

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BRITISH GOLF

By FRANCIS OUIMET

LANDING at Dover on the eve of April sixth, I found myself in the hands of Mr. Ryder Richardson, Hon. Secretary of the Royal St. George's Golf Club, and his assistant a gentleman named Mr. Ratcliff. They came to welcome me to English shores, which kind treatment I appreciated very much.

After a lay off from golf for a few months, with the exception of my visit to Pinehurst during the winter, you may well imagine that I was very keen to get out on the links once more. Therefore shortly after my arrival I took an early train for Deal, which place is in close proximity to three courses which I had heard a lot of Deal, Sandwich and Princes.

On April seventh, less than twenty-four hours from the time I landed, I found myself upon the first tee of the Royal Cinque Ports G. C. It certainly felt fine, and to one who has never seen putting greens or fairways in splendid condition so early in April, was a treat indeed. Owing to a much milder climate in England than America it is possible to play golf the year round, and the condition of the courses is always very fine.

The Deal course is considered by everybody to be an excellent test of a golfer's skill. The same also applies to the Sandwich and Princes. These three courses are about as good as can be found anywhere. The soil, being more or less sandy, produces a grass, the blades of which grow very close together. It is the next thing to impossible to get a bad lie if one is on the course at all.

Of the three courses I personally consider Princes the most difficult. My reason for thinking so is on account of the placing of the traps, which gives the inaccurate player so little leeway. Sandwich is well supplied with a variety of holes and the large undulating putting greens form interesting features of a well planned and well laid out golf links.

Another very excellent golf course of the Burnham and Berrow Golf Club is found at Somerset on the west coast. Without any question of doubt the greens there are absolutely perfect. In fact the only real drawback to this course at all is in the number of blind holes. On the whole, however, it is as interesting a piece of golfing country as one could care to see.

The Royal North Devon Golf Club at Westward Ho! is one of the championship courses of England. When I was looking over the names of the different clubs I came to the words Westward Ho! The name alone fascinated me and I could not help but think that the links at this place must be truly fine. In fact, Charles Kingsley, the author, wrote his famous

book called "Westward Ho!" so well known to all Americans, at this very place. At any rate the name as much as anything else lured me to the place, and I was not surprised to find one of the most delightful golf courses that nature could possibly form.

The surprising feature of the golf played at Westward Ho! is that every round one plays the shots seem to be entirely different. Indeed they must need be different owing to the strong part the wind plays. Those not used to playing golf in the wind little realize how difficult a factor it is. On this particular course it is quite necessary to place tee-shots in order to get the best available position for the seconds. Oftentimes in doing so, you will find that your drive is from 10 to 30 yards from the direction of the hole.

One example of this may be had at the thirteenth hole. The hole measures about 370 yards from tee to green. The green is of the plateau type, not unlike the seventeenth at Ekwanok, Manchester, Vt. The approach to the green is guarded on the right by sand traps. These traps cover, I should think, about half of the green. Then directly in back and on the left are more traps. You will see then that if you adhere strictly to the line it will be necessary to pitch your second shot over the traps, or play a sliced stroke. It is very hard in either case to hold the ball on the green, owing to its small size. The idea is to drive well to the left, thus escaping the ugly traps on the right when playing your second shot. This not only opens the hole, but leaves a run-up shot of about 140 or 150 yards, a much easier method of securing the proper figure of 4, than that of having to resort to a high and altogether uncertain pitch shot.

It is just such holes as these that the golfer must ever be on the alert for. Get these in the simplest way always and by so doing you will invariably find that you are saving many valuable strokes.

Another thing that surprised me greatly are the large quantities of "Rushes." These "Rushes" grow very close together, and are about six feet high and about four feet in diameter. When one has the misfortune of topping, slicing, or hooking his tee-shot into these things he certainly pays the penalty. It is utterly impossible to play out of them, and the only alternative, and by far the best, is to drop back for the loss of one stroke. I have found it anything but fun trying to swing a club with these "rushes" surrounding me.

The courses I have mentioned are of the seaside variety, and are frequented very often by high winds. These winds play havoc with the golf ball, and furthermore, where one day you may get on a green with a drive and a pitch, the next time you play the same hole

GOLF ILLUSTRATED



MR. FRANCIS OUIMET'S FIRST SHOT UPON BRITISH SOIL

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you might have to play two full shots with wood in order to fetch the green.

Then again nature has played a most prominent part in the construction of such links as Deal, Sandwich, Princes, Burnham and Westward Ho! Huge mounds of nothing more or less than pure sand make most excellent hazards. Whenever a new trap is needed the only thing necessary is to dig the crust of the earth and revealed underneath is more sand which is bound to catch a stray or misdirected golf ball.

What to me is more surprising than anything else is the remarkable condition of the turf, though it is evidently not nursed in any way shape or manner, during one year's end to the other. Such things as motor-mowers and-lawn mowers are hardly known to even trim the fairways and this seems all the more wonderful in view of the fact that a bad "lie" is a rare occurrence.

A great deal of golf is played and the members take lots of justified pride in their own respective clubs. A common question I have been asked time and again is, "How do you like the course?" When I told them I enjoyed playing over it, they would seem rather pleased, and I surely do enjoy playing golf on a first-class course. I have been gradually coming on to my game since my stay at Westward Ho! and have had two or three good rounds, but I do not feel that I have reached the top of my form as yet, although I am beginning to hit my shots much better. My putting up to the present time has been my weakest point, but I hope to remedy this by constant practice before the championship at Sandwich.

I am very glad indeed to hear that "Chick" Evans is coming over, as it will give us a better chance to bring the title across the water. Jerry Travers is playing a very fine game, and I feel sure will take a lot of beating.

MR. OUIMET'S AND MR. TRAVERS' IMPRESSIONS OF THE BRITISH AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP WILL BE AN EXCLUSIVE FEATURE OF THE JULY NUMBER