

MAIL BOX

Dear Editor

Sixty-one years ago and for a period of five years my father used to drag me out to his golf course construction sites during my summer holidays. I guess he wanted me to follow in his footsteps as he told me that I needed some practical experience. I hated it, but I'm now very glad he insisted.

In those days, I remember that the documentation for the building of a golf course usually consisted of about 10 sketches and a 5-10 page quotation approved and signed by the client. Tough negotiations were conducted before the approved quote, but when a deal was sealed it stuck. There was no bombastic talk regarding 'conflicts of interest' due to the fact that the architect was building the course himself.

So, why were such procedures quite usual in those days? For two main reasons: *ethics* and *trust*!

The very limited specifications relied mainly on a very simple definition called 'state of the art'. In fact, many architects used to be on site most of the time, which ensured that the course was built exactly the way they wanted. The architect's presence also meant that there were no prima donna shapers. Actually, the architect stood in front of the bulldozer and waved his arms about as if he was parking a plane. Most of the best courses in the world were built in those days, despite the fact that the construction and drawings were extremely unsophisticated. Prerequisites were a lot of muscle to operate the bulldozers and machinery, coupled with wheelbarrows, spades, picks, shovels, rakes, wine and beer.

The courses were built to pre-approved programmes and budgets despite the lack of 500 pages of specifications, 60-70 CAD drawings, and a bunch of superfluous middlemen and useless consultants.

There was no need for pre-concepts and final concepts, preliminary and final designs, preliminary, intermediate and final shop drawings, provisional and final as-builts, provisional, preliminary and final bills of quantities, and provisional and final budget prices. Furthermore, 'value engineering' was called 'a discount'!

So why have things changed? I think that the spirit of golf changed when it became a business. Cut-throat business is driven by greed and does not encourage trust, which forces the

need for a massive amount of people employed to check and countercheck one another. There is little room for ethics and trust in modern business and that is a great shame.

And yet, these days many projects often seem to be over budget and deadline despite all those checks and counterchecks. Or is it maybe because of them?

Peter Harradine
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We are delighted to receive letters from readers, and the best in each issue will be rewarded with a golf shirt. Send to 6 Friar Lane, Leicester, LE1 5RA, UK, or email us at letters@golfcoursearchitecture.net

GOPHER WATCH



Congratulations to Jim Willig of Pittsburgh who managed to deduce that Sandy was at the birthplace of 'Nine Days' Queen' Lady Jane Grey in Bradgate Park, close to GCA's Leicester HQ, for our last issue. The historic theme continues as our intrepid gopher ventures to the UK's south coast, where he's pondering a rather intimidating tee shot from a Bronze Age burial ground on a Harry Colt layout. For a chance of winning a GCA golf shirt, email the course name to gopher@golfcoursearchitecture.net.