



# The Lost Commandments

The wisdom of the ages is preserved for posterity.

BY DAVID A. OATIS

In the course of conducting a Turf Advisory Visit at a very old golf course, I was shown an ancient cemetery in an unused portion of the course. Its existence was previously unknown to the superintendent and golfers, and it had been uncovered in the process of carrying out some much-needed tree and brush removal work.

With the idea that this might be a good place to collect grasses for turf-grass breeding purposes, we decided to examine the cemetery. In the course of our search, we stumbled upon an unusual stone monument located in the exact center of the cemetery. It was taller than the others and was ornately adorned with golf balls, trophies, and cherubs brandishing golf clubs. The writing was difficult to decipher because the stone was quite weathered and the inscription was written in Old English, so the spelling and grammar were peculiar. Close scrutiny revealed an interesting inscription, perhaps just as appropriate today as the day it was chiseled into the stone long ago.

## THE 10 COMMANDMENTS OF GOFFE

- I. *Thou shalt not complaine that the links are not well suited to thy game.*
- II. *Thou shalt accept responsibility for thine own actions and not blame hapless folke for thine own mistakes.*

III. *Thou shalt not take the name of thy greenkeeper in vain.*

IV. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's greens.*

V. *Thou shalt not force, nor pressure in any mannour, thy greenkeeper to imperil thy greens by means of using weighty rollers or clipping/grazing too closely.*

VI. *Thou shalt not place at risk the plants or little creatures in an unholy pursuit of deepening the colour of thine turves.*

VII. *Thou shalt not place any woody plants or artificial or contrived mounds on the links, for if they were intended to be there, the Lord would have seen to it long before they were envisioned by thee.*

VIII. *Do not place thy game of goffe before the true gods of man and nature, and remembre that goffe is a grande and wonderful game and a chance to speake with nature, but it is not a religion unto itselfe.*

IX. *Lest thy families and worke be ignored, thou shalte playe in a most expediente mannour.*

X. *The single most important commandment, find thy featherie/guttie and smite it until it is lost from the eyes of man or until it is directed into the hole. Thou shalte not improve thy lie.*

At the end of the list of "Golf's Ten Commandments," there was clearly placed an "XI," and a blank space was provided after it as if to say, "Here are the ten commandments but I'll leave space for another one should it ever become necessary." Considering all that has changed in the game of golf over the years, one must believe that there is need for a few more commandments. I will be happy to entertain all suggestions, but until such time as they are received, the following are my proposals:

XI. *Thou shalt not confuse the blasphemy thee hears on television with commandments I through X.*

XII. *Abel bodied men shalte not use goffe carts. Theye are for the infirme.*

XIII. *Thou shalte let thy links rest on the seventh daye.*

XIV. *Thou shalte not seeke to immitate or copy the links of they neighbore.*

*Author's note: Honoring the request of the course official, the exact location of the cemetery and monument is considered privileged and shall not be disclosed.*

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN FRETZ