



# The case of the magnificent course

Clive Agran is touring Sussex golf courses. This month he visits Crowborough Beacon, close to the former home of Sherlock Holmes author, Arthur Conan Doyle

Picture: James Bignell Photography

**A**REGULAR in lists of the country's top 100 courses, Crowborough Beacon is simply superb. The view from the first tee alone – although not quite as good as the one from the clubhouse terrace nearly 800 feet above sea level – is almost worth the green fee on its own. Don't be too distracted by the scenery, however, as the opening drive has to carry a significant expanse of heather.

A true heathland course, heather features prominently and most will tangle with it several times during a round. Assuming you're lucky enough to find your ball, the best advice is don't be too ambitious but get back onto the short stuff as quickly as possible.

The close proximity of trees and dense undergrowth to the often sloping fairways put a premium on accuracy which, since the course is not terribly long by modern standards, is more important than power. Bunkers, too, feature prominently and are best avoided.

The other key ingredient that contributes enormously to the course's appeal is the succession of wonderfully elevated tees. With so much height at their disposal, the course's designers – which include the legendary Dr Alister MacKenzie who went on to create Augusta National – must have relished the opportunity of working with such fine topography. There was no need to shift huge volumes of earth around to create features as nature had already done the job and the course retains a wonderfully natural look.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who lived close to the second hole, is the most famous former member. He was captain of the club in 1910 and his wife was lady captain the following year. Quite what the famous author would have made of a recent relaxation in the dress code to permit the wearing of smart jeans in the clubhouse is a matter of conjecture but he would surely have approved of the appointment of the new

general manager nudging his old club into the 21st century. It's elementary really, as the manager's name is Holmes.

## Crowborough Beacon Golf Club

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