

A game of golf in the real world

Well it's here. The new golfing season has begun for everyone outside of the addicts whose breath freeze during their protestations to have you open an ice bound course.

For the golfer it's the best time of the year. He strides to the first tee in the latest Ashworth full of expectation and confidence, the words of David Leadbetter's latest video still ringing in his ears and the smell of freshly cut grass filling his nostrils. From then on, though, it's the same as every other year. Same involuntary lunge at the ball, same wicked slice, same old comments from his partners, same old course – bare fairways, builder's sand in the bunkers and slow greens.

Then The Masters comes on the telly. "Well, if we had greens like that we'd all hole putts"... "Look at those fairways, a perfect lie every time"... "All it needs is a little time and effort and we could have flower beds like those."

When he gets back to the club and he's changing his shoes out of the back of his car the guy doing the same next to him agrees with every word he says. So does the guy in the next shower after the game. Even the steward agrees.

"The luckiest golfers in the world must be the Augusta National members. Imagine playing there every week..."

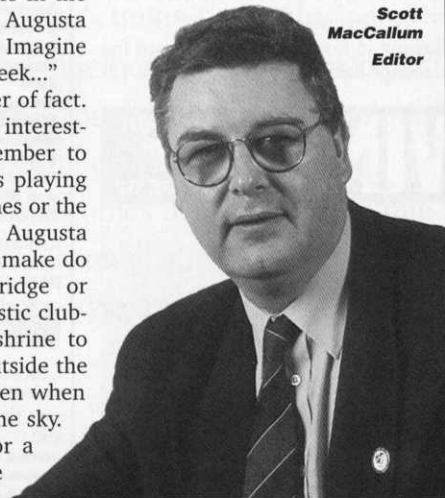
Well, no as a matter of fact. It would probably be interesting for our club member to know that while he's playing in the winter foursomes or the spring medal the Augusta member is having to make do with a game of bridge or checkers in the majestic clubhouse because the shrine to golfing excellence outside the window is closed, even when the sun is splitting the sky. In fact, it's closed for a large chunk of the

year irrespective of weather so every effort can be made to produce perfection for one week in April.

While our man snorts when he sees the accounts during the AGM, and in particular the amount spent on greenkeeping, it may interest him to know the equivalent figures at Augusta National would be enough to pay a handful of good old British fat cats for a couple of years each. Come to mention it the greenkeeping staff at Augusta would just about number enough to run a smallish British public utility.

It's all about making the most of the resources available and cutting cloth to suit. There is no denying that the staff at Augusta National make the most of the unlimited resources they enjoy, which is no mean feat in itself but just as impressive is the wonderful job done at clubs up and down this country where smaller budgets are made to stretch much further than is initially thought humanly possible and where course closure is the rare exception rather than an extended rule.

Wouldn't it be nice for a change if Britain's unsung greenkeeping heroes got the credit they deserved.



Scott
MacCallum
Editor

As I see it...

BY PAT MURPHY
BIGGA CHAIRMAN

Last month I returned to my homeland when I attended the Scottish Conference in Perth.

It's always nice to see so many old friends across the border, and on this occasion, it was particularly enjoyable as it brought back some old memories. It also shows what a small world it is.

The evening before the conference we had a meeting with the Scottish Section Secretaries and it turned out that I was at school with the sister of Stephen Dixon, the East Section Secretary – St David's school in Dalkeith!

The Section Secretaries' meeting was excellent. It was great to see so many constructive suggestions and so much enthusiasm. I've been to a number of these meetings now and they are all informal but there is so much that is positive which comes out of them.

The Scottish Conference was opened by our first Chairman, Walter Woods, and I closed it which seemed fitting. Between us there were some brilliant speakers.

A couple of weeks later I was also at the Mere Conference in the Northern Region, again preceded by a positive secretaries' meeting. This was also an extremely fine conference with some interesting speakers.

Another highlight of the month was the Northern Section dinner dance at Bradford Golf Club which this year had a record attendance of over 100. This is my own Section and I attended with my wife and presented the prizes. It was nice also to welcome the Northern Regional Chairman Ian Holoran and his wife, Audrey, in attendance as well as Regional Administrator Bob Lupton with Sara. I was also delighted that Bill Lawson was able to come along.

It may be of interest to other Sections that Northern are about to start events aimed at the non-golfing members and we will have fishing and clay pigeon shooting on our calendar.

On the golf course spring has definitely sprung and no doubt like you all I've been hard at it hollow coring, top dressing and overseeding all the tees and greens at Shipley.

Can I wish you all rewarding and successful seasons.

