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GREENKEEPER

HON. EDITOR: F. W. HAWTREE



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TEE SHOTS



by the Editor

Sir John Borthwick has received planning permission for a proposal for two full-size golf courses, one private and one public, together with a pitch-and-putt course on his Fox Hills estate at Langcross, near Chobham Common in Surrey.

* * * *

Eltham Warren Golf Club in Kent is threatened by the line of Ringway 2 round London. Stan Barrow, its professional, has found 207 acres not far from Eltham and has already persuaded 22 members to back the scheme with £1,000 each. One of them even promised £10,000 and the bank manager is prepared to lend another £50,000.

* * * *

The Burgh of St. Andrews has more than the normal local authority worries if the Wheatley recommendations for the reorganisation of Local Government come into operation in 1975. Control of the Links could pass entirely into the hands of the new District Authority which would have to consider its full resident population as well as the people of St. Andrews.

* * * *

It now seems certain that Immingham will get its own golf course. Grimsby Rural District Council has agreed to start negotiations to lease 60 acres for nine holes and to make available a further 70 acres in the future for the second nine. The Council has set aside £40,000 to buy the land and will rent it to the North East Lincolnshire Development Association at a rent big enough to cover the loan charges.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

By LEE RECORD

Mid-Continent Director USGA—Green Section

Q: *With rising labour costs, omission of daily maintenance practices has become a serious problem, especially with sand trap maintenance. What is the best particle size sand to use in sand traps or should we change to grass bunkers?*

A: Selecting the sand which is to comprise the bunker is of utmost importance. There are uniform systems of classification which can be used as a guide for sand selection. The National Bureau of Standards (U.S. No.) and American Standard for Testing Materials (A.S.T.M.) are two systems of classification. The classification systems are based on particle size.

The best particle size for sand traps is a very coarse sand (1 mm. in size). From an economic standpoint it may be quite costly to obtain sand this uniform size because of the special screening that would undoubtedly be required. Particle size may easily be reached in some localities, however, individual grains have to be examined closely. Rounded grains will leave the sand too loose and golf balls will be buried too deeply. It is preferred that angular grains be used rather than rounded ones.

Particle size too, affects the speed of play. Any sand exploded on a green over 1 mm. may result in players picking up each individual grain. Mowing equipment may easily be dulled or knocked out of adjustment from large particle size.

Sand in traps cannot be hard to handicap the golfer who already is in a hazard and is being penalised. Normally, a golfer should have an option of playing a "clean" shot, picking the ball clean or to "explode". Depending upon the banks of a bunker, an explosion shot is the normal shot used. Sand that is too hard prevents this type of shot. A

normal sand wedge has a flange at its base; this flange is thick and it must have soft sand to execute the explosion shot. A wedge being used on hard sand bounces off the sand and all ball control is lost.

The condition of traps around greens should consist of a soft, coarse, uniformly raked sand. The depth of sand in these traps should be from four to six inches.

Depending upon particle size of sand, it will take several months up to a year for sand to settle properly. A uniform, coarse sand of the 1 mm. particle size will take several months, while silica sand, a by-product of the glass industry, will take a year or so.

Sand should offer a hazard. The ball should bury up to one-half its depth or less. It should not sit up on top to provide a clean shot. The sand bunker should be a fair hazard; sand should contribute, not minimize the hazard.

Should the decision be to convert to grass bunkers, grass would ease maintenance time required above that of sand. It might also speed up play, as footprints or steps would not have to be retraced or raked. Traffic patterns would not necessarily be worn around greens as they presently are. Grass, however, would not be as attractive as sand. Sand provides a visual aid for the golfer to the target area. A normal height of cut for grass bunkers would be between two and four inches.

Questions that will face many club officials and course superintendents will be either continuing to meet the high cost of daily sand bunker maintenance or of gradually eliminating unnecessary sand bunkers and establishing grass bunkers in their place.

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18 HOLES WITH HAWTREE

No. 15 — Transformation at St Andrews

by FRED HAWTREE

But not the St Andrews where the American visitor is supposed to have said, "Really a very good course for such a small town!" We are discussing San Andres de Llavaneras, a tiny nine holes on the coast about 20 miles north of Barcelona. The club started in the twenties and Peter Gannon, an English amateur who designed some golf courses abroad in the twenties, helped to lay it out. He did not have very much help from the ground. There were only 30-odd acres on the side of a steep hill and they produced about 2,500 yards with two holes crossing and the player in mortal danger throughout the round.

In 1967, while involved in the new course at Pals, further to the north of the Costa Brava (the Spanish Open Amateur Championship was held there last September), I looked in at Llavaneras hoping to see what grass they used. But the situation was far from clear.

Then in February 1968, a telegram came, "Would I meet Sênor Villalonga at a hotel in London?" We met and he unfolded a plan. It could only be Llavaneras. Honesty obliged me to say that fundamental improvement was out of the question here on a course in play but being younger in those days and brightening at a mention of extra land, I arranged a visit. Unfortunately, it had to be on a Sunday. With virtually no rough, and players everywhere, an inspection of the layout was perilous and the extra land was not much help.

One piece was like the dome of St Pauls and detached. The other was a 3-acre triangle alongside the 8th which already received a good share of golf balls sliced off the side of the hill at that hole or hooked from the 7th which occupied roughly the same area.

I took my plans to the clubhouse but the accommodation emphasised the social rather than the administrative side of club life and, like the course, offered no retreat for the golf architect. As a result, every member became in-

involved in designing the alterations. Of these, the most popular was a par-5 which ran from one end of the course to the other and looked like being the longest hole in Catalonia.

After several aperitivos, lunch did nothing to relieve a growing somnolence induced by heat, travel, repetitive discussions in a foreign tongue and the dry white wine of nearby Alella. A Committee Meeting was arranged for the evening and it was clearly undesirable to fall asleep while that was going on. I, therefore, made a further inspection of the layout, this time seeking a quiet corner for a siesta. There was still no such place. Every inch of the course was in play. But a vacant lot behind the clubhouse was big enough to provide a quick ziz out of sight. One does not approve of going to sleep on the job but sometimes there is no alternative.

Committee Meetings in Spain are not based on an agenda (and I regret to note an increasing tendency towards the resulting general discussion in this country). But the central topic was clear and the proposals even clearer after the unofficial run-through in the morning. I explained that four changes would enable the 2nd hole to play behind the 1st green instead of across the approach and also allow the 7th and 8th to have separate fairways. It would even enable the 9th green to be moved as the clubhouse extensions planned looked like finishing in its left-hand wing bunker.

Sênor Bernades, the President, turned to Sênor Villalonga. "Carta blanca" he said, which I took to be some kind of document. Villalonga left the room and we continued to discuss details of the layout.

Three-quarters of an hour later he returned, rather glassy-eyed I thought, and sat down. "I've bought it" he said. He had visited the proprietor of the triangle by the 8th, taken a few glasses, agreed the price for the land,

(continued on page 8.

The cost cutter



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(continued from page 6)

arranged terms of payment, so much down—so much over three years and clinched the deal. This I felt was the way to move. A typewriter was then brought in, a solicitor started to dictate and the formal papers were ready by 9 p.m.

No work was to be done until competitions finished at the end of September. But in July, there was a telephone call. "We have decided to close the course during alterations. You can now do what you like." These instructions are so rare that I took them literally and prepared plans, profiles and sections for recontouring every hole to remove freakish slopes. This involved cutting 16 feet deep at some points.

On the 1st October I went out, set out the pegs and offered to return when they started work. On the 14th October, another telegram. "Please come on 21st". This was in line with Llavaneras traditions. Three weeks from setting out to starting work is very reasonable. In the event, they were roughly a quarter of the way through the bulk excavations and top-soil had been stripped from most of the course and all was exactly in accordance with the plans. This is not a common occurrence on golf courses. But *Sênor Fradera*, a leading Committee Member, had engaged a "*paregador*" who is rather better than a clerk of works.

The soil has a beautiful texture from decomposed granite and large reserves appeared at a depth free of weed seed. These were suitably distributed and planting started in December. A certain *Sênor Mas* has large nurseries of an

Agrostic *Stolonifera* strain at Llavaneras. Stolons were spread liberally over the ground and then rolled with vertical discs which pushed them into the surface. In January 1969, some of the stolons already had an inch or more of root and by April, all was green.

The Members meanwhile had been distributed round neighbouring courses—San Cugat, Pals, Costa Brava and El Prat—but they reassembled at Christmas to see how the works were progressing. A route was signposted all round the course and they were organised into foursomes, each in a car, and were sent off from the first tee at intervals by the starter to drive the nine holes.

February to April is a good season for grass growth in that climate but the opening was delayed until the 1st July. By this time there was a uniform turf everywhere with no weed and no rogue grasses. A reservoir had been made for full watering, a new car park had been squeezed out of an odd corner, full size palm and pine trees had been planted at strategic points, and the size of the clubhouse had been trebled with putting green, new terraces and approach—a busy nine months.

At first they thought the new course was too easy. But when the memories of the old course had faded, the problems of golf itself took charge and in a recent professional competition, there were only two rounds one below par.

I have tried to think why a lot of courses in Britain do not undertake a transformation of this sort. It is more difficult in a colder country with congested courses but the real answer is probably more simple. Money!

Selkirk Golf Club's plans to extend their nine holes to 18 have met local opposition. Nearly 1,000 people have signed a petition opposing the plan which takes in part of a local beauty spot.

* * * *

Aberdeen is looking ahead to an expansion of golf facilities. It already has three 18-hole courses and is planning a new 18 and two new nine's at Hazlehead and Balnagask.

* * * *

Kenilworth Golf Club has been lucky in proposals for a new by-pass road. The plans remove exactly 34 square yards in one corner of the course.

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TRADE NEWS

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* * * *

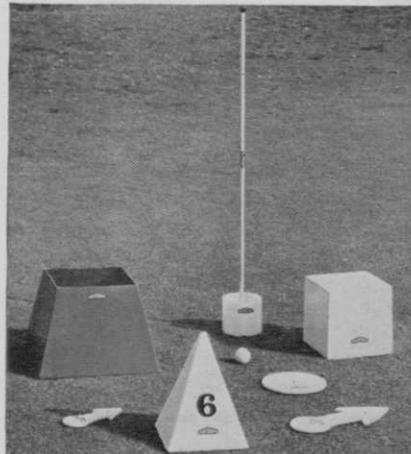
TED REILLY, Ransomes resident representative for North America, has had the honour of being invited by the Royal Canadian Golf Association, sponsors of the International Turf Grass Conference, to give a paper entitled "Past and Future Trends in Grass Maintenance Equipment". Held in Montreal during March, the Conference was attended by leading green superintendents and golf club secretaries from Canada and the U.S.A.

* * * *

Ted Reilly has had a wide experience in grass machinery and grass maintenance equipment both in the United Kingdom and Eire, prior to his recent appointment to North America.

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