

# WALK ABOUT

By PATRICK SMARTT

I have for sometime thought it to be a pity that the head greenkeepers of neighbouring clubs do not visit each other's courses and exchange views. At the Annual General Meeting of the Association the matters discussed will be of a general nature, mainly, it may be supposed, on terms and conditions of employment. One is doubtful (I write in ignorance) if the art — and art it is — of cherishing a course is one of the items.

There are, as everyone knows, courses in greenkeeping. I have never come across such educational gatherings, civil or military that were as useful as personal discussions.

Courses, to point the obvious, differ: the links, the heath, the chalk downland and the lush park. Each calls for a different treatment, as does altitude which can expose the land to all the elements. Despite the differing conditions, one greenkeeper will increase his knowledge and widen his views in a day spent with another, who will also benefit.

I hold the belief that in this peculiar world of ours there is always something to be learned from another, either from mistakes made or something new.

“Whatever ignorance man may show  
From none disdainful turn  
For everyone doth something know  
That you have yet to learn.”

Some 16 years ago I had cause to visit a links. I was secretary of a heath course which, at its highest point is 700 feet above sea level. I asked my opposite number if I might bring down my head greenkeeper to see a links, and converse with his head man — one who receives an annual accolade from Leonard Crawley in his reports on the President's Putter.

A. P. Arnold entertained his visitor royally, lunching him and they quaffed a beer or two followed by a tour of the course, inspection of machinery, stocks of dressing, etc. It is not

unreasonable to suppose they discussed their respective secretaries (I hope not too critically), with some derogatory remarks on the subject of people who, mowing their lawns at week-ends, as members of the green committee offer advice on course upkeep.

I do know that my old friend enjoyed his day and that he absorbed the difference, the distinct difference there is in a sandy sub-soil and the one of clay to which he was accustomed. He learned there were problems other than his own, even the air with its ozone was unlike that inland. A call at a downland or park course would have created new impressions. The reverse holds good, visits from those responsible for these courses would add to their knowledge in seeing a high, heath course.

There is a risk, if you have been to a wealthy club, of your man coming back seething with envy over the mechanisation he has seen. At the time of that visit to Rye, there were many occasions on our home course when I used to hold the gears in the engaged position while Harry Gates drove the ancient tractor which, in our more placid moments we called “the old lady”. Today, with the club substantially better off, he and I, both retired, watch several mechanical vehicles trundling about the place. I suspect there is an unspoken opinion in his mind that “in his day” they did a man's job. A remark that cannot apply to his successor who had been his No. 2.

Greenkeepers are a race of their own; they speak the same language. They are men of the earth, like farmers, gamekeepers, shepherds and the true gardener — they all have mud on their boots.

This scheme, if that is not too grandiose a title, must depend on secre-

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taries. Firstly in seeking the opinion of the other, and secondly by tactful enquiry making certain that one greenkeeper will not resent a visit from another, and that they are of compatible character. Nor should there be any suggestion that one is going to be taught by the other. Obviously the greenkeeper cannot be expected to pay for transport, or entertain out of his own pocket, and it should not be on his day off.

A secretary worth his salt takes a pride in his course, and leads rather than commands his staff. Thus, these interchanges should present little difficulty.

A further advantage is the break from parochialism . . . the day after day effort to coax the best from the sandy, the mud and wormcast course, the east wind emaciated grass — in many instances mis-called turf.

Looking back, I can only wish I had taken the responsible man with me on more occasions when I went to watch tournaments. I am convinced there is profit to the man, a day out for one thing, and therefore to the course if he has an occasional walk around with one of his profession at a club foreign to him.



**HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES**

**Annual Draw**

This year the draw will be run on the Dunlop Masters Tournament and the books of tickets are now in the hands of the Section Secretaries.

It is hoped that every member will do his utmost to promote the sale of these tickets to ensure the financial stability of our association.



<b>MAY</b>	6th	Midland Section Tournament—Oswestry G.C.
	13th	East Midland Spring Tournament—Stanton on the Wold G.C.
	13th	North-East Section—Visit to S.T.R.I.
	19th	Sheffield Section President's Trophy
	27th	Southern Section A.G.M.
<b>JUNE</b>	15th	Sheffield Section Union Match
	16th	Northern Section President's Prize
	22nd	South-West Section Am/Greenkeeper foursome
	23rd	Midland Section—Visit to Massey-Ferguson
	25th	Midland Section Annual Match
30th	Welsh Section A.G.M.	
<b>JULY</b>	8th	Sheffield Section Annual Tournament
	16th	South-West Section Summer Tournament