

Golf Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Scheme

LAST month two young men left the groundstaff of a club in the Home Counties because, less than a mile away, they could earn £3 a week more. They went to a dead-end job admittedly, but is greenkeeping any better? We think it is. Can we convince possible recruits?

If we do nothing, golf course upkeep in the future will become very sketchy. Already one head greenkeeper at a well-known London club complains: "There is just no time for finesse".

The volume of play strips the tees, scars the fairways and wears tracks round greens. Above all, it delays essential operations like mowing and small staffs have still less time for polish. A big effort may be made for a major tournament—two head greenkeepers, by no means elderly, have died suddenly within weeks of this kind of effort—out late at night changing holes, up at 4 a.m. mowing, with all the worry of critical players and gallery—even everyday routine at busy clubs now demands this kind of programme.

Happily, many clubs realise the value of their groundstaff, give their greenkeeper an adequate team and pay a decent wage. But only about 30 are doing anything for the future. That is the number who have registered

youngsters with Joint Council for Golf Greenkeeper Apprenticeship.

No sensible youth with the qualities which are needed will commit himself to a club, where committees and officers change annually, for wages less than he can get in industry. He must be convinced (and his parents) that he will be trained and that his knowledge will eventually have a solid market value.

The Golf Unions of England, Scotland and Wales worked with the Greenkeepers' Association to set up an Apprenticeship Scheme run by a Joint Council. The Council issues a syllabus, keeps in touch with Youth Employment Officers, gives information on training courses, provides printed Deeds and an Employers' Guide.

That is only a beginning, but it must have support from all golf clubs who believe that their future is as important as their present. A young man taken on purely as a form of cheap labour will lose interest and drift into easier work. If he is taken on as an apprentice, trained, taught to play golf, and given a permanent official to look after him, the new problems and still higher standards of the future will be met and the long tradition of golf greenkeeping in Britain preserved for the next generation.

Golf clubs can obtain information about the Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Scheme from:—

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Bingley,

Yorkshire.