

ASPECTS OF DESIGN

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THE golf course architects of the twenties enjoyed love-hate relationships. They formed little teams for mutual support but only one persisted, apparently because there were no clear-cut arrangements for responsibility. The older members unloaded all the dirty work on to their latest recruit and he, not unnaturally, wanted his share of the fun at the top.

They also tended to disparage each other's talents though never averse to purloining useful ideas and figures likely to blind an awkward green committee.

Tom Simpson, for example, in his forthright way, laid down the law precisely on the proportion of a green's putting-surface which should be made relatively flat for hole cutting. '75 per cent', he asserted roundly, as if he has worked it out over a lifetime. By coincidence, nevertheless, **Harry Colt** had suggested the same figure ten years earlier. Coincidence? Unfortunately I can feel a reminiscence coming on. Simpson and his colleagues will have to wait another month.

The tendency to plagiarise without admitting ones sources is a failing which one tries to grow out of in later years, although it is still tempting to repeat the occasional borrowed witticism as ones own without disclosing authorship. Men of science are expected to rise above these temptations. The rest of us try to cover our tracks with 'grateful acknowledgements'.

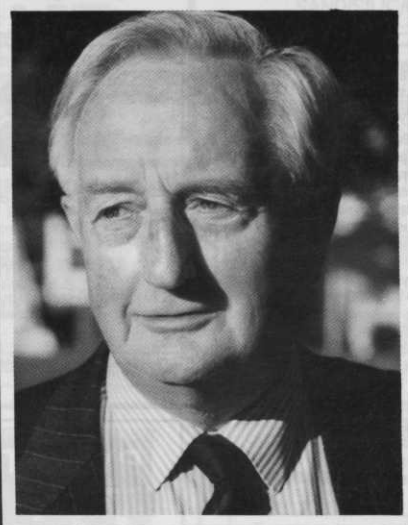
This page once re-wrote the golf architectural gospel in a book which still sells well thanks to the growth of the leisure industry, tourism, and agricultural set-aside. It has also been found useful for the growing number of recruits to golf course designing because all the old favourites are out of print.

When writing a whole book, even this dog-eared page is bound to come up with the odd original thought, simply by the law of averages, since most original thoughts consist of two earlier thoughts put together.

For example, the said treatise, when discussing the bunkering of seaside links and using the folds in the ground to create natural form, 'gather' the ball, and avoid erosion by wind, used the word 'shadow'. Modesty and common sense prevent me from describing the choice as memorable but it might at least be termed apt. The player, it was suggested, would see many links bukers not as sand but as a 'shadow' in lighter areas of fairway.

Six months went by without the golf architectural world being unduly shaken by this revelation. Then a magazine article reported Jack Nicklaus professing himself to be attracted by the idea of 'shadow bunkering'.

As a good greenkeeper, with both feet on the fairway, you will dismiss this as pure coincidence. I prefer to think that somewhere in the Nicklaus residence, if you can find your way, perhaps even in The Den itself, there is a quiet corner dedicated to the literature of golf course architecture and that among all the gems of the past, there is one particular blue-



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covered volume which is well-thumbed even if only because it stands out from the rest owing to its awkward shape.

More recently there have been two articles on building tees which made me sit up with a sense of déjà vu. However, I can only continue if what follows is treated in the strictest confidence. I rely entirely on the discretion of the staff and readers of *Greenkeeping Management*. Should there be one of these who feels that his lips might become unsealed in an unguarded moment, especially following invitations which begin with the words 'what will you have?', he should turn over the page. The sensitive material starts here.

"Still relying heavily on your confidentiality, I will now reveal that if you start designing informally shaped tees by drawing overlapping circles, you may conceivably arrive at an acceptable plan but you will also have wasted a good deal of time."

When Hawtree III read through the proofs of the chapter on tees in Jack's preferred reading, he pointed to one page and asked: "What's all this nonsense?" I explained that in order to reply fully to his courteous enquiry, I was obliged to tell him a story. He appeared depressed but it may have been concentration.

I related how ten years earlier in a booklet which briefly sketched a few basic principles of design, I had mentioned the figure of ten per cent as the maximum cross-fall desirable on a fairway at the landing area of tee shots. I am still not sure

that such a rule is desirable, since so much depends on angle of attack, adjacent contour, and other optional lines available.

But I was gratified to have this figure used (not quoted) back at me within six months by one of my senior "confrères" in the design field. So far as I knew, mine was the first effort to legislate for this matter but obviously if it could occur to me, it could have occurred to him or at least from his subconscious, fresh and glistening, like the morning dew.

"To settle the matter in future, Hawtree III", I said, with a dig in his ribs to stir him from his slumbers, "The tee section of my current opus contains a code or marker". This was a nonsense, as he rightly suspected, though endowed with a certain superficial verisimilitude designed to unmask the plagiarist. It was described as the theory of overlapping circles, a fictitious device, claimed to relate agreeable shaping of the outline of informal tees to their orientation.

Still relying heavily on your confidentiality, I will now reveal that if you start designing informally shaped tees by drawing overlapping circles, you may conceivably arrive at an acceptable plan but you will also have wasted a good deal of time which would have been better spent listening for the mating call of the Leather-jacket. You could have got there hours ago by using your own native instinct or by using interlocking squares, triangles or even, if I may use the term in such distinguished company, rhomboids.

Having set the trap, I sat back and waited for a year or more until I heard the jaws snap smartly. Between them I found no less a quarry than the Bulletin of the Sports Turf Research Institute. An excellent article on teeing grounds gave a lot of good advice, much of which I seemed to recognise. But it also contained one reference which I could identify positively. It mentioned the theory of overlapping circles.

There may be a rule which permits the scientific fraternity to avoid disclosure of its sources in articles of a popular nature, which I suppose is how those in the bulletin are regarded. At the same time, their articles in the annual journal are copiously referenced. It is indeed sensible to quote the authorities consulted on the points you raise in case you get attacked on any one of them.

I reset the trap and waited patiently. The next quarry was less weighty but struggled longer. He not only explained the theory of overlapping circles, he actually produced the diagrams to prove it — flattery indeed. His article appeared in one of our very own favourite greenkeeping publications but as a reciprocal gesture, I shall not reveal its name.

There is heavy snoring in the armchair but he might as well sleep on now because the tale is told. Only the moral remains to be deduced and I am sure I can safely leave that to you. I have enough other worries already. If the theory of overlapping circles invades the main-stream of classical design like a computer virus, the circles may become ever-diminishing until they disappear altogether. But how?

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