Sandy McDivot gets a few things off his chest...

As Basil Fawlty might say, satellite television is an avenue of pleasure that has been closed off to me. I have attempted to persuade Mrs McDivot of its necessity by pointing out that amongst other little treats, it would make available to her a channel entirely devoted to shopping, but she immediately makes the assumption that this is a sly ploy to spend my evenings in unathletic pose while watching sport with beer can perched on rapidly expanding abdominal region. Her objection to televised sport centres around her argument that there is little point in watching real life drama unfold in the form of soap operas.

That is not to say that I am totally alien to the pleasures of the dish receiver. I have to admit to straying into the habit along with my work colleagues when engaged in this highly civilised accoutrement to the working week we often watch golf on Sky Sports. This is of the highest quality and a pleasure to watch but I must state my objection to two frequently shown adverts that are totally derogatory to our noble profession. In fact they put us into the same bracket as estate agents and tax inspectors; a minority group that is perfectly acceptable to be prejudiced towards. The first advert depicts one of our brethren as an unkempt, drug crazed psychopath, hell bent on holding up poor Freddy Couples while he moves the hole to a small promontory of the green that juts out into a lake. The other shows a greenkeeper spending hours rolling golf balls up to the hole making sure the position he has just chosen is as crowned as possible. In both cases, the message is given that the manufacturer's equipment can more than cope with our evil intentions. Unfortunately for us, the additional message is that we are all Charles Manson clones whose sole raison d'être is to irritate golfers.

This is a viscous and totally unnecessary aspersion to the good name of courses and Mother Nature, even if they are designed, built and maintained in a totally artificial manner. In fact in a straight competition between these courses and Mother Nature, even playing a hole and receiving a shot a hole, Mother Nature would be well and truly thrashed by about the twelfth. Personally as I look out through the clubhouse windows, beyond the incessant downpour called spring and onto the more natural look of Sludgecombe, I opine that these courses are amongst other things, severely lacking in large areas of mud. However that's just a personal opinion and unfortunately one that doesn't always coincide with that of my members.

But what then has been the driving force behind these changes over the years? Golf courses change with the times just like everything else in life. Take house architecture for instance. There is a surprising similarity between the fashion in house style and that of golf courses. Back in the early part of the last century, the simplicity of the arts and crafts and art deco movements came out of a rejection of the ornate stuffiness of the Victorian age. This was followed up with the 1930's urban sprawl which symbolised a need to return to the more simple life of the countryside albeit as a more sanitised version. Hence the main roads that reach out from the cities into the tranquillity of the countryside are lined with neat 1930's style housing, often with Tudor style beams and each surounded by its own piece of countryside in the form of a garden or at least three sides. Golf course architecture was in its infancy at the time but Colt, McKenzie and Ross et
al, all produced courses that would be in similar compatibility with nature as much as was possible. The land on which they were laid out was never altered to any degree and intrinsic features were utilised in the design. Water hazards were rarely employed unless they were naturally present and bunkers were made to look indistinguishable from their land on which they were laid out was we would struggle to achieve with a dri-
ver. Was the crude lushness of these days we had courses that were under-
terity of the pre and post war years. 

But often it is a rejection of the past that is the inspiration for future fash-
So in the old immediate post war days we had courses that were under-

The fact is, in those days average golf clubs were not in the summer at least always able to afford the luxury of dense grass coverage and with just a couple of greenkeepers that had to mow the greens using push mowers, who would want it. Maybe the trend setting courses we observe in those old films had gone out of their way to create grass so as they were set apart from the ordinary golf club. They could afford grass and so they made damn sure they would get it. It would become a measure of wealth. Onlookers would say to themselves "Look at that. They've got real grass on their greens that stops the ball from continually running 30-foot passed the hole. I wish we had that on our course 

The need to forget the war years also heavily influenced the building boom of the 50's, 60's and 70's. The housing at that time was cheap and modern and no one seemed to bother too much about visual appeal. If it was old, knock it down and stick up a few million tons of leylandii and poplars are being replaced with the indigenous alter-

The future? Well could we take things a logical step further and start to appreciate the more subtle shades of green that are to be found on our older more unaffected courses. A need for change and a rejection of the past has inspired us before. So now that the past is the multicoloured world of artificial courses, perhaps the future is to reject these synthetic abominations and to embrace not only the design concepts of bygone ages but also their colours and textures as well.

Sandy McDivot. Head Greenkeeper, Sludgcombe Pay and Play today. The key word in house fash-
ion is authenticity. Houses are sold as having original features. The panelled doors and fireplaces that were ripped out in the 50's are now being replaced with a vengeance. It does not matter whether it is Victorian Gothic, Georgian or even 70's kitsch; it must be reproduced and conserved at all costs. It has even got to the stage where ghastly 60's tower blocks are listed as being architecturally significant. And so it is with golf courses. People are regressing to their roots and reproducing the original design features of old. Bunkers are remodelled with creative shapes and mounds and their edges allowed to grow wild. Large areas of rough grassland are recreated and in some cases even the dreadful lines of 

ludicrous building schemes of those times such as the Old Course Hotel on the 17th at St Andrews. Similarly the thankfully few golf courses that were built at this time, were often appallingly bad in both their con-
struction and their design. Bunkering would generally consist of large saucer shaped monstrosities, often shallow and boring which was pre-
sumably an attempt to match the design philosophies of the day.

Then in the late 80s, housing devel-

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