

Greenside Comment...



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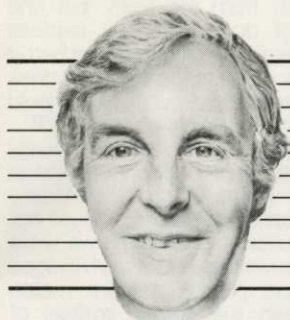
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John Lelean

What's done, needs to be seen to be done

In January this year the newly formed Association of British & International Golf Greenkeepers' came into being, formed by the amalgamation of the long established British Golf Greenkeepers' Association, the southern based English & International Golf Greenkeepers' Association and the Scottish Greenkeepers.

This coming together, following years of acrimony among certain members of the greenkeeping profession, was precipitated by the Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews in the interest of furthering the future and recognition of those men who maintain our golf courses, without whom there would not be a game to play.

Such a move was welcomed by all sections of the golf industry, the greenkeepers themselves, the controlling bodies in golf and those who come under the general heading of - Trade.

All accepted the work involved in organising an Association could no longer be left to honorary officers regardless of their dedication and must be the responsibility of a full-time official.

The decisions made twelve months ago should now be bearing fruit, but greenkeepers

nationwide are asking - WHEN, and so they might.

Last month the National Greenkeepers' Tournament held at Verulam Golf Club, St. Albans, was organised by the Mid Anglia Section of the now defunct BGGGA. It was a highly successful tournament, patronised by many of the active participants of previous years, in fact the majority of competitors were the 'Old Faithfuls'.

This year there was no Annual General Meeting for the new Association and greenkeeping business was confined to informal discussions in the 19th hole.

The Chairman Mr. Walter Woods did attend and said a few words at the conclusion of the prize giving, but the newly appointed Executive Director Mr. Neil Thomas did not. He was said to be moving house to Bingley where his office will be incorporated within the headquarters of the Sports Turf Research Institute.

Cautionary words of advice from many quarters warned of the dangers of rushing into the new venture. Advice largely ignored by its architects, for reasons best known to themselves.

To bring together three distinct, separate bodies, each with its own administration, varying philosophies and regional differences requires delicate negotiation and a degree of diplomacy.

What has now been created is a vacuum. The old groupings have gone and the new, as far as greenkeepers are concerned, is not functioning.

This could have been avoided if the BIGGA had been set up as an umbrella association with three individual associations continuing to operate until the time was ripe for a smooth transfer.

Finance has never been a problem. As reported last month the R&A in a massive grant payment to various golf bodies around the world allocated £37,500 to form the new Association.

Greenkeepers are expecting positive action from their management committee, with the priorities of improved status, better working conditions, an enhanced training scheme and an agreed salary scale reflecting their contribution to the game of golf. So far, all they have received are promises.

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