

# HIDDEN DANGERS

by PETER KEELING

**D**ANGER money for greenkeepers. That was the cute idea of Ken Buchanan, head greenkeeper at Brackenwood Municipal Course at Bebington, Cheshire.

While his idea did not earn much respect from the authorities, it certainly earned him a large slice of national newspaper publicity, and must have set people thinking.

Ken claimed: "I feel danger money should be paid on all municipal courses. Apart from being hit twice, once on the shoulder and once on the backside, I've had many near misses."

Assistant Tom Graham backed him up by saying: "It's no good waiting until someone is seriously injured."

Although the suggestion got to the committee stage on the local parks and amenities council it got short shrift.

But give Ken Buchanan full marks for effort . . . and it certainly opens up new vistas for the workers.

Perhaps top of the list could go the traffic wardens, that group of people beloved by all motorists. They could claim danger money for potential assault and battery every time they book a motorist for popping into a shop for a packet of cigarettes, conscience money for being regarded as social outcasts, and blood money for selling their souls to the devil.

One of the committeemen considering Ken Buchanan's case added another poor soul to the list when he said: "Should we, for instance, pay danger money to road sweepers who might be hit by traffic?"

Or those footballers who are always being sent off for retaliation. Should we give them danger money when an opponent's face gets in the way of their fist?

And then there are the babies in prams. Should they get some kind of award for the inconvenience they are put to by well meaning passers-by who can't resist scratching them under the

chin or giving them a sticky sweet. Perhaps all babies under the age of two should qualify for, what shall we call it . . . "tickling money".

Then, of course, there are those unfortunate people who find themselves outside supermarkets with goods they have not paid for. The magistrate learns later that they either did not know what came over them, or that they were in a daze. Perhaps we should pay them "Mystification money".

While concerned with our weird and wonderful systems of justice, what about the magistrates and judges! The type of pontificating old bore who clears his throat, looks over his glasses and asks: "Pray tell me, what is television."

Perhaps we could get some money together to buy these unlearned judges a set of encyclopaedias.

What about our friends in blue? Spare them a thought as they crouch behind walls, operating a radar trap on a 30-mile-an-hour stretch out in the country on a straight road that just invites a touch on the accelerator.

It breaks their hearts to set into motion the machinery that could cause a man to lose his driving licence. The stony face, sadistic manner and sarcastic voice is only a front to hide the distress they feel for the motorist whose livelihood depends on his car.

Let's give the speed cops a "heart-break allowance" to make up for the emotional disturbance they must feel.

And for all people who use a telephone regularly how about aggravation money". Perhaps a set scale of payments. For the man who breaks his wrist when slamming down the telephone too hard after vainly trying to get the operator for 25 minutes, I think £25 would be appropriate.

For the man who three times after midnight is pulled out of bed for wrong numbers, and stubs his toe on the end of the bed the last time, the GPO

should send a bunch of flowers round to his wife next morning.

And for the poor bloke whose wife or daughter seems to be never off the phone, give him money to buy an "anti-natter" device that disconnects the call after 15 minutes.

These are normal hazards and annoyances of life, but what about men who live in constant danger. On the edge of a precipice, so to speak. The door-to-door salesman who lives by his ability to get his foot in the door with the speed of a rocket boosting off from Cape Kennedy.

He deserves danger money to pay for corn plasters and physiotherapy treatment for the days when he finds housewives with reflexes as quick as his own.

Then there is the man who is admitted to the home, but during the course of his career suffers for it. I mean our old friend the insurance agent. He is let through the door, but at what cost. For he doesn't have to be just an insurance agent, but an electrician, a removal expert and a general do-it-yourself merchant.

Some housewives think that for a two shilling a week endowment policy the Man from the Prudential will be only too pleased to do all manner of jobs in the house just because they happened to be passing through.

One poor soul confessed to me: "I

get £25 a week for my insurance round, but I reckon each week I do local electrical and general contracting firms out of £80 worth of work. And the only thanks I get for it is that my customer will deign to be three weeks in arrears instead of four."

Life is full of hidden dangers, and these days nobody lives more in fear and trembling than the football referee. He has a thankless task, but too often he heaps trouble on his own head by inconsistency, and by trying to be the star of the match.

The hallmark of a good referee is to be firm, unobtrusive and alert to situations off the ball. Now crowd violence is building up to such an extent that the day of the referee as we know it may be numbered. There will have to be some more mechanical substitute not subject to normal human frailties.

Because I am sure that if current Football League referees had nothing more dangerous to do than dodge the occasional miscued golf ball they would feel that their lot was indeed a happy one.

Footnote: There are no prizes for anybody who, reading between the lines of this article, hazards a guess that I have lost my driving licence for speeding.

*(With grateful acknowledgement to the Groundsmen.)*

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