

BRAE BURN COUNTRY CLUB
 NATIONAL AMATEUR
 GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP COURSE
 SEPT. 10-15, 1928
 WEST NEWTON, MASS.

BRAE BURN 31 YEARS OLD

Brae Burn was thirty-one years old last May. It is located at West Newton, Massachusetts, a suburb about twelve miles northwest of Boston Common. The club has eight hundred and fifty members and besides the championship course there is also an auxiliary 9-hole course of about 2800 yards. It has a remarkably efficient organization and is said to be one of the few golf courses in the country which operates without loss and without assessments. Elbert H. Brock, chairman of the Green committee is a man of unusual judgment and long experience, and is the type all greenkeepers would like to work for.

Brae Burn—A Tough Course

By ROBERT E. POWER, Editor
The National Greenkeeper

BRAE Burn is tough. It's what the illiterate golf scribes would call a "goat" golf course. That's one reason why in our opinion only the younger men survived the play after Wednesday in the National Amateur Championship which began on Monday, September 10 and finished Saturday, September 15 with another victory for the redoubtable Bobby Jones.

The slopes on many of the holes, especially the outgoing nine are so steep that traversing them is a species of miniature mountain climbing. Even Bobby Jones, twenty-six years old, sturdy and seasoned athlete, to my personal knowledge paused for breath on many occasions especially in the qualifying rounds when the galleries were small and the play moved rapidly.

ALL of which is coming to the point of our story—that Brae Burn is a greenkeeper's workhouse. Any time you think that John Shanahan's job is a cinch just because he has been there twenty-seven years you have another guess coming. Tees perched on promontories, hog-backed fairways, several double level greens and others with undulations that are actually bumps makes the maintenance problem one of the most difficult I have ever seen.

It takes an agile spiked-shoe golfer to climb

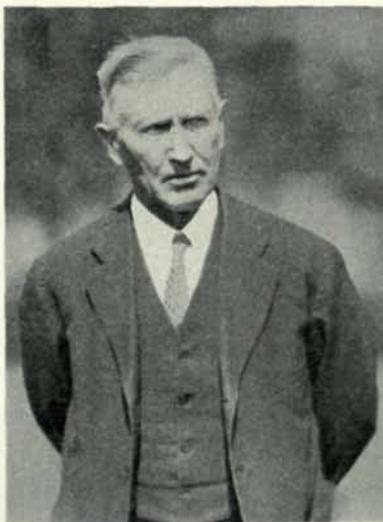
to No. 2 tee or scale the steep approach to No. 9 green carrying no weight but his clothing. How do you suppose the man who mows No. 2 tee and No. 9 green makes out? I asked John if he used airplanes or balloons to get his mowers to some of these inaccessible places. He just laughed as though that was all in the day's work. After hiking around his course for two

days, I felt like crawling into a bunk and sleeping for about eighteen hours. If, as they say, Bobby Jones makes twenty-five thousand dollars a year writing articles for newspapers and magazines because he is the champion, he certainly earned at least six months' salary in his week at Brae Burn.

Shanahan Rates High

IHAD the pleasure and benefit of carefully inspecting the Brae Burn course in company with John Morley of Youngstown and John MacGregor of

Chicago on Monday and Tuesday, the qualifying days. These veteran officers of the National Association of Greenkeepers of America visited Boston as a compliment to John Shanahan and his associates in the New England Greenkeepers Association, of which Shanahan is president. The latter has long been rated nationally as one of the greatest greenkeepers in the United States.



JOHN SHANAHAN
Brae Burn's veteran greenkeeper

After carefully inspecting his course from "stem to stern" as the sailors say, we can safely say that he is not overrated. We could find nothing undone, and considering that early September is absolutely the worst time in the year to get a course in championship condition Shanahan worked wonders. Why the United States Golf Association picked September 10th for the National Amateur on a northern course must have been due either to ignorance or a desire to put the greenkeeper out of business. We feel quite sure it wasn't the latter.

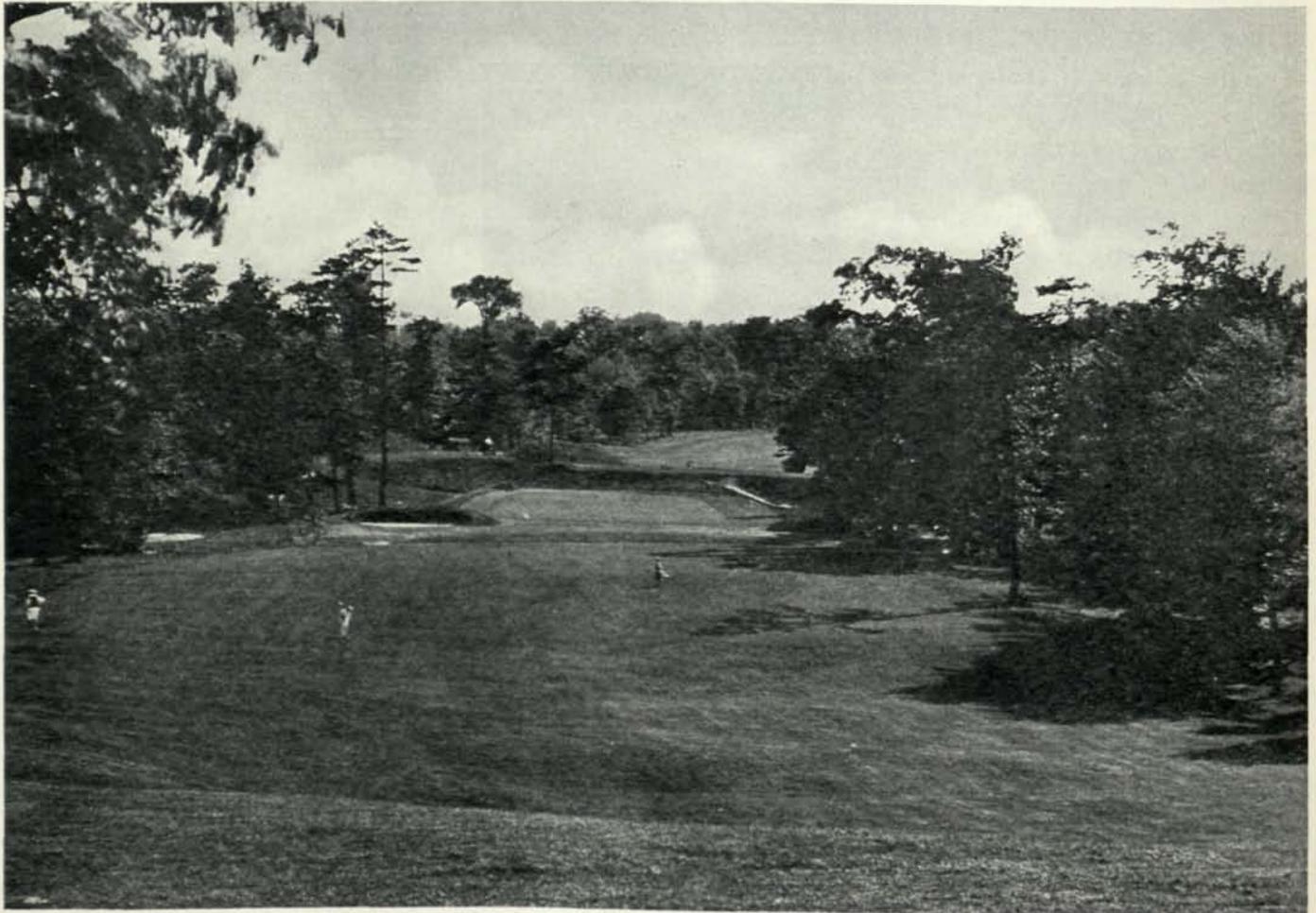
Just pause a moment you greenkeepers and chairmen all over the world to read the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER and think of the sleepless nights and weeks of worry John Shanahan went through, working silently, patiently and praying that weather conditions would give him a break to overcome the tremendous handicap of his position. Fortunately he had rains through July and August that kept his fairways green and growing. Brown patch came of

course as it did everywhere else east of the Mississippi, but he knew how to fight it and did successfully.

When we hunted up the tall gaunt Irishman on Monday morning we expected to find a wreck. Instead his handclasp was hearty and he was smiling—a game greenkeeper and no mistake, and worthy his high standing. No wonder Bobby Jones who has real brains paid him a well-deserved tribute just as he did John MacGregor in Chicago—they were both battling a hell of a problem and they both won out. I hope the National Association of Greenkeepers at their next meeting make Bobby an honorary member.

Brae Burn Made Me Dizzy

NOW about the Brae Burn golf course. In the beginning I said it was tough—tough on players, spectators and the greenkeeper. I wondered at first why the sedate New Englanders remained in stationary groups and didn't rush about much. I thought it was their dig-



No. 1, 337 yards—Probably the easiest hole at Brae Burn. Many players used irons off the tee to avoid going in the creek in front of the green



No. 7, 412 yards—This hole gave the amateur golfers plenty of trouble because of the creek bordering the fairway and the difficult contouring of the putting green

nity but after trying to get out of bed the second morning I decided it was their common sense. Yet I couldn't resist hiking here and there until I was dizzy, because no two holes are alike and turf conditions vary so remarkably that I was fascinated.

Built originally in 1897 Brae Burn is aged and shows it. The putting greens are mats of mottled velvet and carpet bents which in June must have been marvelous. Unfortunately, between brown patch and crab grass they showed the effects of the worst season turf experts have seen in a quarter of a century. But the sturdy nature of these old bent grasses carried them through and they offered an undeniably accurate putting surface. Many players kicked to me about the tricky greens but the tricks were put in by the architect not the greenkeeper. I never saw so many consistently cross-eyed undulations in my life. The slopes ran every which way but the ball went exactly where you hit it.

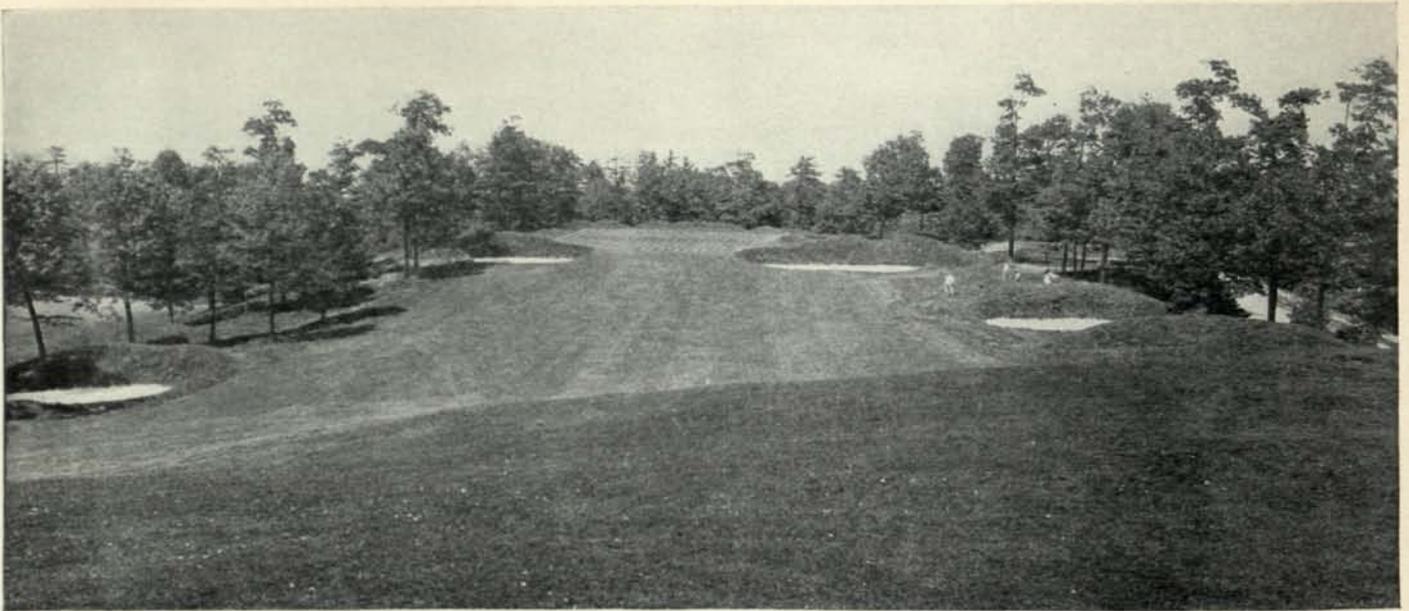
Number 7 green was a bear. Only 412 yards long with the drive from one of those plateau tees and no bunkers about the green, it looked easy when I first saw it. But Monday night I noticed the scores were high and 5's and 6's were not uncommon. So I investigated and after watching several pairs play the hole the answer was easy. A funny blister runs catty corner across the green. If the player's high mashie shot hit this bump his ball bounced into

the steep bank closely bordering the green and was embedded in a hummocky mess of shaggy sheeps fescue. There was only about one place you could pitch and hold that green. After disastrous pitching some played short and tried to run up over the steep slope. The results were so funny that it made you think of those mirror places where one minute you look short and fat and the next tall and thin.

Sweetser Shut His Eyes

JESS SWEETSER on Tuesday shut his eyes, shanked and half topped a four iron and wound up in the right hand bank hole high. Standing at a 60 degree angle he blindly clubbed at the ball and holed out for a birdie three. "Yes, that's better than a six and I certainly needed that birdie," was his retort. His partner hit two fine shots and took a 5. Tommy Aycock, the Florida amateur champion, accustomed to the flat southern greens and fairways was bowlegged and crosseyed when I saw him after the qualifying round. He told me that he offered to bet anybody and everybody five dollars that he could place a ball in a certain place on Number 7 green and they could not get down in two putts. Nobody took him up.

Not all the greens were tricky but those that were comparatively easy to putt on were bunkered for keeps. This was particularly true of the second nine where the premium on the shot



No. 5, 577 yards—The longest hole on the course where no one ever reached the green in two shots

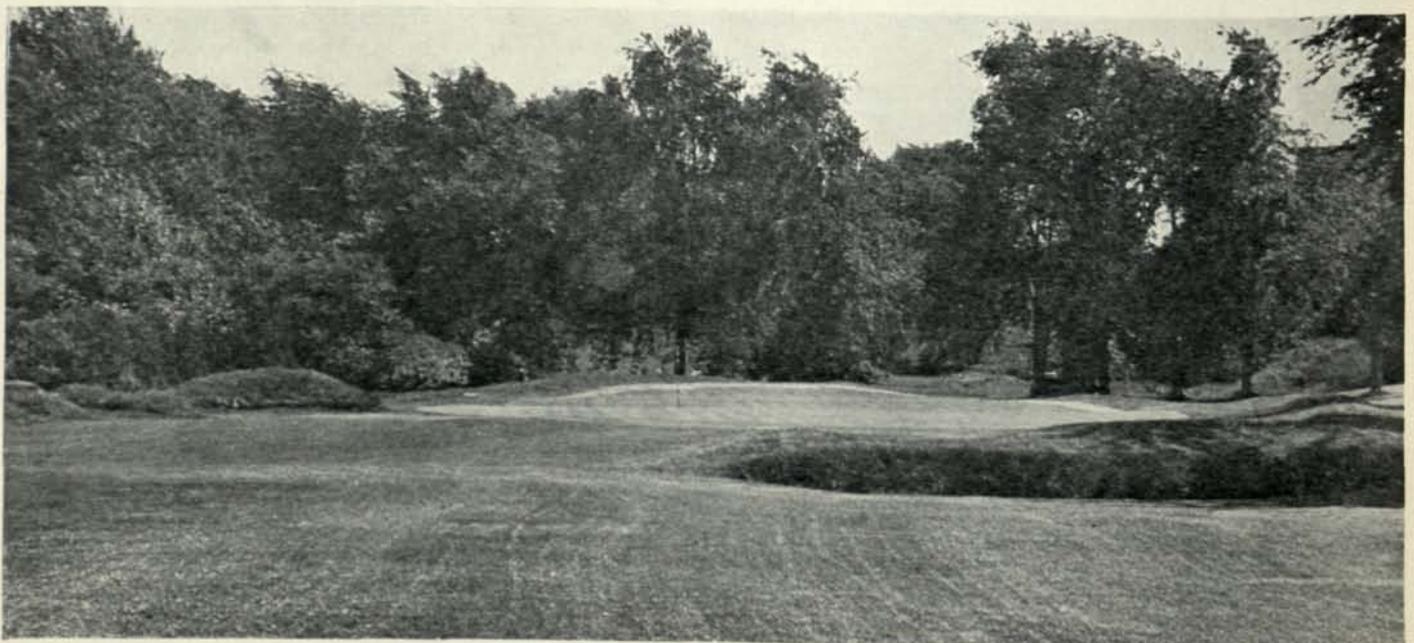
to the green was enormous. With three par 5 holes this second nine was a drag out and many a good golfer just regularly broke his back trying to keep up with the long hitters. After scrambling about the hump-backed first nine and doing a cross-country hike on the second nine every contestant at Brae Burn knew he had been on a he-man's golf course. He had to play every shot in his bag and without luck like Sweetser had on Number 7, he had to play them right.

Compared with Oakmont I think the tee

shots were easier—not such tight bunkering through the green nor such great length required as a whole. But up to and around the greens Brae Burn takes second place to no course the championship has been played on in recent years.

Brae Burn Fairways Unusual

THE turf on Brae Burn fairways was quite unusual. First, the soil is distinctly a sandy loam—more sand than loam—dark in color but fluffy. We found a mixture of seeded bents, native bent, blue grass, poa annua and



No. 11, 463 yards—This difficult two-shotter put a special premium on accuracy as well as distance. It was one of Bobby Jones's best holes

some fescue but not much. The bents predominated and they were very fine which gave the appearance of thin turf, yet the sod was closely knitted and firm.

Some heavy rains had brought out the worms in certain places and there were a few cuppy lies particularly on Number 18 where the ball often lodged between the worm casts. In most cases the fairway lies were fair but close enough to require very accurate hitting. I saw very few balls teed up so to speak, as is the case on many fescue fairways in the heavy soils of the Middle West.

The rough differed so much from the average course that it caused lots of comment. It was all sheeps fescue tough and bunchy but not long. Many a shot which looked fairly simple to the player as he came up to his ball turned out to be a nightmare. It was almost useless to try for distance but the old urge that we all have caused brassies and big irons to come out with disastrous results.

Personally, I think the Brae Burn rough bordering the fairways was the best for a big championship I have ever seen. Nothing like Sciota and Olympia Fields where they just let weeds and hay grow knee high. I saw no rough at Brae Burn over four to six inches but it was always a half stroke penalty at least.

But the face of the bunkers I cannot enthuse about. Here was sheeps fescue, but badly pitted with wash holes and almost without exception a ball in the face of the bunker was much worse off than in the sand. One good player took three shots to get out on Number 17. He took a six and I know had his tee shot been worse and in the sand he would have scored a four. Aside from that criticism there was nothing to find fault with the condition of the Brae Burn course.

We cannot close without mentioning the extreme courtesy and thoughtfulness of the Brae Burn committeemen in handling the details of the tournament. Everything moved like clockwork and there was no noise or confusion anywhere. It was super-efficient headwork on the part of the Boston men coupled with an in-born spirit of hospitality that was felt by all.



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It Took Real Golf Shots to



No. 18, 437 yards—The carry from the tee had to be 225 yards to reach the fairway



No. 2, 304 yards—A cockeyed drive and pitch hole where placing a straight tee shot over the hill to the left meant everything

Play Brae Burn's Tricky Holes



No. 12, 163 yards—Just about a postage stamp to shoot at and no place to go but on the green



No. 6, 150 yards—Just what you see—a slippery mound to drop your ball on. The tee shot must be high and straight