

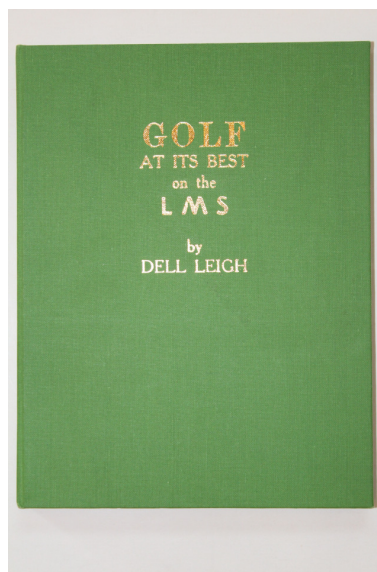
Valuable Book Group, LLC
Specialists in Rare and Antiquarian Golf Books
Newsletter and Book Review for the Serious Collector

Fairways and Railways

Who among us can argue that railroads and great golf don't go together? Surely no one who has ever teed it up at Prestwick with the railway hard on the right as you hit your first tee shot. Likewise, the tee shot on the Road Hole at St. Andrews used to be over a railway shed, now over the edge of the hotel. The railroad was the primary means of transportation to Shinnecock Hills in the early days and remains visible from the first tee today. And surely those that have been lucky enough to cross the railway track that guards the entrance to Pine Valley won't argue the point.

This month we explore books that were published in Great Britain in the early part of the 20th century by railway companies. Although clearly written with commercial purposes in mind, we still think they are instructive today. They are quite collectible and difficult to find. For anyone interested in the history of the game we recommend them highly.

First, is *Golf at its best on the LMS (London, Midland and Scottish Railway)* published in 1925 and written by Dell Leigh. The book is 117 pages and contains a fold-out map in the rear which shows the routes of the LMS railway company. It was published in a hard cover with a green cloth and gilt lettering to the cover. There was also a second edition published in softcover and with the fold-out map.



The book describes 30 different courses in the British Isles. There is a one to three page summary of each course and a description of its virtues. Also included is a period picture of each course almost all of which curiously were taken either during the winter or during bad

weather. Both golfers and in some instances spectators are bundled up or the skies are grey. We know the British Isles have a reputation for bad weather but it's not that bad! We like the book because Leigh has a very definitive point of view to his writing style.

For example, he describes the sterling character of the Lancashire businessman and remarks on how Englishman can be received rather coolly at some Scottish clubs. For anyone who has traveled around the British Isles playing golf, the book still provides insights and observations that are relevant today. The last 17 pages of the book detail every golf course adjacent to the LMS, with hundreds of listings shown. This is a great historical resource since it lists virtually every course then in existence in the British Isles including many that don't exist any more. It is interesting to note that about one third of all the courses listed are nine hole courses.

Leigh shows himself to be a quintessential pre-war Englishman. As an example, the description of arriving by train to play Dornoch: "The joyous awakening in the sleeper at Pitlochry in the early morning; the up-flung blind to the panorama of loveliness of loch and crag and sun-splashed streams; the cup of tea and the first cigarette lying there in regal luxury." Throughout the book he continually mentions his non-golf views: cigarettes and tea and the occasional stronger drink.

The book reminds us how lucky we are today in our ability to easily travel distances. Describing the journey to play in Northern Ireland Leigh writes: "A most comfortable railway boat lying alongside. The nightcap (with soda) before the big open coal fire in the saloon. Bed in a warm and well-appointed cabin. The awakening to early morning tea in Belfast harbour...The soft Irish air." We find this stuff magical and evocative of a lost era.

He also takes on "the Irish Question" in a forthright manner and is happy to report there is nothing for the Englishman to worry about since "Northern Ireland is ultra-loyal."

Finally, the third edition of this book was published with a different title, *Twelve of the best on the LMS* c1928 and is 61 pages and also contains a foldout map. It has a colorful soft cover and contains different content than the previous two editions. It is the stated 'fifth edition' although we're not sure what the fourth edition is and all our standard bibliographic references are silent on the matter. The book in its original form contains a six page color insert in the middle of the book, advertising hotels along the train route.

A Round of Golf on the LNER

A Round of Golf on the London and Northeastern Railway (LNER) was written by Bernard Darwin and was published in three editions by Ben Johnson publishers. The first edition c1924, the second edition c1927 and the third in 1937 although by this time the title was changed to simply *A Round of Golf*. The third edition has different content than the first two editions. The first edition was published with a red cloth cover with black lettering, is 127 pages and does not have a date printed anywhere within the book. The second edition was printed with tan wrappers (softcover) with orange lettering and contains 153 pages. The second edition of the book was also published in a green soft cover with black lettering. The third edition was done with a pictorial cover as seen below and contains 126 pages and

two fold-out maps. The first fold-out map shows the golf courses in England with the nearest stations and the second shows the golf courses in Scotland with the nearest stations. The maps are large and measure 34 cm by 47 cm and are done in grey and red coloring. The first edition is the scarcest of the three and the most expensive.



Bernard Darwin was one of the best and most widely published golf authors of all time, publishing well over 30 golf related titles during his lifetime. His book covers a different railway company, the London and North Eastern Railway and features detailed reviews of 43 courses and 31 period photographs. Cruden Bay is featured prominently in the book and has three illustrations, more than any other course. One photo is a bird's eye view and shows about 30 sheep grazing between the holes in the wonderful moonscape that is Cruden Bay. The last 50 pages of the book list all the courses accessible from the railway and their greens fees. We find Darwin's prose a little flat, especially when compared to Leigh. His course descriptions tend to go hole by hole describing the types of shots you need to hit which can be a little monotonous. Muirfield is listed under a chapter headed *North Berwick and its Satellites*. Darwin specifically mentions that "if you have the necessary credentials you may play here in quiet and privacy." Even then, Muirfield was hard to get on and was probably intentionally downplayed in the book so holiday makers didn't swarm to the course.

We would like to make quick mention of a booklet produced c1926 titled *L.N.E.R. of England and Scotland*. Roughly 8 inches wide by 9 inches high and 16 pages, it appears to have been released for the American market. In addition, the earliest of any of these railway guide books is most likely *Golf Courses Served By Stations On The London & North Eastern Railway*. It is only 24 pages, is softcover with an orange cover, with no publication date present, estimated to be produced in the nineteen teens, although it is more pamphlet than book.

We would be remiss if we did not mention two other books. *Golf Courses on the Great Western Railway Company (GWR)*, published c1923 is 72 pages, brown softcover and contains a very large pull-out color map of courses. And, a booklet published in 1937 called *Golf Courses Served by the G.W.R.* which is 56 pages, contains a fold-out map and has an illustration of a female golfer on the cover. The forward is written by H.S. Colt. Both books are not really books in our sense of the word in that they merely publish lists of courses.

Since all the books reviewed here were essentially used as travel guides, it is difficult to find them in very good condition or better. They are all sought after and recommended, although we recommend Leigh's above the others.