

Building Beauty Into The Bunkers



Fred W. Sherwood

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Bridge designed and built by Fred W. Sherwood

THE formation, improvement and general upkeep methods at an up-to-date golf course these days is no small matter, affording as it does keen delight and substantial satisfaction to members and visitors alike who frequent our golf clubs and courses. In the old days when golf courses were artificially made with their inartistic flat greens, possibly some of them down in a hole modeled after a basin, bunkers that were unsightly holes in the ground, varied sometimes by a ridge that stretched across the fairway, which stood out as stately as the Great Wall of China, natural beauty on golf courses was certainly conspicuous by its absence. Just such a one was the Lytham and St. Anne's Golf Course where the British Open was played in 1926, and which ended so gloriously for Bobby Jones.

Seeking Natural Beauty in Building Bunkers

This club, which is situated on the West coast of Lancashire, England, rightly or wrongly claims to be the



A natural appearing artificial trap designed by Fred W. Sherwood.
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pioneer of natural bunker making. When I took charge of the course in 1908, discussions were started as to how to make the course more attractive. What we did when we wanted to make a natural and attractive bunker, we (the Secretary and I) would take a walk into the many sand dunes that abound around this coast, take a mental view, noting the artistic slopes, the gentle undulating wind swept hollows. With this in our minds' eye we remodeled all the bunkers on the course. We kept before us all the time that whilst doing their duties as bunkers they should have a natural beauty and inviting attractiveness so that one felt it a pleasure sometimes to get into them. These bunkers were always made of sand and we varied them in height according to the topography of the ground. A large bunker, say from 90 to 120 feet long at its highest point would be around 16 to 18 feet high and the piled-up sand would vary in width from 18 to 30 feet. We would leave it then for a few days or a week, and the wind and rains would put on the natural wildness before we planted it with a sea side grass, that was commonly called Star Grass. This grew like rushes to about 2 feet high. We would plant it alternately 2 feet apart and this would keep the sand from blowing away. The back side of the trap we would turf and in course of time the front would likewise become grass from its own seeding excepting of course those parts which we wanted to retain as sand hazards.

What a Greenkeeper Should Study

We also turned our attention to making the course in general attractive. We sowed wild thyme on some of our fairways (the hilly ones) and what a gorgeous

mass of bloom we had around August, clumps of broom (Cistus) in many varieties were planted to hide unsightly places. Golden willows and other shrubs suitable to the conditions were set out, making the course a thing of beauty.

Building a golf course is a work of art and the man who prepares himself for this class of work should be a student not only of nature, but of horticulture, agriculture, landscape gardening and botany. The golf architect and likewise the greenkeeper should be up-to-date if success is going to be assured, for fashions in golf courses like fashions in wearing apparel change very quickly, though I must say in the main it is only the perfecting influence of time that can perfect the fairways.

Greenkeepers Should Play Golf

I would strongly urge all greenkeepers, who can find time, to play golf. It stimulates interest, the men get a more thorough insight into duties that are expected of them and it also gets them to look at things from a player's point of view, which is just what we want them to do. I have in mind getting up a competition for the men on one course where I was employed. The committee when I mentioned it to them donated some good prizes to be competed for.

Interest amongst the men was soon aroused. They begged, bought or borrowed golf sticks from somewhere and practiced diligently early and late. As we played medal from handicaps of the three best scores turned in during their practicing period, each just about knew what the other fellow could do. There were some astonishing low scores and one of them today rates in the first ten in England.

Guarding Against Suffragettes

Another incident of those days which may be of interest to readers was that the British Ladies Open Golf Championship was to be played over the Lytham and St. Anne's course in anniversary of its 21st meeting. We commenced weeks before to have everything in readiness for such an important meeting. Imagine the committee's feelings, likewise my own, when it was hinted that the Suffragettes, who at that time were doing wanton damage to golf courses, and other foolish stunts to have their rights recognized, were likely to pay us a visit. For six weeks I had the greens guarded by night as well as day, and I want to say I was never so thankful in all my life when I saw the last putt holed out and the championship brought to a successful conclusion.

(Continued on page 38)

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California Club Joins for Greenkeeper

THE Los Angeles Country Club is one of several which have enclosed their own checks in payment of Charter membership dues, and offers further support by encouraging their greenkeeper, Mr. Cavanaugh, to write a story for our magazine. This club was active in taking steps to organize a Southern California Greenkeepers' Association, and we have heard from them several times. Mr. Quigley, Assistant Secretary, goes on record with the following letter:

The National Association of Greenkeepers of America
407 Caxton Building
Cleveland, Ohio
Gentlemen:

Enclosed herewith you will find application for membership of Mr. Charles M. Cavanaugh, our Superintendent of Grounds, together with our check for \$5.00 in payment of current dues and a subscription to the National Greenkeeper. Please see that the magazine is addressed to Mr. Cavanaugh personally. We have told him about your desire to have him write an article for your journal and hope that he will have time to comply with your request.

Yours very truly,
G. J. Quigley
Assistant Secretary.

March 8, 1927

Los Angeles Country Club,
Beverly Hills, California.

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A B C of Turf Culture

(Concluded from page 36)

On most fairways the best way to insure sufficient organic matter is to encourage growth of a dense heavy turf. This is accomplished by providing adequate drainage, sufficient plant food and in some instances water should be provided during periods of dry weather.

Light sandy soils present a real problem and may require top-dressing with a heavier soil containing an abundance of humus. This not only adds humus but the finer soil particles as well.

New fairways often require organic matter, especially if the soil is a heavy clay or sand. Manure is often used to good advantage when it can be obtained at a reasonable price. Green manure crops plowed under some time before seeding add considerable organic matter. One of the legumes—clover, corn, peas, soy-beans, etc.—should be used. They not only supply organic matter but nitrogen as well, which is gathered from the air. The seed should be inoculated before seeding to insure the presence of the bacteria which gather the nitrogen. Good cultures are easily obtained. Since legumes usually respond to phosphate fertilizers it is generally well to apply 250 to 300 pounds of acid phosphate. If a combination seeder and fertilizer drill is used it can be applied simultaneous with the seeding. The phosphate serves later to stimulate root development of the young grass seedling.

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(Continued from page 28)

Improve Yourself as a Greenkeeper

Getting back to what I previously stated, the greenkeeper ought to have a fair knowledge of botany; this is essential if he takes an interest in his work for plant life with its scope for study will prove beneficial and interesting. The different kinds of grasses should be studied and carefully noted, on what ground they thrive best and under what conditions. The more knowledge we greenkeepers gain the more we want to know, and to my mind a golf course is unlimited in its possibilities of study.



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