

## CHAPTER II

### THE COURSE THROUGH THE GREEN

Seaside Links—Heath Courses—Woodland Courses—Grass Lands—Arable Fields—Sowing Arable Land—The Rough or Outsides.

#### Seaside Links

Most seaside links are like Topsy inasmuch as they simply "grewed," and were not constructed in the ordinary sense of the term.

As a general rule, the turf was there, and all that had to be done was to lay out the Course, and in most cases the line of least resistance was taken, which usually followed the little valleys which ran through the dunes. The greens were worked up out of the rough, the tees levelled, and possibly a few bunkers dug, but these with few exceptions were amply provided by nature.

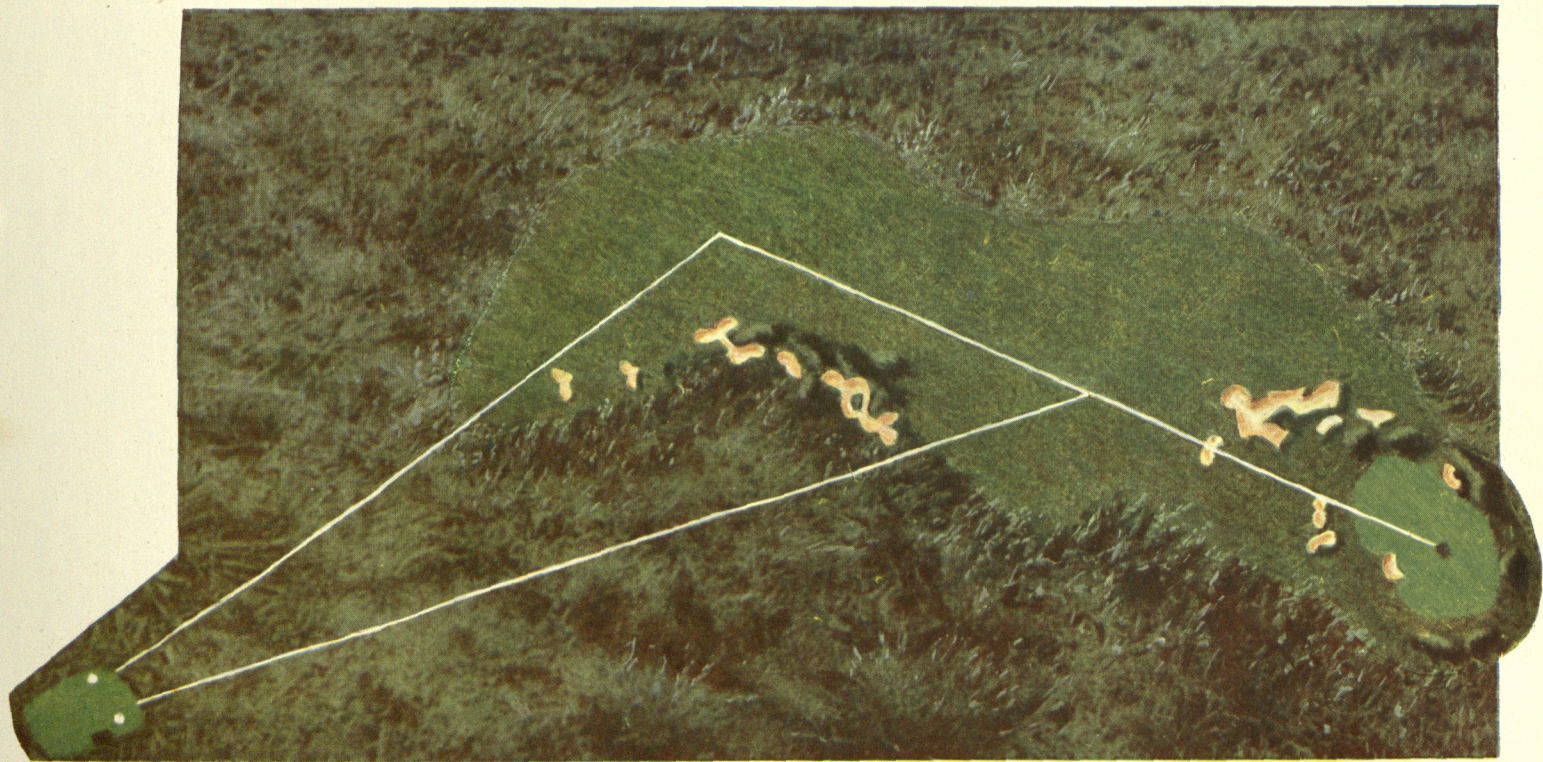
It is but seldom that a new sea course (links) is made, most of the available positions are already occupied by a Club of sorts, so the problem provided is more akin to evolution or reconstruction than construction.

When dealing with seaside links, it must be remembered that although very beautiful turf is found growing on practically barren sand, it has taken generations to form, and that it cannot be produced artificially, nor does it readily lend itself to transplanting, unless the raw sand is worked up into such a generous state as to give the turf or seed a chance to get established and self-protective before it can be damaged by the weather.

The two great bogies to defeat when dealing with sand are wind, which may blow the seed into the next parish before it has a chance to germinate, and drought, which may dry out and kill newly laid turf or young grass before they can root and get established. It is obvious, therefore, that the preparation of the raw sand must be done with care and consideration if anything approaching satisfactory results are to be obtained.

The only way to improve the mechanical and chemical condition of raw sand, and to stop blowing before the turf





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is strong enough to resist the wind and drought, is by adding lime, when necessary, in the form of Pulverised Chalk (Carbonate of Lime), soil ranging from light to medium loams, peat moss or well-rotted stable manures, and artificials.

I well remember a case on the east coast of Scotland where I was told it was equally impossible to get results from seed because it would be blown away, or turf because it would be dried out, and when I got good results from both I was then told that anyone could do the same if they used soil and fertilisers. Exactly, anyone can, provided that they treat the soil generously and do not expect something for nothing.

## Heaths

Some of the best and most beautiful inland courses have been won out of rough heaths, such as Sunningdale and Walton Heath, to name only two.

The soil at Sunningdale was notoriously poor, and had an iron stone pan, whilst at Walton Heath it was exceptionally good, and carried a strong growth of heather, gorse and bracken.

The accepted method of breaking the pan is by the use of subsoil ploughs, and the gorse, bracken and heather should be cut, and the ground broken up by steam tackle, and allowed to lie fallow for as long as conveniently possible.

The soil, if of a sandy or gravelly nature, is almost sure to be deficient in lime, and as poor as the proverbial church mouse, consequently it is clearly indicated that an ample provision should be made in the budget for chalk, manure and fertilisers.

## Woodlands

One has only to mention Worplesdon, St. George's Hill and Addington to realise what can be done with land that is apparently absolutely worthless, excepting for game coverts. If it only carries pines and silver birch it is generally safe to assume that the soil is of a light nature, whilst a mixed wood indicates soil of a more holding nature. The usual practice of clearing woods is to tear the trees out bodily with steam tackle; the small ones come out easily without preparation, but it is necessary to dig a trench round the



large ones, and cut the roots before any attempt is made to pull them out.

When trees are pulled out in this way it usually detracts from their value, so merchants usually prefer to buy them standing and fell them in the ordinary way.

If there is a market for the timber, this is sometimes the best way of dealing with them, leaving the stumps to be dealt with later.

The soil should be broken up with steam tackle if it is at all holding and full of roots, or in the case of light soils hand trenched, the latter method being employed in the construction of St. George's Hill.

Occasionally patches of water-worn pebbles are encountered, these should either be screened out or covered with soil, as stone in a fairway gives a course a very bad reputation for obvious reasons.

The soil should be treated with lime and fertilisers, according to its requirements, and if it varies to any material extent, each class should be regarded as a separate problem.

### **Grass Lands**

This section covers a very wide range, downs, commons, heaths, moorlands, hayfields—in fact, everything ranging from the best to the worst.

They are naturally the easiest to make, because the turf is already there, and all that need be done is to fashion the greens, bunkers and folds in the ground, where necessary. Sometimes a very fine course can be made on what appears to be in the first instance an impossible site covered with rough, neglected turf. As a matter of fact, in most cases, the roughest neglected turf works up best in the end, and it only requires a trained eye to be able to determine definitely what may be expected from the existing turf. As Committees are sometimes put off by the rough nature of the turf of an otherwise desirable site, perhaps I may be forgiven for quoting a letter written in 1908 by Dr. A. Mackenzie, who at the time was Hon. Secretary of the Alwoodly Golf Club, Leeds. It reads: "Dear Sir,—In February of last year you kindly inspected the Alwoodly Golf Course. Some of the members had become somewhat pessimistic in regard to the nature of the turf, they stated among other things that it would not make a Golf Course in twenty years, and that even if it did it would have to



be ploughed up and sown. In your report you stated that the turf, which was at the time in an extremely rough state owing to years of neglect, was composed of very fine grasses, and would improve out of all recognition after being cut and rolled a few times, and that it would not be long before the Alwoodly Golf Course occupied a very important place among the heath land courses of Great Britain. Your opinion did much to secure the success of the Club, and your sanguine expectations have already been more than justified."

The making of a course in grass lands is very simple. All that need be done is to scythe the course through the green, then harrow it with a "Parmiter" Grass Harrow, mow as short as possible, correct any faults in the surface and roll. If the turf is at all thin, it should be tested for lime and fertility generally, and treated in accordance with its requirements.

All hedges should be removed, and any trees that get in the way of play or the proper upkeep of the greens. Hedges and trees are not legitimate hazards in golf excepting for turning a dog-leg hole, where trees do come in useful, but they are an abomination if the branches spread within 20 yards of a green.

### Arable Fields

Here again we get a terrific variation from light sands to the heaviest clays, but as the sites are open they give the Golf Architect great scope for the reason that he can let himself go in regard to the construction of the greens and bunkers because there is nothing to break up or impede him in any way.

When the course is laid out, all the hedges and undesirable trees should be removed, the greens, tees, bunkers made, and the ground limed and fertilised as may be necessary, cleaned as much as possible, and generally prepared for the seed. If the ground is taken over at the Michaelmas quarter as is usual, the work should be ordered in such a way as to get the whole course ready for sowing by the following August. From my experience, although I have had wonderful successes from Spring sowing, I always advise Committees, particularly in the case of very light soils, not to sow in the Spring; the weather is too fickle and the chance of failure too great.

If the soil is very light and poor it will require careful



fertilisation, or if heavy, it is an excellent thing to spread as much coarse cinder, crushed clinker or breeze as can be obtained, graded to pass through a one-inch mesh sieve, and work it into the surface soil by means of a " Hedgehog " Harrow.

The greens will also require special treatment, and in some cases that terrible boggy drainage will take a very prominent position in the budget.

If the ground is flat and uninteresting, a lot can be done by making " 'umps and 'ollows," but this requires very careful handling, otherwise the result may not be at all pleasing ; in fact, quite the reverse—it may be absolutely ridiculous. It is for work such as this that the experienced Golf Architect is essential.

### Sowing Arable Land

Until I proved that it was possible to produce a Golf Course on ploughed land in a year or less from the date of sowing the seed, it was generally believed that it was quite impossible to produce a close, dense turf in less than three years, and some " optimists " put it at twenty. This was, of course, entirely wrong, and one only had to do a little thinking and carry out a few experiments to prove it.

Turf is nothing more or less than a matted mass of grass plants, and if it is separated it will be found that a coarse turf is composed of fairly large plants, and fine turf a multitude of very small plants.

Some argue that each plant should be given sufficient room in which to grow to maturity, but this only proves that they argue without knowledge, because it is very difficult to form a turf by spacing out the plants, and when it is done the turf must be coarse and tufty because each plant has reached maturity.

Others argue that if the seed is sown thickly the plants will smother one another ; of course they will to an extent, and in so doing are only obeying one of the wisest laws of nature, which demands that all life which is produced in abundance shall die in abundance, and so debar any one species from dominating the earth.

It does not, however, affect my argument, because I demonstrated at the R.A.C. Course, at Blackwell, and again at Addington, that heavy sowing not only produced a thick turf quickly, but it was finer and cleaner than that produced from thinner sowings.



There is just one more point, and that is the longer the surface of the ground is exposed to the air, the greater will be the chance of weeds gaining entry.

For sowing through the green the seed should be sown at the minimum rate of eight bushels or 200 lb. per acre.

This I regard as the standard rate, and given normal seasons should produce a close, dense turf fit for play within a year or less from the date it is sown.

When quicker, better and more certain results are required the seed should be sown at the rate of 12 bushels (300 lb.) or 16 bushels (400 lb.) per acre.

These heavy sowings may seem to be extravagant and unnecessary, but are they? The capital invested in a first-class Golf Course amounts to thousands of pounds, and the cost of upkeep is no small item. It follows, therefore, that so long as the course is out of play there is a loss of interest on capital, upkeep, loss of subscriptions, etc., which combined will often amount to a larger sum than the extra cost of the seed, and it has for some time past been recognised by the leading authorities on Golf Course Construction that double sowing pays.

### **The Rough or Outsides**

One of the commonest mistakes made when sowing a Golf Course is to sow the outsides or rough with permanent pasture or other cheap seeds.

It is true that an initial saving can be made in this way, but those who have adopted this expedient have lived to regret it, and regret it bitterly.

Fast-growing grasses of this sort do not form a hazard, they are simply a nuisance, picture a hayfield to catch every pulled and sliced shot. If they are used the Club is faced with two alternatives; one being to keep on mowing at a heavy cost, and the other to let the grass grow long and the players lose balls to their great annoyance.

I always recommend that the rough be sown with exactly the same mixture of seeds as used on the course proper, at the rate of four bushels per acre.

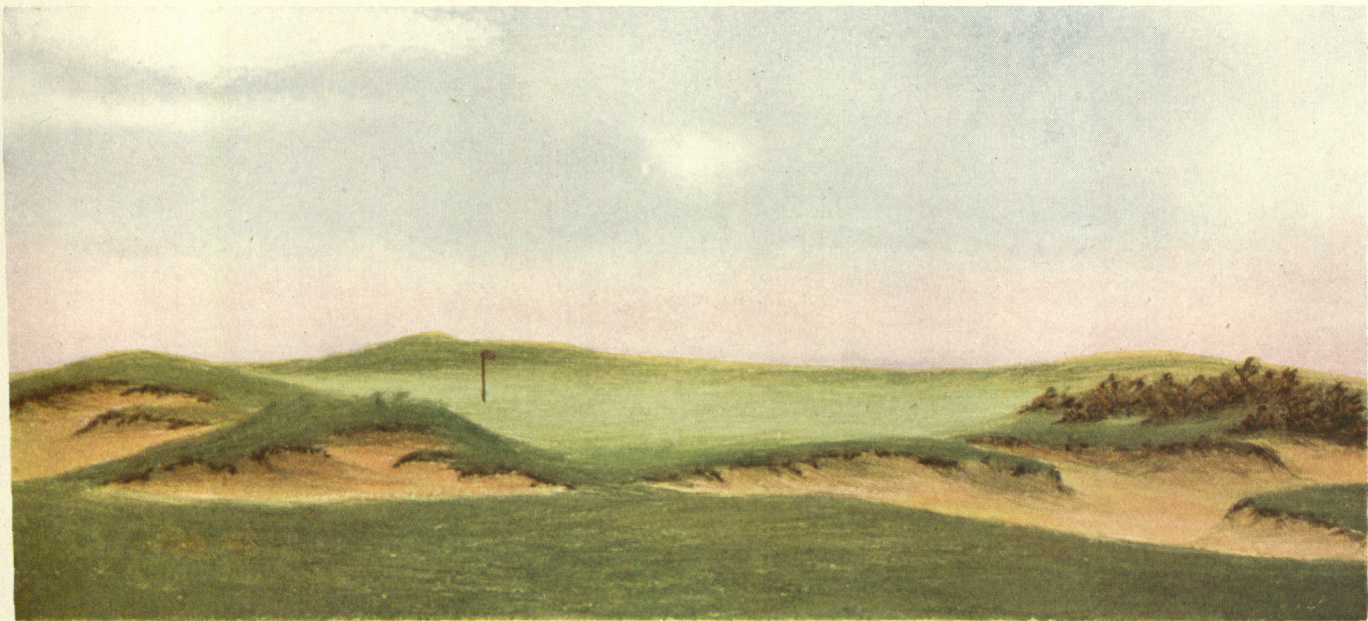
In this way a real rough and hazard is formed of slow-growing grasses, which only require to be cut half short by a reaping machine two or three times a year. Apart from this, should the lay-out of the course be altered at any time the rough, with a little treatment, can be conditioned and brought into play.



It is surprising what a little thought is given to the rough; any old thing will do, when with a little trouble and expense the whole appearance of the flattest, dullest, and most dreary course in the world can be given quite a wild moorland appearance by planting clumps of gorse and broom.

If the planting is done well out of the line of play of the most erratic players, it cannot interfere in any way with the enjoyment of the game, other than to increase it.





AN INTERESTING PLATEAU GREEN DESIGNED BY T. SIMPSON