

Tee Shots

Many of the older courses laid out on common land have had a hard struggle over the past twenty years and longer.

Even before the war the Royal North Devon Golf Club, England's first links, had lost some of its prestige because the condition in which its fairways could be presented fell short of advancing standards.

Golf Clubs on Tooting Bec Common and Clapham Common in London fell out of favour through encroachments by public use and the disturbance compared with private courses. Blackheath, the very first English golf course, quietly exchanged its five holes on the Heath for eighteen in nearby parkland at Eltham. Wimbledon and Mitcham Common golf courses still survive as does Bitwell Common near Nottingham, or Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham. It seems that if there is plenty of space, golfers and public can co-exist. Ashdown Forest is probably the safest example.

But Minchinhampton on a large common is about to make its own private 18 holes elsewhere. The course is laid out round the most popular gathering point for cars at weekends where five roads meet and cattle have precedence.

The Southcliffe golf club at Lincoln is another club actively seeking a place of their own. The local council is beginning to think other sports should have preference over the golfer.

Fortunately they organise things better in Scotland. Apart from the occasional feudal servitude like the provision of sea-shells the Old Course at St. Andrews still looks like carrying on.

The Editor.



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