



## BURLEY GOLF CLUB

**Hampshire is blessed with two forest golf courses, Burley and the Forest course at Branshaw. As a lover of links golf, and that very natural topography, it did not take long to realise that many of those same features are present in these two beautiful courses.**

My most recent visit was sparked strangely by a game of golf in the Midlands. An old friend and fellow member of the British Golf Collectors had invited me to play at Enville. He had obtained a collection of golfing post cards from the early part of the last century, I found four of them that showed Burley in the very early days, and could not resist acquiring them.

With the club fresh in my mind I soon contacted club Secretary David Gough to arrange my game. On a glorious May day, with the sun shining and the gorse and broom a feast of yellow, it was time to enjoy the delights of Burley. The club was founded and set out in 1905, by a group of local gentlemen, it was sited on forestry land just to the east of the village. It is a course that has changed little in the past hundred years, a truly natural venue, that blends into the forest and provides a very different test of golf. It necessitates some extra facets in the golfers armoury, the ability to play high irons to hold the greens, a good chip and run game, patience when the bounce is not a regular as on parkland, and a good putter.



Without doubt it will be a different experience for the majority of golfers, for the New Forest ponies wander round the course, and it is not unusual to see cattle or pigs. These add to the experience rather than detract from it, and in springtime, the abundance of foals is a fascination.

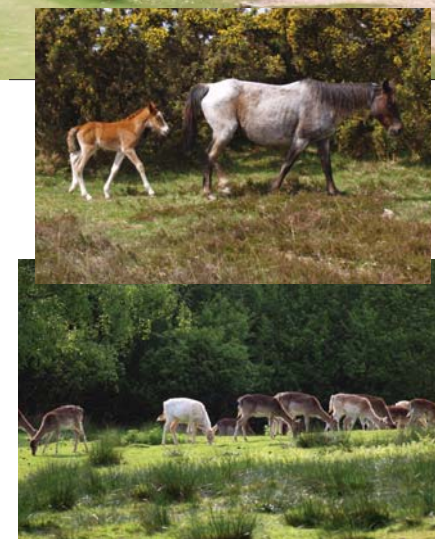
In an old handbook there is a very apt statement, it reads, **Recommended to the golfing world as a delightful holiday cum golf course far from the madding crowd.**

From the moment you arrive at the pointed single story clubhouse set back in the trees you cannot fail to notice the peace and tranquillity that pervades the course, the calm before the storm. As you stand on the first tee, the gorse bushes threaten anything but a well struck drive. The second is across

the road, a short par three defended by a pond and a deep bunker, then a saucer shaped green that is the very devil to hold. Next is the par five, a dogleg left down the valley to a green that slopes away, pars on any of the first three holes is welcome. After a climb up the valley, you are met by my favourite hole, a long four with a valley and a ditch in front of a green set into the face of the hill, a real charmer. The sixth plays back to a green near the road, which is then crossed to face the signature hole the 7th. A challenging tee shot with little room for error, then a ninety degree turn to a green nestling in the trees. The eighth is a short par four, that is played as a three the second time round from a forward tee, where the bunkers come more into play. The finishing hole is a good par four, from an alley back in the trees to an angled fairway, with amid iron approach to the green.

The second nine, has different tees, and they certainly change the manner in which the holes are played. A simple offset changes the angle of the drive on the first and third holes, an effect that is repeated on the 5th and 6th, and the eighth changes to a par three. Eighteen holes that are a test for any golfer, holes that reward good shots, but offline and the gorse and heather will inflict severe punishment.

My personal yardstick is to achieve pars on the 5th and the 7th, and to do so twice was reward indeed, a rare pleasure that sealed the round. Our companions, who hail from



Hawkstone Park in Shropshire were charmed by the course, a very different experience to the parkland of their home venue. The day was far from over, for after the golf came a refreshing drink at the bar, during which time I found someone with whom I could reminisce about past evening Monty League matches that always seemed to be played in sunshine. Then we drove the short distance into the forest to the Station Restaurant for a fabulous cream tea, hot scones with cream and strawberry jam. A final bonus for our friends was the site of a large herd of deer, which included not one but two albinos, a rare sight indeed.

So what of the postcards, well they will find a permanent home at the club, amongst the other pictures that adorn the walls of the clubhouse. There could not be a more appropriate place for them to be, a reminder of the days past, when the pioneers of the game gave us the courses that we enjoy so much today.

Visitors are always welcome at Burley, and if you are looking for something a little different to test your golfing skills, this will be the perfect venue. They have a fine website at [www.burleygolfclub.co.uk](http://www.burleygolfclub.co.uk), or you can contact club Secretary David Gough, who will be pleased to provide the necessary information for your visit. I will be returning soon to savour it all again.



**Michael Rees**