

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN this game called GOLF, we find ourselves as greenkeepers bonded together for the first time. Before, we were separate units, but now breathe deeply with pride that we are one Association.

I applaud the commencement of BIGGA and I am heartened by the fact that the association has already held its first seminar and appointed Neil Thomas as Executive Director.

Greenkeeping is one large family and like most families, its members from time to time will beg to differ, but no doubt the differences will be resolved through healthy debate. As greenkeepers we can take much pleasure in our work, striving to produce the best conditions for the greatest game in the world. Maintenance problems pose a day to day puzzle, although not nearly so bewildering as the historical puzzle as to where the game began. Its roots seem untraceable as there are so many versions that it is impossible to be certain.

Although a game in the form of golf did exist as far back as Roman times which had the name "PAGANICA" and in ancient England called "CAMABUCA", in Belgium it was called "CHOLE" and in Holland "KOLVEN". I must say that I prefer the Dutch name, but in France as ever the

description was more flowery, "JEU DE MAIL".

We can safely say that Scotland was in full 'swing' long before 1427, the year the first edict, of which there were three, banning golf in favour of archery practice was proclaimed. From this time until the forming of the various societies and companies there appeared to be a constant battle between the Church and the players of golf, who had excused themselves from the then frequent two or three hour sermons, perhaps to avoid falling asleep!

Golf continued during these years in an unorganised fashion. No one had created any hard and fast rules and no clubs had been formed. Eventually some gentlemen from Edinburgh formed the Edinburgh Golfing Society now known as the Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh, whose home is at Barnton.

The Royal Burgess pre-dates the Royal and Ancient by some nineteen years and the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers by nine years. The latter were the first to lead the way by drawing up a set of rules that laid the foundation of the game as we know it today. But it was the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews that the leading clubs looked to for an authoritative and uniform version

of the rules which they could all adopt.

One of the first golfers to achieve fame was Alan Robertson from St. Andrews who by all accounts was peerless as a golfer, never having lost a single match playing level. He could not be called the champion for no Championship existed, all his matches being head to head encounters for a side bet. One of the stories as to how the Open Championship started at Prestwick was the desire to find the best golfer in the land after the unbeaten Robertson's

death. The first Championship was played on Wednesday 17th October 1860. It had eight entrants and was played over three rounds of twelve holes at Prestwick. The winner was Willie Park with a score of 174 and the runner up was the legendary Tom Morris with a score of 176. This then was the platform on which the modern game was built, with ever greater heights being reached as this year's Ryder Cup win proved.
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