



MEMORANDUM

Subject:

CONFIDENTIAL

(but you'll find out if you read on).

From: The desk of Fred Hawtree II
in Puncknowle.

To: Greenkeepers, course managers,
greenmasters, turfmasters,
ground staff, superintendents,
custodians and curators.

After a short sabbatical to recharge the cells and ease the writer's cramp, I hasten back to these pages in response to agonised appeals from readers with acute withdrawal symptoms due to my absence.

Where were we ?

After a wild day on the Churston Golf Course in Torbay with Gordon Child, Devon & Cornwall Chairman, his wife, Marion, had thoughtfully decided to dine us on roast beef. This delicacy does to tissues what sabbaticals do for the battery, but Gordon was only half way back to full charge when the telephone called him from the table.

The rest of us were a slice of beef and two roast potatoes ahead of him when he finally returned but his conversation had obviously pleased him. By the time we reached the chocolate gâteau, he led us by a Yorkshire pudding. I was about to say 'by a short head', but, where horse-back is concerned, Gordon prefers hacking to racing and keeps his mare in the field behind his home so that he wastes no time on other forms of travel.

It was surely no accident of fate that the news of BIGGA's impending birthday on 1st January 1987 came while I was in the company of a man who reminds me in many ways of the earliest stalwarts of the Golf

Greenkeepers Association, 75 years ago. I am unfortunately rather a long way from my archives while down here in Dorset. (It's pronounced 'Punnel' by the way), but I can remember Alf Whitall, one of those at the very first meeting which my father called at the London Stone Hotel in Cannon Street in 1912. He became Chairman later, as did Arthur Lacey (Burnham Beeches), George McNeice (Banstead Downs) and Tom Bridges (Addington and later Royal Liverpool). It was mostly southern in those days, the natural predecessor to EIGGA.

The Scottish Golf Greenkeepers Association may even pre-date this era and there was a brief marriage with the other party when the BGGGA was jointly formed together with its Welsh Section and a number of venerable local associations like Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. But distance in those days, and doubtless, expense led to a separation either side of the border.

In 1929, the Board of Greenkeeping Research was set up at Bingley and my father was active in reconciling greenkeepers to this potential threat. For a time he chaired a Practical Advisory Committee with representative greenkeepers from all over the country who met annually at Bingley and aired their views. Tom Mason from Hendon used to enjoy these meetings and write about them.

Tom who contributed to the early Journals of the Golf Greenkeepers Association which appeared in most years up to 1929 when W. H. Smithers (Shirley Park) was Hon. Secretary. Then George Philpot, once an editor of Golf Illustrated, started the monthly 'British Golf Greenkeeper' which became a vital link between members and sections. It all landed on my desk when George died. The three Scottish sections used it for monthly news until they started their quarterly 'Turfmaster', but there was no reconciliation.

Having neither typographer, sub-editor, nor reporter, the 'Golf Greenkeeper' took a lot of time and thought but it survived profitably for some 12 years until the demand for colour and a larger format obliged moving it on to professionals. After Reigate and West Horsley, it is now back near Leeds where one hopes it will settle.

Meanwhile, in the lifetime of these associations, greenkeeping has come from horse-mowers to hydraulic gangs from 14 inch Certes (£11-15-0d in 1929) to ride-on triplex mowers (*Don't ask how much*). There have been a few mistakes on the way. We have learned from them and got it right in the end. And we can learn from the history of GGA, SIGGA, BGGGA, and EIGGA too. There have been a few hiccups but with generous help, they too have got it right in the end. Let's keep it that way. *The next 75 years will be a doddle.*