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## Why All Greenkeepers Should Join An Association

More than 70 years ago, the greenkeepers of Scotland banded together and formed the forerunner of the present Scottish And International Golf Greenkeepers' Association.

Even in 1911, the need for an association was considered a vital prerequisite for the advancement of greenkeeping and greenkeepers.

The basic goals remain the same today—to use the resources of a national association to bring the member's professional excellence up to a level that will set him apart from others and enable him to reap richer benefits from his calling.

Recent years have brought about the realisation that the complexities of the present day call for an expansion in the scope of SIGGA activities. No longer just a cutter and keeper of the greens, the golf course greenkeeper of today has to be a doctor of soil and grasses, a scientist, mechanic, plant pathologist, entomologist, manager, administrator, public relations man and all of this responsibility in a rapidly changing world of limited resources, new technology and a sometimes bewildering existence.

This is where SIGGA comes in—providing every greenkeeper the means to make it, comfortably and happily, in a world full of multiplying challenges.

It is a simple fact of life that everyone in a skilled trade or profession needs to belong to a professional organisation and the logical choice is SIGGA for those in the greenkeeping profession. It is the oldest association and the one that commands national respect.

SIGGA has drive, the kind that comes from representing a growing membership across the country and also abroad. It is the united voice of professionals in SIGGA who recognise that their growth and advancement will best be helped by a strong association with worldwide acclaim.

The members of SIGGA are proud of their profession and eager to see it grow in stature and occupy a position with greater strength in the world of golf. SIGGA members not only take, they give back through participation in association activities in a fine display of unselfish sharing.

SIGGA does more than offer you the prestige of belonging to an association of its stature. It keeps you informed and up-to-date on the art and science of fine turfgrass management; helps you to develop the other skills vital to your job; works to achieve recognition for you as a vital cog in the golf course community and provides a variety of other benefits that show SIGGA's concern for the well being of yourself and your family.

*J.W. Neilson, SIGGA President*

## New Addresses

William Moffett, 22 Port Street, Dalbeattie  
 Stephen Earl, 2 Wheatley Place, Stevenston, Ayrshire  
 I. Semple, 16 Kundale Terrace, Kirkcudbright  
 J.S. Barr, 20 Mount Avenue, Symington, Kilmarnock  
 S. Ramsey, 42 Russell Drive, Ayr  
 G. Heron, 38 Main Street, Ballantrrie  
 M. Holland, 11 Castle Street, Maybole, Ayrshire  
 J. Bradford, 3 Solway View, Mainsriddle, Dumfries  
 D. Gray, Lahinch Golf Club, Co. Clare

J. Grainger, secretary of the Ayrshire section, reports that the spring tournament enjoyed the warmest April day since records began. Some 41 members, trade and guests contested the tournament at Ayr, Bellisle. The long course proved to be the winner, with only one player, R. Bruce, beating the SSS.

Thanks go to Kyle and Carrick for the courtesy of the course and to Harry Diamond and all the staff for a very enjoyable day.

Bill Beveridge came over from Edinburgh to play in the afternoon and present the prizes in the evening. It is with great sadness that we learnt of his death several days later in this his retiral year (see story in *Notebook*). He will be a great loss to Ransomes and an ever bigger loss to greenkeeping. Our deepest sympathies go to his family.

The autumn outing will be held on September 11 at Old Prestwick.

Elie Golf Club was the venue for the recent Central spring outing when 40 members and guests enjoyed a great day. The course was in excellent condition thanks to Brian Lawrie and his staff. Catering in the hands of Mrs Cowan was first class and the hospitality of club secretary Mr Forgie and club steward Mr Cowan was greatly appreciated. Our thanks go to the captain and council of Elie Golf Club for granting us the courtesy of the course.

Winners: best nett—Neil Rawlinson, 67; best scratch—Brian Finlayson, 77; 1st class—G.Scougall, 70, runner-up—John Philp, 71; 2nd class—W. Whitfield, 69, runner-up—G.Palfray, 72; trade—M.Dennis, 72 and two-ball fours—J. Lees and T. McNairney, 27½.

Qualifiers for the Autogarden tournament are B. Finlayson, C. Stewart, J. Philp, N. Rawlinson, G. Scougall, W. Whitfield, G. Palfray, I. Donaldson, C. Fotheringham and E. Small.

Archie Morton, until last year a greenkeeper at Stirling Golf Club, has died. Archie was a keen supporter of the section until he retired early for health reasons.

The annual spring tournament of the East Section was held at Glencorse Golf Club by courtesy of the club council. Over 60 members attended on a dry, sunny day and thoroughly enjoyed themselves on a course in first-class

*Continued on page 24...*

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# Education in the Lothians

SINCE the late 1970s, the greenkeeping profession in east central Scotland has been served by Oatridge Agricultural College, reports Mr D.F. Webster, senior lecturer in horticulture at the Oatridge Agricultural College, West Lothian.

There are usually about 30 students over the three years of study geared to SCOTEC part one and part two certificates in greenkeeping and groundsmanship and they receive instruction in up-to-date methods of maintenance and construction and become involved in various ongoing projects at the college.

As part of the course, there are machinery demonstrations, talks from major firms involved in golf-course construction and turf irrigation, as well as sportsground layout and the use of artificial surfaces for sport, and to back these up, there are visits to suitable venues.

Students are encouraged to develop their design skills by preparing plan drawings—for instance, for a golf course layout or machinery/storage area.

They also get involved in a variety of turfgrass projects, such as a fairway area down to a modern perennial ryegrass blend and shade tolerant mixtures.

A three-hole golf course is now under construction using modern researched techniques and, in the near future, the college hopes to have a putting green for use by the students and local community.

The sportsfield is being renovated and upgraded with the involvement of different Youth Training Schemes attending Oatridge, a small pavilion is being constructed in woodwork classes and a cricket square occupies turf culture sessions.

A windbreak comprising coniferous and deciduous trees will help reduce the windspeed across the field, thus making it ideal for college sports functions.

Oatridge's location in central Scotland is convenient and accessible from all parts of the central belt for day release classes. College staff are always willing to show any interested greenkeeper or groundsman the facilities, as well as visit them at work to advise on education and training.

## Contact...

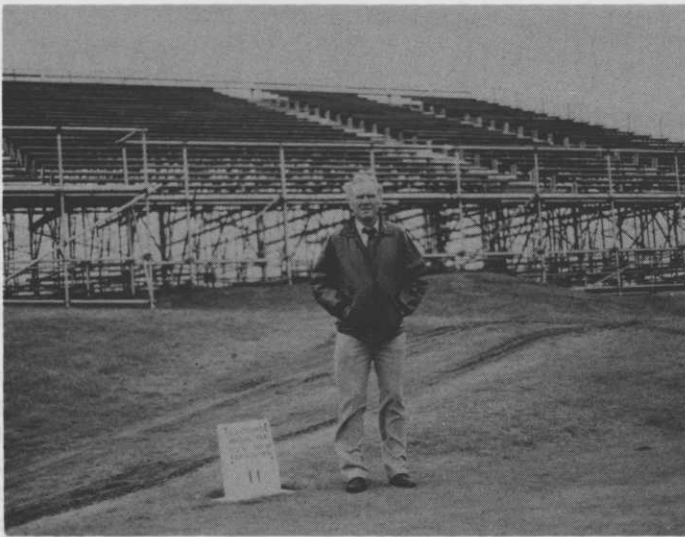
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All in the course of a day's work at Oatridge Agricultural College, West Lothian. Top: students tackle drain installation. Middle: a perimeter drain is dug. Bottom: a group learns the basics of green construction.



## Out-On-The-Course Continued...



Walter beside the 11th tee stand.



An elevated view of the green for holes 8 and 10. The spectator stand is by the 9th tee.



In the St Andrews maintenance yard, assistant links supervisor John Philp, assistant engineer Walter Woods Jnr and links supervisor Walter Woods.

Being a public links we get a lot more play from visiting golfers during an Open Championship year at St Andrews, which means a great deal more wear and tear on the links just prior to the event. We usually close to the public about 14 days before the championship begins and while this gives the Old Course a little respite, we are still open to competitors for practice play, which entails a certain amount of extra work dealing with divots and repairing ball marks, etc, while the maintenance programme is being brought to a peak for the start of the championship.

"Apart from the intensity of course preparation, there are regular meetings with the championship committee. I have to be aware of all that is happening on the links at this time. It is necessary to be able to pinpoint where spectator stands, TV camera towers, marquees and a host of other amenities are going to be located, so that lorries and vehicles arriving with equipment can be directed to the designated site without the risk of damaging the playing areas or getting bogged down in a hidden bunker.

"Any digging operations have to be carefully supervised to ensure that the miles of electric cable we use for our irrigation system does not get damaged. My staff have to lay out the metal posts and light rope fencing around the perimeter of the Old Course for crowd control and we also mark out the fairway crossing points and erect the signs to indicate these spots for spectators. Most of this is a drill now and we have the benefit of long experience and local knowledge, which is great.

"I am fortunate to have a few older members on the staff who have had previous experience of past Opens at St Andrews and some of these men worked here during your period in office. You know George McLaren, our engineer, very well and I believe it was you who first engaged him to work on the links about 16 years ago. His knowledge of golf course machinery is without parallel. He does all our overhauls and repairs in his own fully equipped workshop and saves us a great deal of money.

"My son Walter assists him in the workshop and is gaining useful experience. My assistant John Philp has proved a valuable asset and is a good man to have around at a busy time like this to take some of the pressure off me. There are many other members of my staff who play a substantial part in the upkeep of the courses."

I told Walter that, during my time at St Andrews, we never tried to 'trick up' the Old Course for the Open Championship. "The same policy still applies today," he said. "We have never considered it necessary to make the course any more difficult than it is. The humps and hollows and speed of the greens can make ball control difficult without sticking pin positions in awkward spots behind bunkers, or narrowing down the width of the fairways, etc. Playing the Old Course from the championship tees adds to the strategy of play and if there is a little bit of wind, it will test the abilities of the world's best players when firm, fast surfaces are retained."

I asked Walter if he would like to have the Open at St Andrews every year. "I would not object to that if everything could be carefully controlled. To have the event here annually, we certainly could not allow the volume of play we presently have on the Old Course and that would lead to complications. This is a public links and we could not impose restrictions on the amount of play to preserve the course as I would wish.

*Continued overleaf...*

## Out-On-The-Course Continued...

"In addition it takes about six or seven years to recover from the effects of heavy vehicle traffic, as well as the wear and tear caused by the crowds. There are many advantages in holding such major tournaments at the same place every year, as they do at Augusta with the US Masters. Augusta has permanent facilities and the layout is specially designed to cope with the crowds and offers every advantage of watching play in comfort. From a greenkeeping point of view, this is an ideal situation, for it is much easier to get on with the work of preparing the course when you have all the amenities permanently on site."

Walter agreed with me that clearing up after the Open is over entails a lot of work and is a critical phase of course conditioning to get everything back to normal as quickly as possible. This is always an anti-climax after the glamour and publicity of the event is over.

"After the last Open at St Andrews, I could not bear to watch the heavy lorries and other vehicles coming and going over the course, so I decided to take my wife out of town for the day. This gave me a welcome break. However, this year I will not be able to do the same. Immediately after the Open, we have to prepare for a series of short matches on the Old Course.

"To keep all our courses in tip-top condition for the many events that we have every year demands a constant supply of good compost and getting topsoil for this purpose and the many other jobs we do on the links is becoming increasingly difficult," Walter said.

"Nowadays, topsoil is a very valuable commodity to landscape contractors, horticulture, as well as golf courses and it's quite scarce around here. We have been using a sand and seaweed compost mixture, which seems admirably suited for our purpose. We try to obtain the seaweed from the district council when they are cleaning up the beaches and we mix this with sand.

"I have some topsoil in stock, but I believe it will become even more difficult to obtain as time goes on. Looking to the future, we may have to experiment with other materials, such as tree bark, as a source of compost.

"After the Open is over in July, we have to prepare for the Eden Tournament. The qualifying rounds are played on the New and Eden Courses, culminating in matchplay for the remainder of the week on the Eden. Then we have the Royal & Ancient Golf Club's autumn meeting and many local club events, as well as a host of other bookings by golf societies to cater for. Greenkeeping is never dull at St Andrews and there is not much time to relax when the season is under way!"



Walter Woods  
as portrayed by  
John Campbell.



George McLaren, links engineer, and Walter at the workshop entrance.



The famous black sheds are being restored within the grounds of the Old Course Hotel complex.



The 17th green with the Royal and Ancient clubhouse and Hamilton Hall in the background.

## At times like this, greenkeepers are the unsung heroes...

By Jim Arthur

BEFORE every major golf event, there is much discussion by golf writers and the golfing public on likely winners and debates about form but, it seems to me, never very much thought about the condition of the hosting courses.

Head greenkeepers who have sweated blood, contended with appalling weather and tried to keep their golfers happy while turning their courses inside out in preparation for a championship or tournament rarely earn a line in golf correspondents' reports (though there are honourable exceptions).

And unless there is a disaster of flooded greens or putting surfaces like rice puddings, we all too often get the meaningless ritual of those who win saying they have never played on better greens and those who do not blaming the condition of the course for their failure. You cannot, of course, please everyone, but it would be nice to please a few more occasionally!

The Open Championship is no exception. In the dozen years I have been responsible to the Championship Committee of the Royal and Ancient for advice on the condition or presentation of a very limited number of links courses and the qualifying courses, I have had to suffer (generally in silence!) criticisms of courses because they were too dry or too wet, or too burnt up or too lush and green.

Only rarely, as at Turnberry in 1977, has the golfing press—after initially throwing every brickbat they could think of at the R&A for selecting the course—unstintingly praised the final result of three years demanding work by the head greenkeeper and his staff, which turned an over-fertilised and drought-ravaged course back to the superb links MacKenzie Ross so lovingly restored after war-time devastation.

Yet all these commentators who fill the air and pages of print with their observations and criticisms seem to miss the whole point of the exercise—namely, that the weather is the most important and uncontrollable factor in the Open Championship.

I well remember Muirfield in 1980. In early June that year, I was informed by Keith MacKenzie, in no uncertain terms, that the whole course was burnt to a frazzle—"all the holes playing par 3"—and that we needed emergency watering. Both the

head greenkeeper and I were unimpressed. Nature always repays its debts weatherwise and we had had many weeks of unbroken drought. The only argument was when that drought would break and for how long the resultant rain would last.

Experience, again, proved a wise teacher: A few days later, the rains came, the whole course greened up in less than a week and it rained for the next six weeks.

One correspondent no longer welcome at Muirfield insisted repeatedly that too much fairway watering had been carried out—overlooking the fact that there are no pop-ups even on the greens and no way to water fairways at Muirfield.

Similarly, at Sandwich, we are constantly being told that too much watering had been carried out in 1981 with the then newly installed fairway watering system. In fact, after the initial testing in spring, the pop-ups were hardly used, but we had 2½in of rain in the days before the Open! Overwatering, yes, but it came from the heavens! All that the fairways ever get at Royal St George's in a severe drought is 15 minutes twice a week with RK90 pop-ups.

Hopefully, at St Andrews, as the culmination of many years of hard work by Walter Woods and his staff and a great deal of discussion on methods and objectives, we shall see some real links golf, with fast running fairways, tight lies and very firm, but yet resilient greens, on which a good player can still stop the ball. Hopefully, there will be none of the lushness that enabled players at some previous Open Championships to come out of semi-rough and plummet a ball into soft holding greens and still stay on.

If only those who can so easily reach the golfing public could realise that we play the best golf on fine textured fescue and Agrostis turf and not on colour.

Television has done much for golf—not all of it good—and, sadly, there has been too much attention to colour and too little to the preparation of firm fast greens. Better to have rather dry or bleached greens, which may not be a dark lush green, but remain playable whatever the rainfall,

than unaerated ones, which flood when neighbouring courses are dry. But to listen to some commentators, you would not think so.

Hopefully, this Open will be something special to watch and the conditions may well vary each day, but only due to the weather and not to artificial irrigation. I would like to hear commentators pay a little thought and homage to those who have worked so hard since the moment the last Open finished on their course to make sure that this one is really true links golf and not some pretty painted green turf lushed up for television.

It would be nice to think that many chairmen or convenors of green committees would learn by watching shots being stopped on firm greens when properly struck, but that those from semi-rough were properly penalised by greens too firm to plug and pitch mark and where absence of imparted back spin would result at best in a very long putt back.

I think it is a sad commentary on competitive golf that only on the rarest occasions does the man who has done all the work (i.e. the head greenkeeper) get the opportunity to explain, even briefly, what he has set out to do, even if there is no time to say how he did it.

In the end, however, the weather is the final arbiter and one of the charms of links golf is that the weather is rarely the same two days running. I never cease to be amazed that those who try to attract visitors from across the Atlantic attempt to do so by designing and building American-type courses. For one thing, we never do it so well because we have nothing like the budgets and, for another, I feel sure that the special attraction of our famous links is that they are so unlike the vast majority of US courses.

Few would dispute that the Open Championship will never in the foreseeable future be played over any other than the limited elite of links courses, where all the demands of the Open can be met and where the course itself is a renowned challenge.

What is significant is that each of these links could take the Open at very short notice—if all the other 'hardware' could be moved—and there never has been any attempt to tart up the course for the event. For one thing, the headmen of these links

*Continued on page 28...*

# Evolution of a series

Readers of the recent series on golf courses by my son Nicholas in *Golf Monthly* may have wondered how the articles came about and why he should have been chosen, or, indeed, be qualified to write on this subject.

We have both had a considerable amount of greenkeeping experience, not without its ups and downs, and while we are now finally certain of what we want for our own course in terms of sward and playability, we are constantly made aware of the average club golfer's ignorance of greenkeeping matters.

Such ignorance is not surprising when you consider the structure of clubs as they are run in this country. So, we hope the series in such a popular golfing magazine will enable more club members to understand what the problems are, how they have come about and what so many greenkeepers are now striving to achieve, while, at the same time, pointing out that there are no soft options.

I was born and lived in the home of Cumberland turf, which older generations will remember being shipped to all parts of the country. Composed mainly of creeping red fescue, it was literally sea washed, often with a fine silt layer. It was greatly in demand for the best bowling greens, but often deteriorated when moved. Hindsight would suggest that this was due to faulty management.

I was embarking on a career in scientific agriculture at Reading University about the same time Jim Arthur was leaving there to go to Bingley. I had a grounding in those very subjects that now seem so important in greenkeeping and I had an involvement with a golf course as a part-time replacement for a greenkeeper on war service.

By Eddie Park

Eventually, I changed to another profession entirely and only returned to golf after qualifying in Edinburgh. Settling in Sheffield, I became a golfing fanatic. At that time, many courses were still without water and the two that saw me most had lovely fescue greens. Dry in winter, green and firm in spring and autumn and often brown in summer. Using mainly pre-war instruction books and with a professional in his seventies, I developed a short game to cope with the difficult bouncy periods.

The newly introduced wedge seemed of less value than the old niblick with which a greater variety of shots could be played. In 1957, I witnessed the thrill of a lifetime—victory by Great Britain and Ireland over America at Lindrick and, soon after, joined the famous club.

By 1967, members were somewhat less than happy with the course and in 1968 I found myself in the hot seat as chairman of the green committee with a brief to discover what had gone wrong. In truth, although we made some improvement, it was to take ten years to work it all out. By that time, Nicholas had taken over as chairman and the committee called in Jim Arthur. That started a period of fairly public disagreement over the methods to be used which, up to then, had involved heavy use of both fertiliser and water.

Living near the course, I had been asked to undertake periods of daily supervision and we had both been

forced to relearn the basics of botany, plant ecology and soil science to be sure we were really on the right track. We had uncovered remarkably full club records and also, by courtesy of Peter Hayes, full records from Bingley from 1928, in Norman Hackett's time, up to 1968. Taken together, they showed a 90 year history of ups (in the shape of sound traditional greenkeeping) and downs (in the shape of high-risk methods encouraging poa annua at the expense of indigenous bents and fescues).

Five years from the start of the programme, we are well along the road to re-establishing the dominance of the indigenous grasses. We have not overseeded or used any other gimmick and we have realised some important truths. The policy may be obvious with hindsight, but at the beginning it is not easy to understand—especially for the members who are in for a period of suffering. Above all, it is the daily judgements involved in the implementation of the policy that are so difficult.

Our chief asset has been a wonderfully enthusiastic and increasingly highly skilled young staff (all I hope with a great future) and the support of a particularly knowledgeable section of members. We wouldn't pretend to have gone all the way and there are a number of problems, mainly due to faulty construction, left to solve.

Through this period, however, it has become obvious that not all golfers enjoy the return to agrostis/festuca turf even if that is the only option, both financially and ecologically (i.e. anything else will end in disaster). That sent Nicholas back to research the 'physics' of golfing turf—what actually happens when a ball meets turf—as very little research had

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been done on this subject. His preliminary views appeared in *Greenkeeper* (July 1983). The editor of *Golf Monthly* read this article and invited him to contribute a series.

We spent much of this past winter pursuing the story from early times to the present day, looking at the history of golf courses and greenkeeping and also at the game in general. It became plain that the introduction of the bouncier and heavier rubber cored ball from 1900 onwards had produced an element of luck for which golfers had demanded remedies, such as water and fertiliser, which had produced their problems.

The aim of the series is, therefore, to get golfers to think about the game and their demands on their golf course. Only then will greenkeepers have any chance to pursue (and be able to stick to) sound policies. We hope greenkeepers will find it a help in discussions with committees and members.

I believe strongly that it is more than time to stop the pernicious view that the golfer (and, therefore, the greenkeeper) has a choice of numerous options. We don't! Chemicals, machines, water and any other inventions are merely useful aids. We must work with nature and that means this country's climate and conditions.

So, there we are—'amateurs', so we can say what we think, which is not always possible when you earn your living from the golf course. 'Traditionalists'—believing British golf, as it was invented, is the most enjoyable game and that traditional British greenkeeping, updated by modern machinery, can produce the best golfing turf in the world (and, in this climate, the only turf with a viable future).

Jim Arthur is still our valued source of advice and I am still in daily charge of things and if you are thinking that I don't really understand your problems you would be wrong. Over the last 42 years, I think I've met most of them. It has left me with little sympathy for those who do not want to learn, but great admiration for the sensible majority trying to carry out a difficult job with too many obstructions.

Maybe through *Golf Monthly* we will have reached a wider audience than this excellent technical journal could hope to achieve and possibly with helpful publicity from the likes of Tom Watson and Ben Crenshaw and other 'traditionalists', we shall get home to Mr Average Golfer the message that it is all worthwhile, especially if he wishes to play all the year round.

## In·My·Opinion Continued...

and soon filled its 36 holes with 1,200 members.

Fashion, snobbism and commercial connections also tend to direct aspirants to a few established clubs. Even the higher subscriptions of those where there is most demand may not be as high as those new ones where profit is part of the operation. The earlier clubs have paid for everything except upkeep. The new ones have to look at the interest on the loan.

The dilemma may be solved where estate development accompanies the golf course. This combination has facilitated the formation of only a few courses in Britain, such as Wentworth, Moor Park and Little Ashton, but now it leads, because of the large funds it develops, to the competitive window-dressing that menaces us all. The more extravagant the claims, the more numerous those persons, one of whom is said to be born every minute, who queue up to weekend, retire or holiday beside these lush and elegantly syringed fairways.

Once the possibilities of extravagant length alone were exhausted (even the professionals jibbed when it got to 8,000 yards), the sandhills, spectator mounds, lakes, palm trees and other extravaganza were imported to bait the hook.

Unfortunately, because colour printing is so much cheaper than formerly, they have become part of the everyday vocabulary of better-known designers; still more, of their imitators and especially of those professional golfers who turn to the design department in order to extract an extra dividend from the reputation they have built up on the tour.

Their household names also permit the developers to stick another worm on the hook. Whether this tit-bit is as tempting as it should be, may or may not be proven. (There are still people who believe in the shoemaker and his last.) But we can be quite sure it is not going to make the budget any slimmer.

One of these newcomers also provides himself with a residence on each of his favourite developments. Presumably, this goes on the bill, too. Thus, a few hundred golfers can casually let slip that they happen to live next door to The Master. This is still good for their personal publicity,

even if they only see him over the fence or through the palm trees once a year.

Since the United Kingdom is built on a relatively small scale, its planners tend to have strong views about the development of housing in their backyards. Competition from the Costas, whether Blanca, del Sol, Smeralda or de la Luz, also restricts imitation by home developments to more austere lines, even if the British climate is to be ignored.

The return to nature, if indeed we ever left it, is, therefore, welcome as British endeavours to splash out Florida-style have all been on the pawky side of enchanting. Even Robert Trent Jones must have found himself limited by some atavistic quirk, for so knowledgeable an authority as Peter Alliss to have had reservations in describing Moor Allerton.

I am not so sure that the return to nature in greenkeeping is quite so simple as the philosophy suggests and one or two advocates insist at great length. Artificial demands on grass by insatiable golfers can hardly be met on traditional lines. Green and tee construction must be abreast or rather in advance of the state of the art. Intensive use, often in unfavourable conditions, must alone demand artificial preparation.

This work already adds 40 per cent in real terms to the bill for 18 holes compared with 20 years ago. But no amount of pools, ponds or sleeper-faced bunkers will comfort a golfer if the greens are soggy when he wants to perform.

Frills can, however, be added later, but they should be envisaged in the original concept. Too much frippery at the start will soon bring us to the end of the road. Then, only government grants for reclamation, rehabilitation or investment by those with large funds in estate development, hotel, time-share or prestige projects will give us new courses.

We shall have lost forever the scope for a group of golfers to get together, scrape up funds, find a piece of land and build themselves a golf course. Provided they start with a good master plan, programme it, build it and maintain it sensibly, they will be achieving something precious for themselves, their neighbourhood and for golf—at least, in the next generation.

We should not forget that in these hard times—especially if they get any harder—golf is not too cheap. We should not let it get too expensive either.

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