"A Change of Headgear"

BY FRED HAWTREE

It may have escaped your notice, locked up as you are in your ecological struggle with Nature, machines and the members; that three months have elapsed since Cardinal Joseph Malula passed on to higher things from amongst his flock in Zaire.

His chief legacy was an adaptation of the rites of the Mass to African circumstances. Certainly Pope John Paul II will not forget his 1980 visit to Kinshasa in a hurry, when twenty Zairian priests danced to the Gloria dressed in gold robes, rocking rhythmically from side to side in front of the Peoples Palace; nor the crescendo of tom-toms as they thundered across the square on the cue: "Let us pray!"

Eight more years were nevertheless needed before the Vatican gave approval to the Cardinal’s localised liturgy, and then with a firm proviso — leopard skins will not be worn!

By contrast The Holy Diocese of St. Andrews has never laid down rules appropriate to the rig of golfing or its designers. Restrictions are unnecessary, for set apart as they are from the profane world in sadness and loneliness, golf architects dress soberly, although when the American Society of Golf Course Architects adopted Dornoch’s son, Donald Ross, builder of several hundred US courses, as their patron saint they uniformed themselves in blazers from the red and black Ross tartan woven in Scotland. A hundred of these at their annual banquet can be trying on unshaded eyes, though easily distinguishing members from visitors.

In this country, after 1900, a sartorial watershed also divided early professional golfer/designers from those amateurs quietly infiltrating the brotherhood. ALL wore caps upon the links and the professionals continued to do so while architecting golf courses. But the amateurs — turned — designers changed their style to match. They donned the felt Homburg hat of commerce. There was obviously money in it.

The 1913 photograph shown of their leader, Harry S. Colt, planning St. Cloud near Paris illustrates this change. Holding a plan unfurled (photographers still require this) his tall figure dominates the group still more strongly through his heavenward extension by a Homburg of majestic proportions.

Across the Atlantic, A.W. Tillinghast, who designed most of the USA’s favourite championship courses, often penetrated the jungle wearing just the same headgear.

Two photographs in my family album confirm the Distinction. The group at an exhibition match at Sunridge Park before 1914 shows J.H. Taylor (umbrella), James Braid, Alex Herd and Harry Vardon, ALL capped. The founder of The Golf Greenkeepers Association (on Taylors right) is also capped. But in 1920 in The Open Exhibition Tent at Deal, having embraced golf course architecture, he has also embraced the Homburg hat.

The Capped ones were not deterred. They counter attacked strongly, led by four Open Champions with one Sherwood Forester at the rear. Willie Park Jnr., still on the active list, produced the first serious writing on golf architecture in ‘The Game of Golf’ (1896). Between 1900 and 1919 he built 50 courses in Britain and 5 in France. Another 40 in the USA included the Grove Park Inn Course at Asheville N.C., recently pared down because the Inn seems to be getting bigger than the golf course.

After James Braid’s first Open in 1901, he was designing as well as winning again in 1905/8/10. Henley, Northampton, Oswestry, St. Austell and West Hove belong to this period.

John Henry Taylor, five times Open Champion and six times runner-up, was not far behind with Clevedon, Eastbourne Downs, Heaton Park, Queens Park, Bournemouth & Seaford.

Harry Vardon won one U.S., and six Open titles. His earliest designs included Letchworth, Little Aston, Mendip, Sandy Lodge and Saffron Walden. He might have done much more, but his health slowed him down.

Lastly, in 1919, a circle within a 40 mile radius of Nottingham would contain only one course NOT designed by Tom Williamson, pro/greenkeeper at the Notts. Golf Club.

But the Homburgs were coming.
They too put up a team of five, cap-
tained by Harry Colt, R. & A. Rules
Committee, Cambridge Captain,
Lawyer, Sunningdale Secretary, and
finally No. 1 course architect of the
amateurs. He scored 20 layouts in his
first eight years, finally leaving Sun-
ningdale in 1913 to go solo. His
associates Dr. Alister MacKenzie, the
Leeds medical practitioner, and Hugh
Alison, Secretary of Stoke Poges
followed his lead.

J.P. Abercromby was not a profilic
designer, but was highly respected.
His new course at Addington was a
gem, stolen now by housing needs,
though the Old Course is fortunately
still there. He checked out the opposi-
tion by working with Park earlier at
Coombe Hill.

Herbert Fowler, who had designed
Walton Heath, co-operated with Aber-
cromby at Cowdray Park and West
Kent (now moved to Downe). All three
were involved in the early days of
Worpledon. Fowler started playing
golf at the late age of 35 and planned
Walton Heath because of a family con-
nection. He then completed five
British courses and one in Los Angeles
before the 1914 war.

On quantity, The Caps halved one
game and won the rest, even giving a
stroke a hole. But if we assess quality
in the results, I should say it was
honourably halved.

The flood of new courses did not
Caps well to the fore at Sundridge Park, cir-
ca 1913.

stop completely between 1914 and
1918; it slowed to a trickle. Only
MacKenzie and Alison were young
enough to join the Army. But in 1920,
both sides returned to the offensive.

The amateurs struck first. Colt &
Alison produced one book, 'Some
Essays on Golf Course Architec-
ture', and Alister MacKenzie produc-
ed another. He included in his book a
list of the 13 features essential in an
ideal golf course, this catching the
readers imagination, as simple
summings-up often do, despite what
they leave out. Historians have
mistakenly quoted from this book ever
since, but I can now reveal for the first
time that MacKenzie first outlined his
13 points not in book form, but when
lecturing to the Northern Section of
the Golf Greenkeepers Association.

Greenkeepers First — The World
Second! He obviously got his priorities
right.

In case you have forgotten what he
said up there, we shall start in the next
issue where we leave off — with those
13 points, and a few extra for good
measure. Incidentally, his book, 'Golf
Architecture', costs about $350 now,
so you might as well wait and get his
points for nothing.

FRED HAWTREE

A Homburg behatted forebear of The
Author.