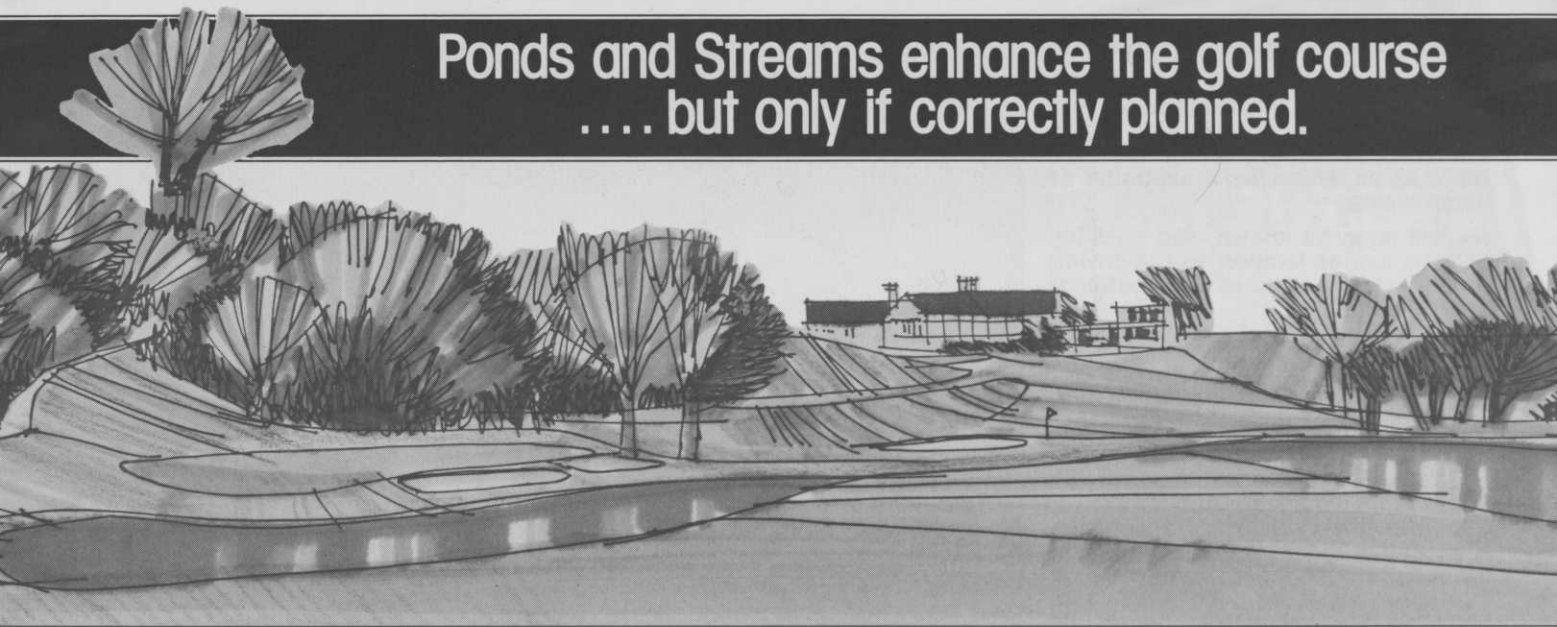


Ponds and Streams enhance the golf course but only if correctly planned.



Ponds, brooks, becks and streams, set with thought into the golfing landscape can do nothing but add to the pleasure of the course. That is, with the proviso they are correctly maintained and do not become an overgrown aquatic paradise for weeds and a breeding ground for midges and mosquitoes.

Perhaps in this country insufficient use is made of water as a hazard, both for the drive from the tee and as a thought provoking obstacle for the approach shot to the green. Many of our existing ponds and streams are there because they have always been there, part of the natural landscape, serving as drainage areas for the land in the days when it was used as meadow pasture or for arable crops.

In some instances the golf course architect has made use of the water course, positioning the tee in such a way it will penalise the bad shot. Similarly ponds have been opened out or re-sited to act as a hazard to the left or right of the green.

Most British inland courses were developed in the early 1900's, often with little money and sadly not a great deal of thought. Golf course architecture was in its infancy mainly dominated by the professional golfer who doubled as greenkeeper. The truly great courses have been in existence for far longer, constructed on land the farming fraternity regarded as useless for agricultural purposes, but with little reconstruction became the links and heathland courses now names to conjure with around the world. Men like James Braid, Willie Park and J. H. Taylor, true professionals, also had the natural ability and flair to design monuments to their name.

The true architects often with engineering and botanical backgrounds like Dr. Alister Mackenzie, Fred Hawtree, Sen, Donald Ross, Harry Colt, Wetherhead and Simpson, emerged when golf was increasing in such popularity players, wanted a course on their own doorstep so they could indulge in their passion every weekend, rather than travel the breadth of the country to the Fylde coast, West Country or the Scottish links.

Such men were in tremendous demand and no doubt unable to cope with the calls on their services, with the result it is not too difficult to find a golf course where one wonders just what was in the mind of the designer when it was laid out. There are some which could be regarded as a blatant affront to the Health & Safety regulations, where safety helmets and substantial insurance cover should be a pre-requisite before venturing on to the first tee.

Like a redoubtable claret a golf course should mature with age. Because of their initial construction it is often necessary to make improvements, adjustments and replacements. It must not be forgotten either, the game has matured as well, with clubs manufactured to hit the ball further and balls themselves bearing little resemblance to the feathery, gutta percha and india rubber balls.

Streams criss-crossing the fairways in the 1930's providing a hazard for the poor second shot are now often in range from the tee. There are also the reconstructions introduced by green committees to lengthen the course, though why such obeisance is paid to the pagan god of standard scratch is a mystery, unless the club 'big hitters' are trying to ensure the majority of members cannot make the par fours in two and by so doing, monopolise all the club's silver.

Modern excavating equipment makes light work of a pond construction with the vast range of diggers, bulldozers and bucket attachments available. Greenstaff can easily treat small projects as a winter direct labour operation. More ambitious schemes should be contracted out under the supervision of the Head Greenkeeper. It is after all his responsibility for maintaining the water area once the contractors have left.

Minimum maintenance should be the prime consideration. Where at all possible the pond should have an inlet and an outlet ensuring a fresh supply of oxygenated water provides movement. It need not be fast flowing, just sufficient to prevent stagnation. If this is not possible the pond should have sufficient depth towards the centre to prevent the growth of algae and support aquatic plant growth and fish. Plants produce their own oxygen, snails, fish and amphibians such as newts and frogs live off the weed creating another of life's cycles.

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