

## OPINION

It is a small sample but already suggests three trends. First, and most ominous, is the role of leading professionals in bringing in the business and staying in it as co-designer.

Second is the listing of the name of the collaborator who probably did all the serious work. This may have occurred because the full list was prepared by Ronald Whitten, co-author with Geoffrey Cornish of "The Golf Course", the only full account so far of the designers of the world's golf courses. He will have been meticulous in allocating the credits.

Bob Cupp, for example, has now stepped out of the shadow of collaboration and stands alone. Jim Wyllie who will be speaking at next April's Cambridge Conference (Queens' College, by the way, not Queen's and not Queens) told me yesterday that Cupp is enjoying a vogue in Ontario re-fashioning out-dated bunkering. He is also designing a new course in Sussex for a Canadian group and already has his own under-collaborator.

Third, many of the names on the list are new or at least unfamiliar. I have certainly heard of Don Knott who married Victoria, the daughter of another golf course architect, Robert Muir Graves. Graves still ploughs his own furrow solo in spite of a long list of courses in America and as far afield as Japan and Malaysia. He started life as a licensed landscape architect in California but gradually concentrated on golf. This is still the best route into golf course architecture though collaboration with an experienced firm is probably safer at the start. Peter Dye for instance, the neo-Impressionist in golf design, has ten young men attached to his office. The policy there is one man, one course, from crackle to champagne. Even Mrs Dye has blossomed into full consultanthood and specialises in design from the forward tees.

I have reservations about collaboration with a big-name pro. They tend to have bizarre ideas amongst the good ones picked up when away from the practice ground. Unless Ronald Whitten is around, they may also get a disproportionate share of the credit.

And the owner of the big name does not pin it on the gate for peanuts. He is cashing in on a valuable



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property built single-handed over many years. The customer will not be hornswoggled but had better get his sums right before agreeing to the unlimited budget which is likely to be requested and which, as the old joke insists, will be exceeded.

That milestone on top of the other one, the advisory fee, will grind the client pretty small unless he has recourse to building or resort development. Those possibilities

are scarce in these small islands and getting scarcer as the planners and conservationists close ranks. Even the general public who prefer their present outlook to what is being offered now tag along to the Public Enquiry and register their protests about disturbance, traffic, dust, water table and excessive use of land by an élite group.

I blame all this on the amount of expensive hot air necessary to blow up the balloon. Each development has to be grander, bigger and more star-spangled than the last. These requirements determine where the golf course will be built - not the suitability of the site itself. The qualities of the site are relatively unimportant because it is simply converted into a standard 72 par product exactly like all the others apart from a few local eccentricities likely to ensure that the maintenance bill will be astronomical for ever after. The greenkeeper ends up with the headache - trying to maintain a monster which should not have been there in the first place. We grumble about inflation going up from 4.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent. Where is it going in the golfing world? It is not going down, that is for sure. And it is not steady. So there is only one other way. And, present trends look set to push it higher still.

Now, before you put in for a rise, sharpen your pencils.

### WHIZ KID'S QUIZ ON GOLFING FINANCE

- A. What will it cost to add a big name to your project?  
Tick one box for each question  
a) £50,000  b) £100,000  c) £350,000  d) £500,000
- B. A popular but not outstanding North American club has an 8-year waiting list. What is the entrance fee?  
a) \$10,000  b) \$20,000  c) \$30,000  d) \$50,000
- C. You decide to play a round at Pebble Beach. What dollar bills should you offer?  
a) \$20  b) \$50  c) \$100  d) \$500
- D. Which of the above is the best value?  
A.  B.  C.

*If you got three C's and a C go to the top of the class. If not, there is still hope if you continue reading THE GOLF COURSE.*