

Cirencester Golf Club gets a new 18th fairway

by John Campbell



Phillip Franklin, Green Chairman points out the distant 18th green in front of the white building. He is standing on the edge of the new fairway landing area for tee shots

Many courses have potential bottleneck spots where holdups occur during busy periods slowing down play and causing frustration to golfers. Cirencester Golf Club is one course who have successfully dealt with a problem area, which was often a source of slow play. Two holes, the 14th and 18th share the same fairway along a deep valley with play going in opposite directions. The 4th, measuring 377 yards, is one of the good holes on the course played up the valley flanked by a steep hillside of rough on the right. The run of the ground is against play, calling for a good drive and a well placed second shot to a raised green set into the foot of the left hand slope. The green is strategically bunkered with no room for error.

Higher up the slope, overlooking the 4th green is the tee for the finishing hole, 457 yards running in the oppo-

site direction, which demands a downhill drive into the valley towards oncoming traffic playing the 4th hole.

Phillip Franklin, Green Chairman at the Club explained, "They are both good holes but the snag is having to share the same fairway, it was always a source of slow play and potentially dangerous for golfers. Really we are in a situation now, where every fairway should be separated in view of the amount of play taking place."

"We decided the time was ripe to alter the 18th hole, by carving a new fairway out of the hillside along the valley to create an alternative route to the green. The earthmoving work was undertaken by a local contractor with a Hy-mat under our own supervision. The bulk of the work was carried out last year.

Phase 2, this autumn, involved minor adjustments to increase the ball land-

ing area for tee shots, also additional subtle mounding of features, so that the whole thing blends in naturally with the surroundings."

"Ground clearance work at the start entailed the removal of 31 mature conifer trees from the site and a further 9 were taken out after much consideration during stage 2, to enlarge the tee shot landing area. It was our desire to preserve as many trees as possible, for they provide a shelter belt and have always been a feature on this part of the course."

"It took six weeks with the Hy-mat to move about 10,000 tons of heavy material and 600 tons of topsoil to provide a seed bed to finish the job. Machine hire cost £12,000. Imported top soil £2,000. Grass seed £600. An elevated tee was built by our own greenkeeping staff, which gives an excellent view of the fairway ahead, which slopes gradually downhill into

DEVELOPMENT

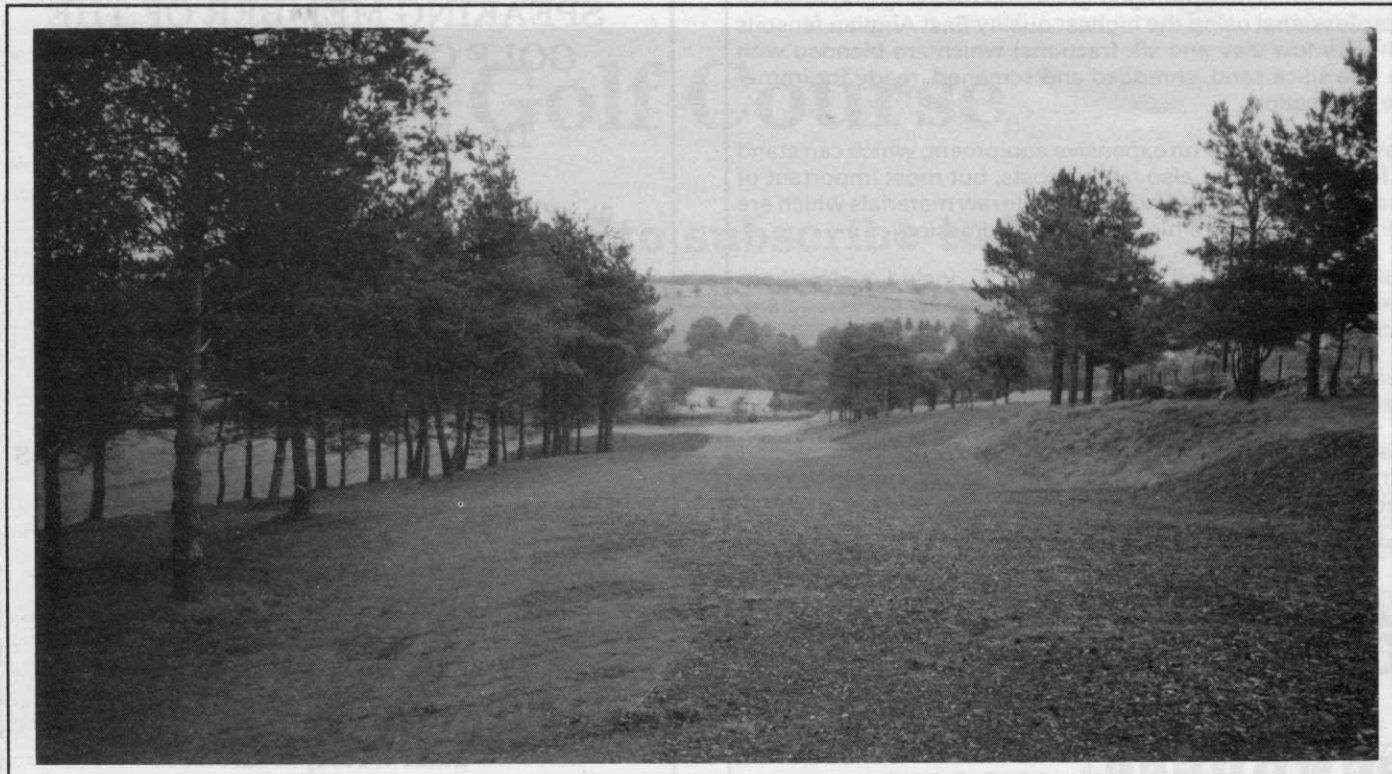


View of fairway from a tee shot landing spot. The position marked by small bush on horizon between gap in the trees. Exposed soil left and right is where features were modified this autumn to enlarge playing surface width.

the floor of the valley." Phillip Franklin added, "I suppose by the time all the work has been completed we will have spent around £20,000 on the project." Building this new fairway will make a

considerable difference to the smooth flow of play, particularly at peak periods and it is estimated that it will reduce by up to 40 minutes a round at the end of the day. The new 18th will

undoubtedly be a challenging test for all golfers. It already has its own character, where the elevation provides splendid views over the rest of the course and surrounding countryside.



Looking down the new 18th fairway towards the green in front of the white building. Soil areas in foreground are where features were modified during phase 2.