

An aerial photograph of a lush green golf course. In the upper left, a clubhouse with a brown roof is nestled among trees. The foreground shows a large, undulating green with several sand traps. The background features rolling hills under a clear sky.

Courses

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Huntercombe

Originally a heathland layout with hardly a tree on site, this par-70 Willie Park Jnr design 15 miles south-east of Oxford has grown up over the years into a timeless gem.

The club was founded in 1901, and its beautiful and easy-walking course is a

wonderful place to play. Unusually, it begins with a very short par 3, before the one gentle change in elevation on the dramatic downhill 2nd and demanding uphill 3rd. Having returned to the clubhouse at the excellent dogleg 5th, the next two skirt the Ridgeway, which you then cross to play

holes 8 to 13, the last of which borders the excellent new practice ground. The short par 4 at 17 offers birdie chances, while another very strong feature throughout is the contoured greens.

The single-story clubhouse is full of charm and the club is now working with leading course architect Tim Lobb to

ESSENTIALS

Huntercombe Golf Club,
Nuffield, Henley-on-Thames,
Oxfordshire, RG9 5SL

Stats: par 71, 6,281 yards

GF: round: £75-£95;
day: £95-£115

reinstate some of Park's lost design features and review the entire landscape philosophy.

History

Having twice won The Open in the late 1890s, Park Jnr became one of the earliest leading golf course architects. Sunningdale's Old course is probably his most famous creation, and he bought the land at Huntercombe at just about the same time before building the course in just seven months. The club

was subsequently purchased by Viscount Nuffield before it was taken over by the membership in 1963. James Bond author Ian Fleming and Henry Longhurst were both members here.

Signature holes

Huntercombe is consistently strong throughout, and it was not really the style of the time to create signature holes. There is, however, a most definite and distinctive signature feature: the Willie Park Jnr 'pots'.

With just 13 sand bunkers on the course, there are a further 100-plus areas where Park created hazards that can best be described as grass bunkers. Varying greatly in size and shape, some are tricky to see from a distance and some are lined with or contain gorse and other trees and shrubs. They greatly add to both the visual impact and strategic approach at this thoroughly enjoyable classic.