

If 'Capability' Brown of landscaping fame had been designing and constructing golf courses in the 18th century instead of laying out the parks of England's stately mansions, he would certainly have been equally successful in re-shaping the golfing landscape by moving hills, digging lakes and transplanting large trees.

Today's golf course architects might be seen as the heirs to many great 18th century landscapers, where they succeed in re-shaping the new golf courses, yet retaining the essential character of the surrounding countryside.

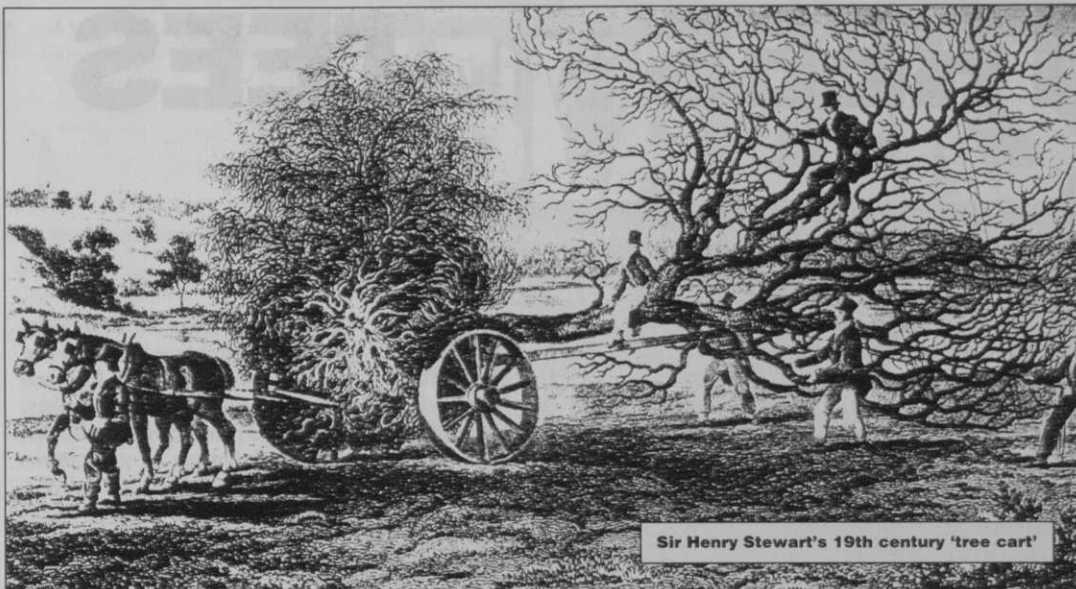
The 18th century landscapers used teams of draught horses to move large trees, but now mechanical tree-spades on flotation tyred tractors take minutes to transplant 20 year old trees, and if desired, even larger trees, up to 1.5m trunk girth and 15m height, can be transplanted using 200 ton cranes and special tackle.

The proprietors and architects of new golf courses are likely to find over-mature trees on their chosen sites, often protected by local tree preservation orders (TPO's). Old established trees, especially oak and beech, do not tolerate changes in the water table, caused usually by modified drainage and land form. The skill of the architect will determine whether these existing mature trees can be retained in the design.

Increasingly, Planning Authorities expect to be offered outline applications for new courses that include extensive tree planting, either as shelter belts to screen adjoining properties, or simply to increase tree cover overall. Planning applications that incorporate generous tree planting are more likely to succeed than those that do not. Mostly this planting is done with three year old trees (whips) spaced 1.5 to 2.0m apart, and protected from rabbits and deer. But for greater effect in important positions it may be appropriate to plant larger trees.

On a number of the most prestigious new parkland courses, the developers and architects have chosen to plant large trees extensively. This has achieved the desired landscaping result immediately, instead of waiting five to ten years for young trees to grow.

Two important new courses that open this summer have recently completed large tree



Sir Henry Stewart's 19th century 'tree cart'

TREES by the TEES

CHRIS NEWMAN examines the history
of trees on the golf course

planting schemes aimed at quite varied objectives.

Golf Fund plc, led by Colin Snape, is developing The Warwickshire, a 45 hole complex at Leek Wootton near Warwick, now due to open fully in 1993. Karl Litten has designed the two 18 hole courses and a nine hole par three course, constructed by Total Golf Ltd in a truly beautiful parkland setting of mature stands of beech and oak, flanked by the Victorian arboretum of Wootton Court.

The objectives of the new planting, using large trees in this already mature landscape, as explained by the landscape architect Graham Stevenson, are three-fold. Most of the large tree planting relates directly to the 45 tees and greens, thereby giving visual structure to the three courses.

These trees are planted in groups of the same species or maybe two complementary

species such as pine and birch. In sympathy with the species of mature parkland trees, distinct areas of new planting along the fairways are predominantly of oak, beech, chestnut, pine and willow. The adjoining arboretum is being extended on to the course with planting of many similar exotic species from North America and Asia. The overall effect of planting these five hundred large trees at The Warwickshire is to link the course with its surrounding landscape, yet at the same time give form and direction to the undulating land form.

The Oxfordshire at Thame is an eighteen hole championship course which opened in June 1993, and likely, it is said, to be extended with a second eighteen holes.

Nitto Kogyo Group, which owns and manages 36 courses worldwide, commissioned Rees Jones to design the new championship

course. Nitto Kogyo chose the rolling countryside site, endowed with mature oak and ash, which have been resourcefully incorporated into the undulating design. Four new feature lakes provide water and assist with drainage for the course. Mr Edmond de Rothschild continues his long association with Mr Hitoshi Matsuura, chairman of Nitto Kogyo Group, to achieve a truly English landscape setting for the designs of Rees Jones. The original hedgerow elms vanished in the 1920s, but they have been replaced by 400 semi-mature indigenous oak, maple, lime and ash from Exbury Gardens, transplanted mainly around the perimeter of the course. Once again, as at The Warwickshire, the tree planting achieves a continuation of the existing countryside, but in this instance it is a landscape of hedgerow trees, as it was before elm disease wrought havoc in Oxfordshire and all over England.

Replanting the hedgerow trees at The Oxfordshire has achieved other considerable benefits. Six of the eighteen fairways lie adjacent to the new hedgerow plantings, which provide shelter from the north and east wind. On the north-west a dense planting of these large trees screen the nearby A 329 Thame-Oxford road. Underplanting with indigenous shrubs and hedgerow plants produces a wild life corridor linking with the original hedgerows on neighbouring properties.

The techniques for planting at The Warwickshire and The Oxfordshire differ considerably. At The Warwickshire the red sandy loam and iron-stone inclusions can be made to drain sufficiently providing the tree positions are not in hollows or gullies. By contrast the blue Oxford clay underlying The Oxfordshire course pro- → 22

TREES by the TEES

21 → vides no natural drainage, so that every tree pit is connected by land drain to the course drainage system. On both courses the large trees were stored on site during the winter and spring of

1991/1992 while the courses were too newly formed to allow planting vehicles on to them. In the spring and early summer of 1992 the planting of The Oxfordshire went ahead on schedule.

These large trees of 8 to 10m height are supported against the wind by the Japanese method, using a tripod of long stakes, which also protects the trees from accidental damage by gang-mow-

ers and machinery. At The Warwickshire the trees are supported either by overhead wire guys or by stakes, as both courses are exposed to extremes of wind.

At The Warwickshire the planting has been spread over the summer of 1992, taking trees in full leaf out of storage on site. On the first eighteen holes the large trees were moved across newly planted grass by flotation tyred vehicles. Reinstatement was kept to an absolute minimum by working only during dry weather.

All these trees on the two courses have been planted, maintained and insured by the contractors Civic Tree Care Ltd of Tring, who also maintain the areas around the planting. Civic Trees expect to replace, free of charge, about 5% of trees, and the success rate at The Oxfordshire after a full growing season is 94%, despite transplanting most of the trees in full leaf.



The Oxfordshire. Semi-mature trees replace the hedgerow Elms lost in the 1970s and shelter part of the course from the A329 Thame-Oxford road, and the north east winds



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On established golf courses the planting of young trees as copses, woods and shelter belts creates a 'tree bank' that in five, ten or twenty years can yield, by the normal process of thinning, substantial numbers of surplus trees to replace losses on other parts of the course. Young trees, well planted, tended and protected for the first few years, can double in value every two to three years, and may remain available in these 'tree banks' for up to twenty years, before they become too large to be transplanted economically. The cost of transplanting by tractor tree-spade can be as little as one fifth of importing an equivalent tree from a nursery.

Already many established courses have these 'tree banks' of semi-mature trees that have grown up naturally from self-seeded saplings. In order to realise the potential of these surplus, yet valuable, trees it may be

necessary to cut out the less good specimens to make space for the best to flourish and develop a full crown for several years prior to transplanting them on to the course.

Trees in the landscape are more valuable than ever before. Everyone involved in the countryside is aware that disease, storms, squirrel and deer can ravage the most cherished trees. An annual or bi-annual programme of replanting with young trees will ensure that the country's tree heritage is carried on into the next century.

● The author, Chris Newman, started designing large tree moving machines in 1960 and formed Civic Trees in 1963, a company that grows, supplies and transplants semi-mature trees throughout the British Isles. The screening of the Berlin Wall is among the multitude of prestigious projects that his company have achieved over 30 years in this area of landscaping expertise.

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