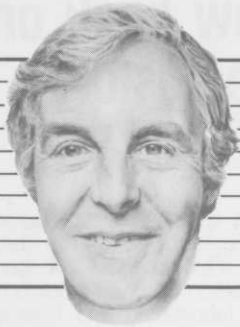


## Greenside Comment...



*John Lelean*



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## The Year Ahead

As we enter the New Year, the prospects of a better deal for greenkeepers look extremely bright. Interest in the game of golf world wide is growing at an enormous rate and this must offer tremendous opportunities for those young men who are prepared to set forth and seek the rewards for hard work and initiative both at home and in foreign fields.

Massive financial investment is currently taking place in Spain, Portugal, France, Germany and the Middle East where golf courses are under construction combined with housing and hotel development. The investors know only too well their rewards will only be realised if the standards and condition of the golf course match the price levels they will be asking for the accommodation.

Experienced greenstaff and this must include the British greenkeeper, recognised as among the best, will be in great demand provided they are prepared to dedicate themselves to the job, adapt to the customs in their chosen country and learn a new language.

It is an opportunity for pioneers, those, who like their predecessors set out to the new world to seek their fortunes.

Even at home there will be increasing opportunities as private enterprise capitalises on the policy change relating to the release of more agricultural land for leisure purposes. Local authorities will find it increasingly difficult to find the huge sums to build new courses, so it will be the private sector where the majority of new development will emanate, but as those who already earn their living with company golf courses know, the rewards are considerable, but accountability severe.

The new Greenkeepers Association is one year old this month. It has a full-time administrator and offices at the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley St. Ives at Bradford, but if greenkeepers believe they can now sit back and let others organise their lives they will be in for a rude awakening.

The strength of any organisation is only as good as the effort put into it and this particularly applies to the BIGGA. We have been critical in the past of a seemingly lack of action, but there are a number of dedicated members who have put in considerable effort to launch the combined association and steer a passage through troubled

waters. As well as the nominated officers at national level those who organise the membership within the regions should also be recognised.

The priorities for their first full year are two fold. The development of a recognised improved education and training scheme to cover not only new entrants to the industry, but those who have not been given an opportunity in the past. Compared to other industries the standards of training available to greenstaff have been abysmal. What other business will only take trainees to a City & Guilds Certificate and not offer nationwide opportunities to progress to higher levels of certification?

The second goal must be improved salaries and working conditions, but one will not be achieved without the other. In some ways it is a "chicken and egg" situation. The answer is firmly in the control of the members themselves. Only they by their own efforts can improve the image of the greenkeeper and portray themselves as professionals doing a professional job.

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