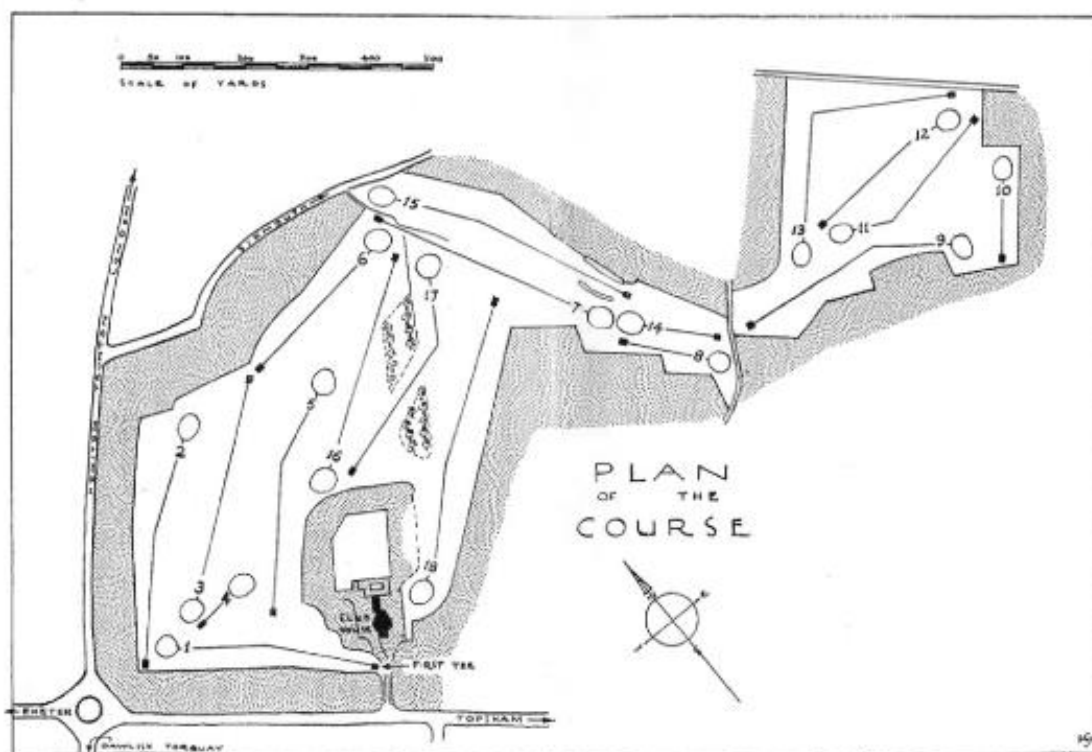


THE EXETER GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB
by ROBERT WALKER

typed by the Ladies' Golf Captain 2023, Vicki Rogers



The Exeter Club originated in 1895 with a nine-hole course set out on the top of Pennsylvania, and it was not until 1925, when the ever-increasing number of members made extra space necessary, that a fresh site was sought. The Wear House Estate was recognised by several Committee members as being an admirable place on which to construct a Golf Course, and it was this Estate which was eventually purchased. The design and construction was undertaken with enthusiasm and care, and the Club moved there properly in 1929 and altered its title to that of "Exeter Golf and Country Club"

From the point of view of accessibility the Club is excellently situated, being two miles South East of Exeter, on the road to Topsham, and in these difficult days of transport it is gratifying to note that 'buses stop hard by the Club entrance. The Club House, which was formerly the residence of the Duckworth-King family, one of whom was Admiral Duckworth who attained eminence by forcing the passage of the Dardenelles in 1807, is a most beautiful mansion, sumptuously furnished in expensive and tasteful style. It possesses a spacious dining room, a very attractive bar, and the changing rooms are the last word in comfort.

The discerning golfer will readily agree that the Exeter Club provides a handsome and lovely headquarters from which to start out and complete his game of golf, for there are splendid gardens, many ancient trees, and the views from the terrace extend to Woodbury Common. There is, in fact, everything to appeal to those whose thoughts turn to some sporting

relaxation in pleasant surroundings. They will also find, both inside and outside the Club, courtesy, quiet unobtrusive service, and help from everyone.

James Braid designed the Course, and this eminent golf architect found at Exeter and example of perfect parkland upon which to work his very special talents. The rich Devonshire soil was a help, of course, together with the excellent drainage, and whether one is a good or indifferent golfer the greens will not fail to stir the admiration by virtue of their perfection and intriguing undulations; they are wide and spacious and make excellent targets for the player who is determined to "go" for the pin. The turf to-day is something to be wondered at, it is so firm and true that the ball sits up naturally.

Another enticing feature at Exeter is the fact that, although everywhere is wide open and there is no feeling of constriction, we cannot deviate with impunity from the straight line. Bunkers are accurately placed in order to trap wild shots, and in these days of shortages it is pleasant to report that if our ball does go into the rough, we shall probably succeed in finding it; another point is that unlike some courses, the man who hooks is somewhat more fortunate than his slicing brother. It simply does not pay to slice at Exeter, which is as it should be. In an effort to study the comforts of players, the Committee have very considerably provided at every tee a modern ball-cleaning apparatus. We mention this because we have met very few clubs who have shown such consideration in these little matters.

1939-1945 came, as we all regretfully know, and, like many other famous courses, Exeter made its contribution by giving up some of its valuable land in the interests of winning the War, part of the course being devoted to the U.S. Navy Personnel, some of whom availed themselves of the Club's attenuated hospitality. Well, the War is now over and eighteen holes are playing once again but the layout is different, a special feature being the bight of land to the north east, comprising twenty-two acres, in which five new holes are attractively set.

In the early part of 1947, James Braid was engaged to lay out these new holes, and this was done under the guidance and painstaking supervision of Messrs. J. R. Stutt, Ltd. Tremendous efforts have been made because the Committee felt it imperative that the Exeter Club should regain its pre-war eminence; when a visitor plays this Course to-day, either for the first time or as an old pre-War friend, we think he will quickly agree that superb golf can now be enjoyed on these Exeter Links. And now to describe the actual holes . . .

The first tee is immediately in front of the Club House and the hole, measuring 343 yards, is more of a dog-leg than it would seem to be at first sight since it definitely hinges to the left as we play over the valley across the fairway. The green slopes slightly to the left where there are two cunningly-placed bunkers. The second hole is a splendid example of what a good two-shotter should be, with its 405 yards of superb fairway, and our best line is to the left, to be followed by a very firmly played second to the trickily-sloping green. This is undoubtedly a very testing four hole. We now play the long third of 440 yards which, with its shrewd bunkering, demands straight shots all the way to the green. The fourth hole of 156 yards is the famous "Endowed" hole, where the interest on a certain investment accrues until a member holes out in one, when playing in a competition, when he (or she) receives whatever the interest has amounted to. It was last claimed in 1936 and was then worth £8. It really is a heavenly hole and it is longer than it looks and if we are not on in one, we might

easily find a 4, 5, or even 6 on our card because of the bunkering of the green. The fifth is another long hole of 443 yards with Bogey allowing us five, and we are usually very well content to score this figure. Accuracy is most essential and as the green lies on the crown of a slope, the approach can be enormously difficult to judge. The sixth measures 272 yards, and is a fine hole, played down-hill to a plateau green behind which is a pond, but whether we pitch on to the green with our second or whether we run on, we must be *straight*.

We now commence the first of the post-War holes which are laid out in an attractive bight, as previously mentioned. The seventh is a delightful hole of 392 yards played slightly up-hill, and it is desirable that we hold our tee shot up to the right in order to compensate for any leftward run of the ground. The second shot has to be played very accurately on to the new green. The second one-shotter of the round is the eight, of 194 yards, and it is one of those admirable holes where we can use any club from No. 3 to No. 6, according to the wind. In other words, it is a hole demanding judgement and precision. It would be as well to mention here that all the short holes at Exeter are approximately the same length but they play vastly different according to the climatic conditions. We now cross the road to play a perfect dog-leg, namely the ninth, measuring 380 yards. It is proposed in future to lengthen this hole and to drive across the road, but whether this can be put into operations or not, it cannot be denied that the hole plays very attractively in its present form. The tee-shot requires to be accurately steered uphill, and the best line is on the middle tree which one can easily see. When we reach the top of the rise an entirely fresh atmosphere greets us and we cannot help feeling really invigorated.

The tenth, of 157 yards, is a perfect short hole where slicing is most definitely to be avoided; the bunkering is cunning and cleverly positioned to trap almost any but the correct full pitch shot. The green is a lovely flat oval and from it we can turn and look back towards the tee and see in the distance the colourful Haldon Hills; at the eleventh tee, from which we shall be playing 310 interesting yards to the green, we are at the furthest point from the Club House. The hole is a slight dog-leg, and visitors should note that two magnificent English oaks on the left. We would mention that the twelfth fairway may not be used as a route to the hole, for it is out-of-bounds with the penalty of stroke and distance, and a slice will be "snookered" by the trees on the right. The green is round and well-bunkered and is an attractive target.

The twelfth, of 300 yards, although a comparatively straightforward Bogey 4, and an open hole, requires an accurate approach uphill to a well-guarded green. The big sentinel bunker on the right entrance to the green was once a bomb crater! A feature of this hole is the snake-like way in which the fairway twists, first with its run down to the left, and then with its twist upwards to the right, and so on. It is amazing, though, how few people do get up with their second shot; timidity does not pay good dividends. This is, by the way, the highest point of the Course.

The thirteenth of 456 yards, is a superb dog-leg to the left and our best line is over a tree on the right, or, alternatively to the right of the bunker. As in the case of the eleventh, No. 12 fairway is out-of-bounds. Very few people reach this green in two shots and it behoves us to play our shot to the right of the tree and then to run in. The green is undulating, narrow, and, despite the lack of bunkering, really quite interesting. Our next one-shotter of the round, measuring 153 yards, runs parallel to the eighth, and we take our tee shot having recrossed the road previously mentioned. This is a very good No. 4 iron shot against the

wind, and it does pay to go boldly for the pin, for the capacious green is well-bunkered, and possesses a tantalising convexity.

One of the best holes in the West of England is undoubtedly the fifteenth, of 440 yards, and from the raised tee we have a grand dog-leg to the left; our best line is on the far mound. The green is first class, carved out of the side of a slope, and is definitely in the championship class, a charming setting being formed by the row of trees in the background. The sixteenth, of 406 yards, will satisfy those of us who enjoy a drive over the brow of a hill and our line should be on the old Belvedere Castle. What a lovely setting we have here with the trees on the left and magnificent scenery as far as the eye can see! The sixteenth is a sturdy two-shotter culminating in a beautifully kept green of superb proportions and built-up at its rear.

Our line at the seventeenth, measuring 382 yards, is on the tall firs, the tee-shot being played up a gentle rise through the opening of the first line of trees in order that the dog-leg may be navigated correctly. Before we walk downwards to the left we are once again reminded of the beauty of the links, innumerable lilacs and daffodils being visible everywhere. As we stand on the eighteenth tee in readiness to play the last, and longest, hole – it measures a full 511 yards – we are deeply conscious that Exeter possesses a golf course of which the members may be proud, for although it may be testing it is far from tiring and beauty and enticement go hand-in-hand with incredible invigoration. The safe line for our final tee-shot is on the rhododendron bushes and if our ball has come to rest on the right of the first bunker, this approximately marking the 200 yard distance, we should be at the top of the rise, be steered to the right thus avoiding the next line of bunkers to the left. The Club House with its stately terrace is met with when we round the trees and come to the home green, the surface of which beggars description. Well, that is the Exeter Golf Course, the Club House now beckons us and we should be more than ready for what it has to offer us in the way of first-class refreshment. Before concluding we might mention that the Club possesses three hard tennis courts and three grass courts, all in perfect condition.