

Flying Divots

France's inland revenue service to set golf tax?

In France, the fact that golf is played mainly by wealthy A B socio-economic classes, has been quickly recognised by the ever-grabbing French equivalent of our own Inland Revenue.

There is a proposal before their Government to impose a tax on expenditure incurred in playing golf. The elements of the declared expenditure would be subscriptions, travel, equipment and 'nineteenth hole' imbibing. In fact, all outgoings in connection with participation in the game. Suspect declarations are anticipated, for with only some checkable, eg subscriptions, the rest will be on trust. The degree of trust demonstrated by the French tax collector is craftily contained in the proposal: "when a golfer's expense declaration is submitted, the department will double it..."

United States go from course to course

It's no secret that Americans are building new courses at a rate which leaves Europeans staggering.

Over 300 were actually opened for play in 1990, with close on 200 more nearing completion and a further 200 in an advanced planning stage. Despite gloomy world recession forecasts there seems to be no shortage of funds, especially for US resort course developments, where the cost of play is not nearly as high as many would have us believe.

It therefore comes as no surprise to learn that the USGA Green Section are launching a \$2.8million research programme directed at coming to grips with anticipated environmental problems and in producing a cheaper and more durable turf. It is also declared, in a recent U.S. report on world golf, that golf is booming at a far higher rate in Europe.

Britain's prospective developers, especially those in the tardy public sector, should now be addressing the escalating access to play problem, for if building programmes are ignored, shelved, or pitifully undercapitalised, the bubble here will surely burst.

Fulford's poplars to be felled

One of European golf's landmarks is set to disappear very soon.

The line of 68 poplar trees, widely seen and always admired on TV whenever the Benson & Hedges International Open was held at the Fulford, York venue,

GREAT NUMBER PLATE GAME

The lengths some people will go to 'enrich' their cars with personal number plates seem to know no bounds.

Numbers like A1 or RR1 command six figure price tags and even, Heaven forbid, such unlikely items as E L V I S or R O B I N have prices more akin to works of art than mere registration plates.

The practice is now officially encouraged by the Department of Transport. We were amused to see in The Times recently that registration B I G G A was for sale... at only £10,000! You'll be pleased to know that the official coffers remained firmly locked.

are scheduled to be felled.

The Lombardy poplars, planted in 1935 and now some 120 feet high, are to the left of the first fairway, visible for miles around the course in Heslington, a village on York's outskirts.

Two of the trees snapped off near the base in high winds earlier this year, leading to a survey being carried out and advice given by an arboricultural expert.

Each tree was drilled, with 21 being found sound, 28 in a primary state of disease and 19 totally rotten.

Consideration was given to having the trees pollarded to a height of about 20 feet, but, after assimilating further expert information and advice, the Fulford Committee has decided to have them all felled, at a cost of around £6,000.

A Committee spokesman said, 'A lot of us find it very sad, but I am afraid it is inevitable. When poplars are planted it is as certain as night follows day that about sixty years later they get rotten and have to be removed.

'We have yet to decide which type of trees will replace them, but poplars are out, as a future Committee in 60 years time would be faced with the same problem'.

Where brown is just beautiful

At the rather grandiose and somewhat pompously self-titled 'Golf Summit '90' held in California (where else?) recently, it seems that some of the authors of golf course generated wealth and opulence – the architects – are having second thoughts.

Citing the high costs of golf in Japan – up to £260 per round – and the average costs of construction of new courses in America at over £2.84million – not including such 'necessities' as clubhouse and amenities – the architect Perry Dye, son of notable Pete and Alice, has suggested that a move away from green is a good way to rein in the escalating charges levied at the public.

'It's time for golfers to wake up,' says Dye. 'Brown is beautiful and always has been. The great Scottish links are as brown as it gets. We as golf leaders need to go back and talk brown. We need to talk about our environment – something we haven't done in 20 years.

'We should start in the direction of less water and less chemicals as soon as possible. Get to moving the ball over to better turf and play winter rules in lieu of what we can do to the environment to keep grass green. The change must come from within the industry.'

We are not sure of the GCSAA view to such comments, wise though they may be, for the American greenkeepers have long advocated as an official association policy: 'keep courses green.'

East meets west on the course, but cold war remains for would-be Russian golfers

Those pukka Californian wheeler-dealers get everywhere, though I doubt if they could have imagined the vast amount of Soviet red-tape that needed trimming before the long overdue Moscow Golf & Country Club could become a reality.

No less than fifteen years in the making, after numerous false starts, the course is at last scheduled to open in 1992 – to foreigners only!

Charismatic Boris Yeltsin has lobbied long and hard for more sporting facilities in the capital and will no doubt be frustrated by the decision taken to ban play to local citizens, a miserly touch no doubt cooked-up by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Californian company, American International Golf

Resorts Inc., jointly concerned in the venture.

The 6,600 yard course, designed way back in the mid-70s by Robert Trent Jones II, is being financed by the Californian group and a consortium of investors and will include a huge hotel and a clutch of swanky villas.

The whisper in official circles is that some 75 per cent of western multi-national firms with Russian interests are putting up the cash, prompted perhaps by the distinct lack of recreational facilities available for foreigners in the capital.

Nevertheless, our sympathies lie with poor old Ivan, who must wait in vain for a chance to join the golfing jet-set.



North Scotland section members, still cherishing fond memories of a fine day of golf when they played their Autumn Outing at an immaculate Turriff Golf Club in mid September, were horrified to learn that on the morning of September 29th the River Deveron, which adjoins the Turriff course, rose and fell in a flash flood which at its height was 13" above normal, and at its highest level for 32 years.

At 5m the menacing roar of the river in full flood could be heard, even in the distant town of Turriff, heralding a trail of devastation that included the loss of 64 sheep from the fields up stream from the golf course.

Hay bales, trees, debris and livestock were flushed away in the ripstream as the river banks disappeared and within no time at all eight greens on the course were under water.

That the course was only closed for eight days speaks volumes for the fine work carried out by head greenkeeper George Geddes and his staff who, when faced with the mammoth task of clearing trees, branches, silt and a particularly nasty tide mark of straw and mud, came through with flying colours. A month later only the heavily silted 14th green – pictured above just after the disaster – remained unplayable.