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THE BRITISH GOLF

GREENKEEPER

HON. EDITOR: F. W. HAWTREE.



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he ought, not as much as he can.*

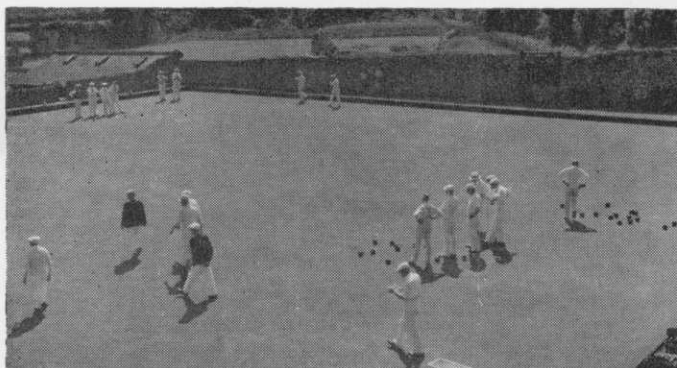
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TEE SHOTS



by the Editor

Help the Greenkeeper!

One of the big firms in horticultural sundries has started a "Help the gardener" scheme which might be worth a trial by some of those supplying equipment to golf courses.

There is an astounding range of spades and forks for example in any comprehensive gardening catalogue and one of them is presumably best for one job and one person. By paying a deposit, a customer can have his choice delivered and try it out under practical conditions.

When it comes to the bigger machines used on golf courses, most firms will arrange a demonstration on the site, and this is a wise precaution whatever is in view. Often the choice will be narrowed down to a firm with which the greenkeeper has dealt for many years. There is much to be said for quick personal service in spares and repairs and old established firms have built up a reputation for reliability which inspires confidence whatever the machine. But who would like to say which is the best of the thirty odd rotary mowers which befuddle the market? And what greenkeeper has time to arrange even a dozen demonstrations? The answer should be a week's trial use after he has narrowed down his choice to the machines that he thinks will give him best service and results. A good machine will sell itself once the experienced handler has made it do the job he wants.

* * *

We have now added another form of transport round a golf course to our collection.

Royal Birkdale's Head Greenkeeper, D. Pate, drove us round in the rain the other day in the armoured car which was bought for the Open Championship last year. This choice had nothing to do with the character of the event but was determined by an attractive price and the fact that it would go anywhere. To judge from the ascents which it took in its stride, it would even go into orbit very willingly.

Other favourites in our collection are:—Bentley—the most comfortable; helicopter—the most noisy; and mule—the most frustrating, especially on dog-legs. Although we have waited patiently by several 'buggies', we have never yet been offered a lift. Meanwhile, our usual and possibly best vehicle is still Shanks' pony.

NOT only were many of those who went to Woodhall tempted to describe it as the best inland course in the country but the Championship itself—in the odd way these things do happen—suddenly convinced a number of the most experienced pundits that a new era had started in Amateur golf, and become incontrovertibly proved in that event.

Analysis of the actual scoring would be a bore, and prove nothing, either: so much depending on the wind, the day and the state of the course (infernally difficult!). Analysis of why so many of us—from younger players to older players, right up to the senior golf writer present—felt this suddenly strong impression of a new standard, is not too easy either. But what seems to have happened is that there is now a much wider field of amateurs, all able to score well under competitive championship conditions; and most of them are young. Of the 43 qualifiers for the last two rounds, all on 153 (76, 77) or better, over half were under 25, less than 10 over 30. This is a change, and a radical one; for in championship qualifying rounds over a course like Woodhall in its hard conditions, wisdom, ability to keep one's head, and sheer experience of how and why to cope, must count for a lot. These young players had not suddenly and magically acquired these qualities, natural to their elders. Not at all; they succeeded simply because they have learnt to swing well, hit the ball hard, and rested on the confidence that comes from that: they could rely on their swings to take them through.

Basic Method

The elder watchers noted that where ten or fifteen years ago one would have seen a great number of unformed or untidy swings all over the field, nearly all these young men have comparatively simple, sound methods. Perhaps—and it could be an important trend if it is true—it is the first definite result of the work of the Golf Foundation, in encouraging both the game and the proper learning of it amongst the young; added to, most likely, both by the coaching schemes subsidised by the four national unions, and by the general climate of

LINCOLNSHIRE GREEN

John Stobbs played in the Amateur Stroke Play Championship and reports his impressions from Woodhall Spa.

attention to method engendered in the attitude of—and through the controversies about—the Walker Cup selectors.

However it is, there can be little doubt but that it is true; and that young players of ordinary county standard now score and compete with consistency and dash of a far higher order than their predecessors were capable of. There are far more people now in the field capable of still being in the picture after the first three rounds; and in fact in the first 30 in the results, from the 290 of Slater and Shepperson down only to the 304 scored by Joe Carr, and stopping there, the only players definitely over 40 were Slater, Carr and Pierce; and over 30 Thirlwell, Burgess, Davidson and Huddy. Nearly all the rest were youngsters nearer 20 than 25.

It suddenly thus becomes possible to prognosticate with some certainty that within another five years—if the trend continues, and there is no reason why it should not—there will not only be a positive flood of good players still under 30, but many more come up by then to join them. Competition in amateur golf will be much more on the American pattern of acknowledged free-for-all; and favourites vastly more difficult to

foresee—as, indeed will rapidly become national and Walker Cup teams. Although this certainly means the eclipse of the middle-aged county player (and none of us likes being swept into backwaters, by however admirable a tide) it will undoubtedly do British golf a vast amount of good.

Scottish Verdict

The second theme is the course itself. If Woodhall isn't the best inland course in Britain, it's not easy to name one decisively better; which may amount to much the same thing. When you find Scots talking of it in the same breath with Gleneagles and Rosemount, Yorkshiremen with Ganton, Sussex men with Pulborough, Surrey men with Walton Heath and Sunningdale, and Hertfordshire men with Berkhamsted, some special quality of merit is at least deducible!

So let enthusiasm rip! May I admit that I took 83 in the first round, then in the second a score I just refuse to reveal: and still came away admiring it immensely and longing to play it again. You can say more: that it is the sort of golf course you could settle down to play on for the rest of your life, and never want to live anywhere else.

It is so nothing of an odd phenomenon. The country of Lincolnshire all around is flat and fen-like, a continuation of the Wash country. But set suddenly in it at Woodhall is this ridge of sandy country with heath, heather and pines. Golf was played there for some time before the local Lord of the Manor, Colonel G. V. Hotchkin, took a hand in it, redesigned

the layouts and ended with the present course.

The first 11 holes proceed in a loop of 5, then a long run out to the turn, and a tack back, through wonderful open, slightly undulating, heath. The fairways are narrowish, and bordered by heather of a peculiarly tough and clinging consistency, though it is nowhere left long enough to make a ball disappear.

But the wonderful character this somehow gives the course, with the holes laid out as they are, is hugely added to by the cavernous sand bunkers everywhere. There is nothing magic about bunkers; in fact many nowadays are just a bore; but none of them are a bore at Woodhall. Never have bunkers fitted so absolutely naturally into an inland course. Understandably, because the bunkers are there anyway; all you have to do is to excavate them and keep them open—a little job performed adequately enough by the constant spade-work of niblicks.

Three Blind Shots

There is something indefinably right about the way they are placed, too. They give the impression of growing out of the terrain, as it were; and perhaps the best thing about them is that though their penalty is real if you do get in (often to take three strokes before seeing the fairway again, since they are often deeper than your hat) there is absolutely no need to go into any of them at all. Their function is mainly to terrify the eye; and to nearly every green a straight, firm shot, pitching pin high, is absolutely and utterly safe from them.

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The last 7 holes are able to ease up a bit with the sand hazard; for from the 12th drive onwards into the trees we go on the lower level of the heath; and from then to the end belts of birch make a continual threat along every hole. There's one hole, though, where the sand comes back in a tight battalion before and around the green: the drive and short-pitch 15th. There I took a lovely 7, 5 of it struck out of sand: and this is quite, quite easy to do.

One Bad One?

There is perhaps one bad hole, the 16th: rather an undistinguished drive and pitch to a flat green surrounded by trees, and half hidden by a cross ridge 30 yards short. In winter conditions this may be a fine hole; but it somehow lacks the character of the others; and is vastly overshadowed by 15 and 17, both challenging drive-and-short-pitches. It's a contrast to them, yes; but not a very good one.

You can sit back and try to analyse the particular charm and challenge of Woodhall, and never quite arrive at a certainty. Perhaps that itself is part of it—as with the theme of a woman with a bit of irreducible mystery about her, no matter how many years you know her. But in Woodhall's case I think part of the answer may be that the essential of playing it well is to direct the drive to the tactical side—usually the bolder, too—of every fairway; then be able to play firmly at the pin: and then do so! Your mind, in fact, must weather the hazards before the ball is struck; and that, perhaps, is part of the best of golf.



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All this, I think, makes good golf. But *splendid* golf, as Woodhall provides, is essentially indefinable and subjective. Either it is there for you, or it is not.

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AUGUST

13th, 14th and 15th B.G.G.A., A.G.M. and Annual Tournament, Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club.

30th Southern Section, Autumn Tournament, Sunningdale Golf Club.

SEPTEMBER

25th East Midland Section, Autumn Tournament, Willesley Park Golf Club, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire.

26th Welsh Section, Cardiff Cup, Glamorganshire Golf Club.

27th North West Section, Autumn Tournament, Bolton Golf Club, Lostock Park.

OCTOBER

18th Northern Section, Autumn Tournament, Headingley Golf Club.

NOVEMBER

28th Midland Section visit to Messrs. Massey Ferguson.

GOLF CAPTAINS AND GREENKEEPERS AT ROMFORD

Once again the Essex Golf Captains were hosts to a team from the Southern Section at the Romford Golf Club on Thursday, 12th July.

After an enjoyable lunch, the two teams played 18 holes on a course which was in perfect condition, thanks to W. Moore and his staff.

Both teams, for the second year running, scored the same number of points. The Greenkeepers results were as follows :—

Ford and Craig, 45 pts.

W. Moore and Ness, 39 pts.

Glass and Noakes, 37 pts.

P. Moore and Staines, 32 pts.

Whitehead and Dennis, 41 pts.

James and Hall, 38 pts.

Foulkes and Stobbs, 36 pts.

After tea prizes were presented and Mr. Glass thanked the Captains for a most enjoyable day.

STAFF PENSIONS

Mr. Sidney Norgate, "Enderleigh", Brant Avenue, Illingworth, Halifax, Yorkshire, will always be interested in helping clubs and Greenkeepers starting a staff endowment insurance scheme. Pilot scheme was started by the Northern Section some years back and is worth bearing in mind.

ROYAL SHOW

At the Sudbury Soil Test Kit Stand at the Royal Show, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, from 3rd to 6th July, over 650 individual Soil Tests were made for visitors to the Show.

THE DOWIE

We apologise to the memory of Mr. Muir Dowie. The hole named after him at Hoylake is No. 7, not No. 10 as a caption in our July issue wrongly stated.

JIG-SAW IN GERMANY by F. W. Hawtree

THE new layout of 18 holes for the Düsseldorf Golf Club was planned in April and work has started on the practice ground. The rest of the course will be made after the harvest this month.

The site is seven miles to the east of the city and was selected from three alternatives. Its intrinsic advantages made it a natural choice, although farthest from the centre. Distance can be an advantage in these days of expanding suburbs and the tranquil rural atmosphere will more than repay a few extra minutes in the car. The soil is lighter, the landscape—with only a few distant houses in sight—ininitely more attractive than either of the alternatives, and from my point of view the planning presented an exciting challenge. All the elements were there—strong undulations, hills, valleys, streams, part wooded, part plain—the problem was to find the pattern of 18 holes which would dovetail into this picture to give the length required without steep climbs or blind approach shots and, above all, which would reproduce in play the tremendous variety and interest of the ground.

Well Hidden

I thought of Willie Dunn who was frequently consulted about sites for golf courses in the late 19th century and is reputed to have said of each one, "God obviously intended this to be a golf course"! The same intention could be assumed at Ratingen but it was carefully concealed. It therefore provides an excuse to try and answer a question which Mr. Rod Davies asked me in Birmingham two years ago and which has worried me on and off ever since. He asked what mental processes are involved in planning a new golf course and it was difficult to give a satisfactory answer because they all occur at once.

In the first place one gets under the skin of the site to feel what sort of a course it will give and what sort of layout is going to take the player round it in a natural, orderly fashion. There will be surprises on the way by all means but the land itself must produce the arrangement of holes not the layout be forced

unsympathetically on to the land. Where atmosphere or contour vary noticeably, the agreeable areas must not all be fired off in the first few holes. There is a strong and a weak way round each site (sometimes, too, there is an expensive and a cheap way—another factor to be borne in mind). How many courses are there where the 17th and 18th tail away after strong climaxes earlier on; how many where the 19th seems a long way up in the air as you stand on the 18th tee; how many where a frivolous hole exaggerates an anticlimax instead of providing a break in tension which emphasises other holes before and after it.

Compromise

These faults are often due to defects in the club-house position but when the choice is free, experience naturally provides some facility in determining a location which will compromise between layout, access, services, outlook, contour, and orientation. Some compromise! But once it is achieved, indeed, earlier, the 1st and 18th are taking shape and, one hopes, two other holes at the middle or a third of the round.

At this stage, the pieces of the jig-saw are still big ones—they will be subdivided later on—but they must already interlock. If one piece is neglected the pattern is never complete and another club will be condemned to live for ever saying "If only . . .". I use the words "for ever" advisedly because once the course is laid out on the wrong lines, it can never for practical purposes be put right in the future. Some are laid out more wrongly than others and no land will ever permit the abstract ideal. Nevertheless there is a practical ideal for each piece of ground and that is the only goal.

We can now start work on the detail in earnest, remembering that each detail is still vital in the broad picture. This will already be splitting up the site into areas and dictating profitable lines of investigation. Where hills are involved the general direction of the finish will be doubly important. Thinking about this

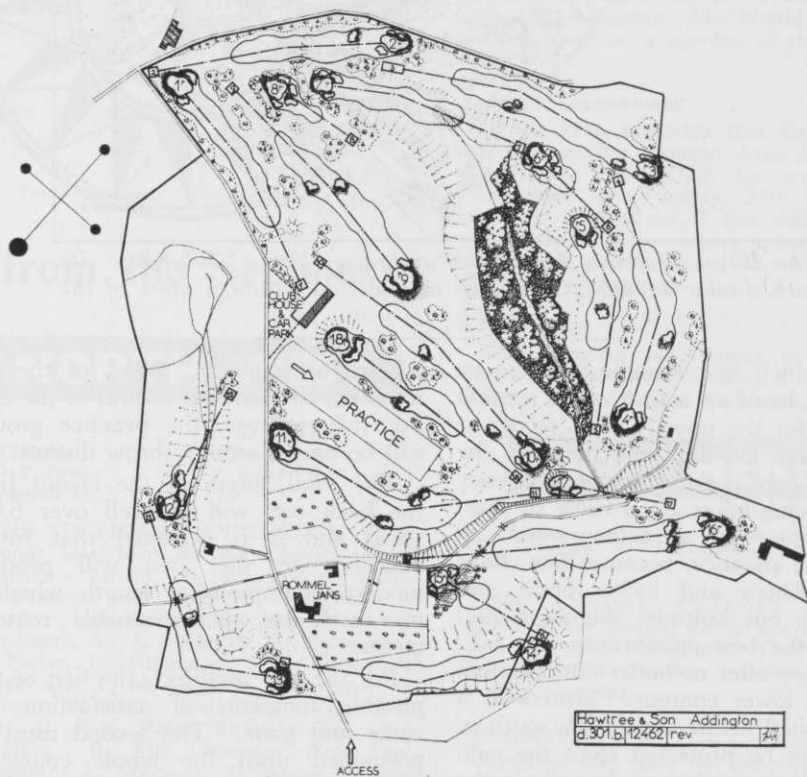
will already influence the start. The short holes must be the jewels but the 5-bogey holes can be boring if they lack feature. These and a host of other factors determine each move in the game but at the same time their interaction is building up the total effect.

Experience will generally show at once

adjourn for luncheon until the Hon. Treasurer reported one hole short.

But with all the experience in the world, on a good site (by which I understand one with a variety of natural feature and enough room to manoeuvre to use it properly), there is only one way to find the best possible series of holes—

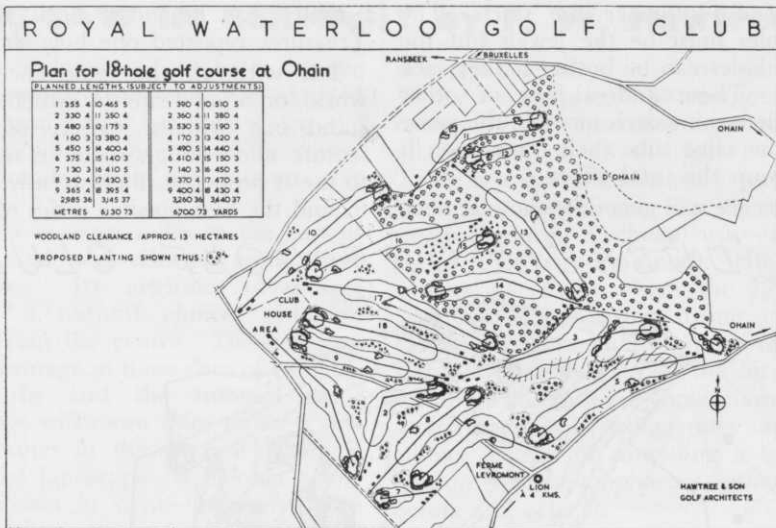
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what cannot be done and the implications, perhaps holes ahead, of any single step. And it is probably the only thing which will check the designer when, after making compromise after compromise, he reaches the point where he knows that if he goes any farther the total effect will be feeble and frustrating. Consequently, this stage provides an absorbing exercise with extreme pleasure if solved satisfactorily in the minimum number of moves. Perfection would be five minutes for reflection, one walk round the site, and there is the layout! They say of an eminent professional golfer no longer with us that he achieved this feat one morning and was ready to

that is to walk and keep on walking, twisting all the possibilities this way and that until suddenly the whole scheme clicks naturally into position. On this site the distance covered until that moment was $22\frac{1}{2}$ miles. On flat sites, a stroll through the middle may show the solution at once; on bad sites, the happy solution may never come; on good but difficult ones it is happiest when the work to find it has called for every resource the designer can command, constant adjustments of initial impressions as new ideas develop, and strict control of emotions ranging through fury and despair to relief and delight.

Looking back, as I like to do in order



The Royal Waterloo Golf Club at Brussels has a club-house site with similar advantages to these at Düsseldorf though more of the course lies in front.

to find which first thoughts had to be corrected, I can see a trap which is often prepared for the unwary. To recognise it now may avoid a few miles in the future. There is an instinctive tendency to site a club-house on a brow or crest commanding an attractive view all round. In practice, because there have to be kitchens and locker-rooms and because in our latitudes the south and west are the best orientations, the hill-top site may offer no better outlook than one on a lower contour. Moreover, a building sited below and to the south of a crest can be protected from the cold side, it will sit much more happily in the landscape without breaking up the horizon, and both internal and external planning can be more interesting and even more economical.

An old A.A. gun site provided the trap at Düsseldorf—a good field of fire all round but a poor length hole up to the boundary behind and a long climb up for the 18th in front. The solution was to move the club-house 100 yards down the slope. Then both 1st and 9th holes will acquire good length; the 18th, aiming at the club-house all the way, will end in a natural amphitheatre just below it without having to climb the whole of the slope; and the view from all the main rooms will be just as good,

indeed, outstanding. Most of the last nine will be seen and several of the first. For full measure, the practice ground will be only a stone's throw distant.

The total length of the layout from the back tees will be well over 6,000 yards and it is expected that future additions to the area will produce modern championship length which is now well beyond reasonable requirements.

For the golf architect, the first of two possible moments of satisfaction has come and gone. The second must be postponed until the whole course is modelled and green. In between, there will be many more miles over ploughed land in wet weather, hot weather, and probably snow.

For the group of Düsseldorf golfers whose scheme this is, the moments of pleasure are still to come. It can take up to two years to plan, build, and bring a golf course into playing condition. We hope to improve on that and in any event a practice ground will be ready for autumn. But at least they can be patient in the knowledge that they have a site of which any club could be proud and that there are some spectacular holes on the board which will test whether the practice they put in meanwhile has been earnest or not.