A tribute to David Spurden

Everyone can recall the absolute shock they felt on the morning of Sunday, August 31, when they awoke to the news that Diana, Princess of Wales, had been killed in a horrific crash in Paris.

A world went into mourning and the collective outpouring of national grief, as highlighted by 12 hour queues to sign a book of condolence and the funeral itself, will be remembered for the remainder of everyone’s lifetime.

However, the vast majority of those who grieved had never met the Princess, but formed their “attachment” from television pictures, the printed word and glossy photographs.

A mere 25 days later the world of greenkeeping suffered an equally shocking and tragic loss. In its way the loss cut deeper because David Spurden, who was killed in a shooting accident out on his beloved Ganton course, was known personally by so many who shared his profession. Not only known but respected and, perhaps most of all, liked as a friend.

Respect came from his wonderful skill and greenkeeping ability – you needed only to look at Ganton to appreciate that – and liked because in an industry known for the genuine nature of so many of its people David had also reached the top of the tree. It is rare to find class acts who can wear both business and personal hats with equal aplomb, but David did just that, and in such an unassuming, down to earth, fashion.

It is perhaps fitting that a week before the accident Ganton played host to the last Hayter Challenge Final and that 63 greenkeepers from all over Britain and Ireland had the opportunity to play David’s course. With potential critics aplenty and, in Ganton, a huge reputation to protect, it would have been a daunting prospect for many, but David was relaxed – he even represented the Northern Region team and played well, especially in the morning.

He knew he had no reason to be anything other than relaxed because, as he no doubt suspected, Ganton was the real star of the week. The praise which flowed for its condition and its layout during both practice and competition days, as well as during the gala dinner, would have caused many a head to swell... but David merely smiled contentedly.

You can ill afford to lose people of the calibre of David Spurden and in an industry as close knit as greenkeeping that loss is even more acute and hard felt.

I pass on heartfelt condolences to those who will feel that loss more than most – his family and, in particular, his son and daughter of whom I know he was so proud.

That two such remarkable people be lost in such a short space of time is truly a tragedy and for those who knew either of them personally the loss creates a gap in their lives which will never be filled.