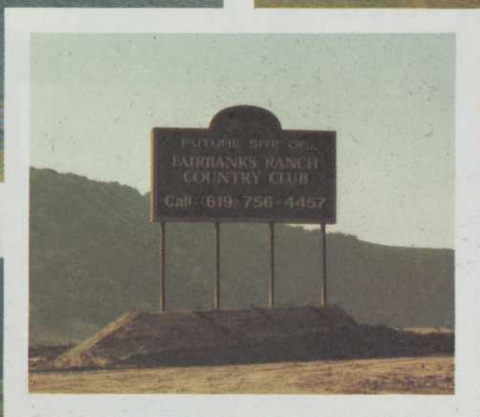
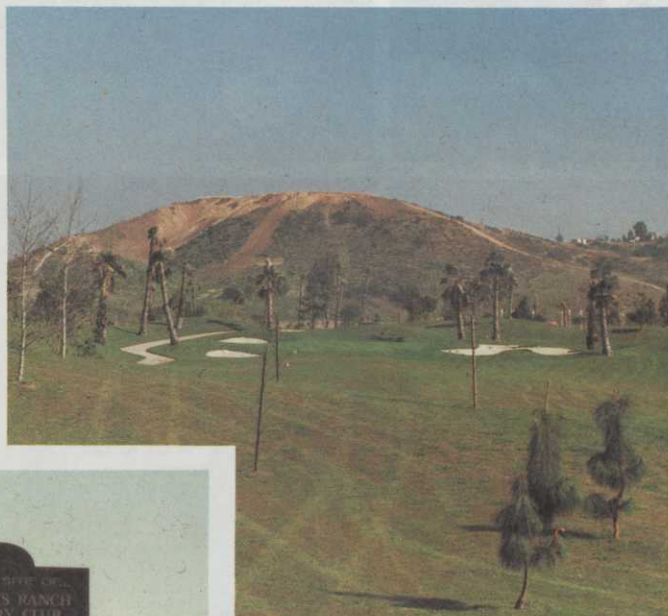
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San Diego in southern California has the ideal climate for golf. Temperatures hardly vary outside the 60° - 90°F range and there are numerous fine courses. However, as in most matters American, there is always room to go one better... Take a film star's ranch, virtually unlimited funds, add the Olympics and, in just over 12 months, you have the Fairbanks Ranch Country Club. The ranch, at Rancho Santa Fe on the outskirts of San Diego, was the property of Douglas Fairbanks Jr. An enterprising development company—Watt Industries—acquired the land and laid out plans for some palatial homes, shops and, naturally, a golf course. The site designated for the course was not, by British ideas, particularly attractive—just a valley floor covered in scrub, surrounded by hills and with a small river. Into the story entered golf course architect and construction superintendent Fred Harris, followed by the US Equestrian Olympic Committee and the Fairbanks Ranch golf course and the Olympic Equestrian cross-country course for the three-day event started to take shape in April last year.

The 34 charter members of the club each put up \$300,000 (£200,000); the construction budget for the first 18 holes was \$3,500,000. Unfortunately, a few unforeseen snags occurred and eventually the cost will be \$5,000,000, which is about £1,000,000 over budget!. This left \$5,000,000 for a clubhouse, etc, and there is no shortage of takers wishing to subscribe the \$50,000 membership entry fee. Landfill for the course was taken from the river bed and banks with 55 large earth moving machines shifting 3,000,000 cubic yards of 'dirt'. The river, which was 100 yards wide, is now nearer 500 yards across and a stone embankment has been constructed in case the river comes into full flood. Over 6,400 mature trees were planted and lakes, all with concrete edges to avoid erosion and to ease maintenance, were built. Seeding took place in autumn and the course opened for play in May. In between, the equestrian course builder moved in and up went 30 jumps around the golf course, including several through water fronting the clubhouse, all of which will be dismantled and never seen again after the Olympics. So watch out for the T.V. coverage.

Michael Coffey.

Top left: 18th green and clubhouse under construction. Below: Fred Harris points—also pictured is Jim Adams.

Top right: many holes enjoy stunning backdrops. Below: 14th fairway.

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## North West

The North West branch held a golf match at Chester Golf Club in May. It should have been against South Wales but, because of other commitments, they were unable to attend. However, the captain and committee of Chester GC stepped in and saved the day. The result of the match was a defeat for the greenkeepers by three matches to one.

Some 40 people enjoyed the day and the superb food provided by Mrs Hartell-Payne. Thanks go especially to Alistair Jack for providing a team at very short notice and to Ransomes and Cheshire Light Tractors for providing prizes.

David Royle of Ransomes had the unenviable task of deciphering the score cards—rumour has it that he blew up two calculators (must have been Japanese!).

Last, but not least, thanks to the greenstaff led by Len Sproston. His

course was in enviable condition and he broke the hearts of those of us who are struggling to get any kind of grass growing—never mind good species!

Members will be notified of future events through the North West newsletter, which is to be circulated quarterly. Meanwhile, contact me on Chester 678879 if you need any information.

A. Campbell.

## Sussex

I would like to say right away how much the Sussex lads who attended *Golf Course '84* at Cambridge enjoyed the conference. Meeting so many friends was, in itself, an innovation to us all.

The Sussex branch greenkeepers held their annual match against the golf club secretaries in May—the result was a complete beating for us all. Well done, the secretaries, but I can assure them that the result is only a temporary respite. Many thanks to Jim Coutts of Mannings Heath for such a resolute team of secretaries. Thanks also to Major Carroll and Worthing Golf Club's steward and stewardess

for an excellent meal after the match.

It was delightful to see Peter Simpson and his wife Enid, who came along to present the trophy to Jim Coutts and his team. Well done, Jim.

Thank you, Hugh MacGillivray for such a splendid course and for keeping the sun shining.

The one thing the greenkeepers did win on the day was the raffle—by our good friend Bob Moore of Seaford GC and Dormy House. Well done, Bob.

Dennis Ayling.

## Surrey

Surrey's spring meeting was held at Old Thorns Golf Club. This relatively new course proved to be an extremely hard challenge with narrow fairways and many small lakes.

The scratch prize was won with an 83 and 85 by Paul Pearce, Ken McNiven's new assistant at Effingham.

1st handicaps A.Cale (Old Thorns), 2nd handicaps D.Lucas (Old Thorns), 3rd handicaps D.Lenham (Sunningdale), 4th handicaps A.Davey (RAC), 5th handicaps G.McNiven (Effingham) and 6th handicaps D.Fernie (Effingham).

A special prize was donated by Old Thorns Golf Club for nearest the hole at the 16th. This was won by J.Covey, a greenkeeper at Old Thorns, but because the prize was an overnight stay at Old Thorns, he declined the offer and the prize was given in conjunction with the Veteran's Cup and so it went to Derek Bishton—a retired greenkeeper from Sunningdale.

Many thanks to Dave Lucas and all his greenkeepers for the splendid condition of the course. The greens held the pitch and putted true. So much for the adverse criticism of sand greens.

Thanks to the management and catering staff for keeping us well looked after in the food and drink stakes. Also, our thanks to the trade for donating the prizes for the raffle. I think everyone who played thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

## An Open Letter To All EIGGA Members

Having attended the very successful *Golf Course '84* and being a young head greenkeeper, I want to put forward some thoughts for the future of EIGGA in the hope they will act as a catalyst for sensible and reasoned discussion.

While listening to some of the comments of older greenkeepers at Cambridge, the thought that continually crossed my mind was that we, as a profession, have become blasé about the problems facing us. All too often the answer given to an idea was: 'it has been tried before and it will not work'. Surely, we should take heed of the saying: 'if at first you don't succeed, then try and try again?'

The problems facing us as a new organisation are vast, but not insurmountable—especially if we finally accept that we must become a self-financing body and not rely on others for support. There are two ways of doing this—either increase the membership or increase the subscription. Now, I can almost hear the cry: 'we can't afford it,' but if EIGGA can offer some of the benefits other bodies offer, then surely the answer would be: 'can you afford not to pay it?'

The modern greenkeeper has the world at his feet and, as SIGGA is proving, respect and financial reward can be gained, but only when we go about things in an orderly manner and present a professional image—as do the Scots.

Many lessons were learnt in Cambridge, but perhaps the biggest was that EIGGA should not be side-tracked by the wishes of others, but should forge ahead with its plans in an aggressive, but controlled, manner and prove that we are The Association to belong to.

A. Campbell

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