Tom O'Brien, B.E.M., reveals how Royal Birkdale maintains its world-class reputation.

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Order No. B11
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Order No. BI4
£1.95

Ladies Scarf
Order No. BI5
£6.95

2 GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL July 1991
A very pressing problem

Understanding the principles of compaction is something every greenkeeper should know—and want to pass on to his Club members! Our layman's guide should be required reading for all players—why not ask the secretary to pin this vital article on the Club notice board.

Pages 18–20

Tom O'Brien's Open invitation

Tom O'Brien is our featured head greenkeeper as he enters the final phase of fine-tuning Royal Birkdale for The Open Championship, golf's oldest and greatest tournament. His year round preparation ensures nothing is left to chance and he's ready for any contingency.

Pages 11–13

Controversial advice and a Tour of strength

Preparation and attention to detail is the name of the game at PGA European Tour events. Bruce Jamieson leads us into the heady world of tournament golf, revealing secrets that bring near perfection in their wake.

Pages 22–26

Winter water—an irrigation cure-all?

Storing winter water in lakes and ponds is seen by many as the only salvation for future summer irrigation. Get the skid-steer loader out and start excavating!

Page 32

Forming a chemical waste disposal policy

Save it you've got it, ditch it, you've had it! Doom and gloom perhaps, but the incorrect and unlawful disposal of containers and tank washings could mean a visit to the magistrates court. The law also demands adequate records be kept.

Pages 29–31

Cover pictures:

The Clubhouse at Royal Birkdale and Austria's Gut Altentann: championship courses in focus.
Perils of pesticide poisoning

A report on a Lancaster University study gives some cause for alarm to those within our industry regarding pesticide poisoning. According to their findings, cases of pesticide poisoning by those affected by organophosphate pesticides, eg those often used to control insects, weeds or fungi, could be much higher than suspected for one simple reason – Victims have had no success in reporting to the official agencies, with many victims just too ill to report to a baffling system. Calling the system ‘a failure’, the study highlights the need to be adequately protected, totally aware of substances used, strictly adhere to the instructions issued for use, and keep immaculate records of ALL chemicals used. Ignorance of these basics can seriously damage your health. Above all, DEMAND protection at all times. It is your right.

Wonders into tragedies

Over the fax today came a snippet too good to miss, originating from the pen of Peter McMaugh, Director of the Turfgrass Institute in Sydney, Australia: “Golf has almost become two distinct sports, one a spectator sport and the other a participant sport. The spectacle – the circus – the amphitheatre – the combatants – the commentators – trying to make it unique, all geared towards the spectacle of golf rather than the participant and all because of the advertising dollar, resting on TV ratings. ‘And yet golf of all sports, is both the ultimate in individualistic isolation and the most intense of competitions. All too often we are prepared to spend countless dollars on the few for TV and neglect the many enjoying the game in the fresh air. ‘Budgets of $16-20 million are not uncommon for new courses in Australia. ‘Good’ has become synonymous with ‘outlandish’ or ‘out of the ordinary’ in the journalists’ vocabulary. Commentators rush to pour adulation on companies who are technical miscreants – if not charlatans. Today’s wonders become tomorrow’s tragedies. ‘The golf world seems to be full of spivs of two kinds – first the pro inspired by arrogance and second the technocrat inspired by ignorance – but both of whom can create masterpieces out of nothing in five minutes, one costing a fortune and the other saving it, and both leaving work behind in repairs for the next 20 years.

Till finish with the comment one designer made recently: ‘Our main concern is to give the client the golf course he deserves’.

“A job for Moaner

An advert placed by Tees Valley Tourism for a £150 a month ‘part time moaner or professional complainer’ drew a response that astonished the county tourist board for Cleveland. The job – visiting hotels, guest houses and restaurants – was one of making life as difficult as possible for management. Someone should have told VT that a humble postcard on almost any golf club notice board would have brought instant response... from the hordes of part-timers who enjoy directing their complaints and moans at the poor greenkeeper.

Golden divot for Alex

How good it was to see Seve Ballesteros back in winning form at the PGA Championship at Wentworth, and to see the Burma Road in such sparkling condition. My ‘golden’ divot goes to Alex Hay, a stout supporter of the greenkeeping cause, for bearing praise over the TV waves on course manager Chris Kennedy, and in bringing to the attention of countless millions the plight of all greenkeepers over the past two seasons. Whilst Alex gains the coveted ‘gold’, Peter Alliss loses Brownie points by daring to suggest that the West Course could use some re-bunkering and that he would love the job! The ghost of Harry Colt must be writhing at his audacity.

Old journals wanted

Now a plea for your help. Over the years I’ve attempted to build up a library of golf and golf greenkeeping techniques. The STRI Journals are invaluable sources of reference and I am looking for copies from all eras. I’ve some from the thirties, (first published 1930) practically nothing from the forties, ditto fifties. Market prices gladly paid and all issues considered. Call 0232 891291 or drop a line. Show me that advertising works!

Seve shows his mettle

Seve’s renaissance continues apace with yet another great win – two in one week no less – at Woburn in The British Masters. Earning the equivalent of a greenkeeper’s weekly pay over the past five outings each time he hit the ball – about £215 a shot – he also merits a ‘golden’ divot for kindly words spoken on Neil Whitaker’s preparation of the Duke’s course.

Couplets of wisdom

Groundsman, greenkeeper... who are they

Without them both you’d rarely play

On grounds and pitches well prepared

From knowledge most would wish they shared

Too hard, too soft, too fast, too slow

But would you like to have a go?

Like Hell you would, so on your bike

You wouldn’t know just when to spike

To scarify, to slit or trim

So leave the job all up to him

And when you’re sitting round the table

Only speak if you are able

To do the job as he can do

You wouldn’t really have a clue...

– submitted by Tony Howard, Maxwell Hart Ltd.
Who and what are moving on and moving in, in the greenkeeping industry

Four members of the staff of SISIS Equipment Ltd complete 25 year service with the Company in 1991. Pictured are Lynn Hilton; George Hobbs; Dennis Bayley and Eric Burgess with directors R A Hargreaves; J W Hargreaves and A Harrison, plus production manager J D Arnold, who himself completed 25 years in 1989. The total service of these eight amounts to 206 years – an enviable record!

Kevin Munt is leaving John Jacobs Golf Associates to join Kajima Engineering Europe, as Manager of their Golf Course Management division. Links with Jacobs will however continue, for the current Colne Valley development at Denham, owned by Kajima, is a John Jacobs design. Given the acclaim this layout has received, no doubt other designs for Kajima will follow from the Jacobs stable.

Robin Greaves is moving from Bristol and Clifton GC to the Burhill Golf Centre, Thornbury, where a full length 18 plus 18 par three and 20 bay range will open in '92 on a pay and play basis. Robin has been in greenkeeping since school and was at Cotswold Hills GC before moving to Bristol and Clifton GC some 12 years ago, assuming the head greenkeeper role in 1985.

Vion (Buster) Lewer has secured a long deserved promotion, moving from Wells GC to take on the Erlestoke Sands course at Devizes, Wiltshire. This course, designed by Adrian Stiff of Western Golf Developments, will open in May '92 and at 6500 yards par 71 has already generated sufficient interest for the Wiltshire Golf Union to apply for their championships to be held there in 1995.

Mike Eddington and Andrew Robinson of Sports Turf Services were welcome visitors to Charterhouse Turf Machinery recently, the occasion being receipt of the Charterhouse Dealer of The Year Award, presented annually to the dealer with the best sales of the year. Last year’s winners, Risborough Turf Supplies, worked hard to repeat their 1990 success but were pipped at the post by the Edinburgh-based Sports Turf Services.

Martin Townsend has been appointed Regional Technical Sales Manager, Avoncrop Amenity Products, this following a brief but successful spell with Monro Amenity Care. Martin has skills which have spanned several sports, including an apprenticeship at Lords, head groundsman at Eastway Multi-Sports Centre and head greenkeeper at Bishops Stortford GC. Apart from obvious practical skills, Martin has an academic background that includes C&G Phase I and II in Greenkeeping and Sportsground Management and the IOG National Technical Certificate.

A weary stork was sighted over Ashburnham GC recently, lugging the 8lbs 13ozs that is David Michael, a son to Ashburnham’s Mike and Pam Wilson. The best wishes of BIGGA’s South Wales section goes to them all.

We’ll call it the Charnwood merry-go-round, for the transfer list in the East Midlands, supplied by Gordon Mitchell, revealed that Tim Allard moved to Charnwood from Longcliffe GC and Steven Tolley moved from Charnwood to Longcliffe. Also away from Charnwood to Oxton GC is Charlotte Skirrow, with Nick Danvers moving from Scraptoft GC to join the hard-working team at Leicester under Bill Hewerts. In Gordon’s words, good luck to you all and may the grass grow greener on the other side of the fence.

Andrew Chamberlain has been appointed national sales manager by Bark Products, his special responsibilities including major accounts and commissioned agents.

If Charnwood is the merry-go-round, what adjective can be conjured up to describe the goings-on in North Scotland? The dictionary suggests circumfluous, (flowing all around) which apply fits Gordon Moir’s latest epistle of changes vis-a-vis Don Moir’s latest epistle of changes vis-a-vis.

The 18 hole par 72 parkland course at Hintlesham Hall, near Ipswich, designed by Hawtree, is due to open later this year with a feature that promises to be quite something. A unique Edwardian-style clubhouse is currently under construction and will complement one of England’s finest historic hotels. Full marks to the developers for such foresight, especially when many Clubs consider razing their own delightful clubhouses to turn into architectural nightmares.

Doubts as to the readiness of The Ocean Course for the Ryder Cup may be instantly dispelled, for Kiawah Island’s ‘magnificent work of art’, opened for regular play on May 24th for up to 100 players a day. Players reported being spellbound by its character. Playing 7371 yards from the tiger tees, the course features 12 holes directly along the Atlantic Ocean and has a distinctly Scottish links flavour that should suit our team admirably. Surprisingly, considering the huge investment, cost of play is not exorbitant, with fees of $100 (about £55) including cart rental and unlimited practice balls quoted.

Peter Jefford, MD of Rufford Top Dress Supplies Ltd., has appointed his wife Margaret (pictured) to assist in promotions and exhibitions. Margaret’s wealth of experience in sales and marketing will benefit Rufford’s dramatic expansion in the sports and leisure industry. The quality of Rufford’s range is well known and to further enhance this, Michael McDonnell (pictured) has been appointed as head of production and quality control. Commenting, Peter Jefford said ‘This is just reward for Michael, who has been with Rufford’s from its conception, his vast experience in quarry operations and his dedication to detail will be a great asset’.

GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL July 1991 5
They're glamorous wee beasts, conjuring in the mind a vision of Motocross and airborne scramblers flying 50 feet into the air. It's true these versatile, go anywhere, do anything, little vehicles were spawned directly from the sport of motorcycling, but their rapid development has seen them used in situations as diverse as polishing the aisles in Marks & Spencer or rounding up stray animals at a safari park, together with increased use on golf courses, be they wet or dry, flat or hilly.

Prompted by the improporportionate amount of interest shown in ATVs at the Landscape Industries Show, and the ear to ear grins on the faces of those who took demo rides, Greenkeeper International, in the cloak and dagger guise of your roving editor, quizzed greenkeepers at the show and quickly discovered that in most cases All Terrain is translated as Rough Terrain. So successful have the ad campaigns been in promoting the vehicles' ability to climb mountains that the day-in-day-out workhorse character is often overlooked. Further, in later asking the question of several renowned head greenkeepers: "What do you look for in an ATV?", we were surprised by the wide variance of answers.

Steve Suttle, at North Foreland GC in Kent, felt that his course, on chalk downland with gentle sloping terrain, drained so well that he had no need for an ATV, although he resisted using tractors unless absolutely necessary and used three turf trucksters for maintenance work and as runabouts. Avoiding compaction is high on his priority list and if an ATV miraculously appeared, he would insist on low flotation tyres.

Pictured, clockwise from top, the Suzuki LT-F4WDX King Quad; the Kawasaki Mule 1000 with Logic rotary mower; the Polaris Big Boss 6x6 six wheel drive; the Kawasaki KLF 300B.
The research experience of David Berry, at Bury GC in Lancashire, prompted by the envious news that his Club secretary has earmarked such a purchase was, in his own words, 'an eye opener'. Admitting he didn't know much about them, his 'wants' list now includes: low centre of gravity; seating for two; load-carrying hydraulic dump box; anti-roll bar with optional cab; low-flo tyres; PTO and tow-bar; implement attachment; a steering wheel and regular layout pedals; four wheel drive and a diesel engine. The use of 4WD is, he insists, an essential in view of the steep slopes at Bury and he believes that both excess pressure and stress is put upon the suspension of his present runabout. Conscious of the large bag/electric trolley syndrome, he is aiming to set a good example by using a light, turf-friendly ATV whenever possible.

Stewart Melville already uses an ATV on his hillside course of Lothianburn, near Edinburgh, tackling hills that are near vertical. Sheep roam on the course and he finds them a troublesome intrusion on what he describes as a labour-intensive layout. 4WD he sees as an essential, as are very sound brakes. He is also cost conscious and thinks diesel is a must. Three questions to be answered, were he to replace his current model, would be: 1) Will it have the capacity to do what I want and will it cope with the hillside? 2) What is the quality of service, in particular is the maintenance agreement a sound one? 3) Is it cost effective? His critical buying decision would not rest on price alone however, for in his experience short term savings can result in long term costs in repairs and lost man-hours, an important point.

Finally we asked Ray Day, of Saunton GC in Devon, for his views and once again the compaction problem loomed large. For him 4WD is a must, as are low-flo tyres and a diesel engine. He likes the idea of a pick-up type body with drop sides and a tailgate and would welcome a fixture to accommodate an irrigation hose reel, and a bolt-on bench vice. A wide wheel axis and a short wheel base, giving good stability on undulating ground, is equally important and extras such as PTO, three point linkage and possibly a winch to haul hydro drive machines aboard would be highly desirable. He thinks that such a versatile machine would be expensive but would be a lot more vehicle than a mere run-around.

The world of LOGIC, who specialise in ATV accessories, solve most of these 'must-have' needs and manufacturers themselves are constantly looking at new ways to add to what is already accepted as a machine of unique versatility. Cost, in the writer's opinion, is not something that should prevent serious consideration when the need for a highly manoeuvrable work machine is next mooted.

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**Terratrac TT 80 by Inter-Drain**

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**King off the Road**

**Suzuki - the pioneers in Four Wheel Drive ATV's**

The new Suzuki LT449DX is strictly in a class of its own. The proven Four Wheel Drive engine is now bigger, more powerful and offers improved low and mid range torque capabilities.

The four wheel drive system on the King Quad has three drive modes – 2WD, 4WD and 4WD with front differential lock, plus the added benefit of a handy reverse gear.

Three speed secondary transmission guarantees a gear for almost any use – high, low and super low – covering a range of fifteen speeds.

With the widest track width of any 4 wheel ATV available, oil damped shock absorbers (with pre-load adjustments), and the many other features of the King Quad, you can be sure of being first in the field.

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**Yamaha Pro-Hauler with trailer**

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**Safety First. Wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing, slow down on unfamiliar terrain or when visibility is reduced. Read owner's manual carefully.**

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Rather as predicted, the continuing interest in the USGA Specification for constructing greens continues – perhaps even gathers pace. Following Consultant Agronomist Jim Arthur’s thought-provoking views in our May issue, and to maintain editorial impartiality, we now publish two further views on a subject with legs; it’ll run and run...

From Gordon Jaaback:

It is obvious from Jim Arthur’s article that there is still much controversy and apprehension over the merits and use of the USGA Specification. As an agronomist just four years in Britain I am loath to query his wealth of experience in this country – yet none of us in the technical, commercial or practical world of turfgrass can override sound scientific fact seen in the correct context.

Today, with the rise in professional sport and the added boost through the media, the demands on high quality grassed surfaces are much greater than ever before. Wear is heavier and consequent compaction on them is more severe.

Furthermore, as Jim Arthur maintains, play is extended or often concentrated – particularly golf, rugby and football – into a winter season which differs markedly with the harsh extremes in the North American continent, where snow cover or continual freezing prevents play and enforces a period of dormancy. Yet this in itself should not prejudice the use of USGA Specification in Britain.

It is not my theory that is offered – it is the basics of turfgrass science, soil physics and hydrology, which should be the foundation of any turfgrass programme.

On the matter of USGA Green Section golf greens:

1: I am sure Jim Arthur acknowledges that the specification has no relevance to the choice of grass species – it was developed to overcome physical problems in golf greens and is based on scientific data on the movement of water in soils and their physical properties. The main concerns were compaction, poor internal drainage and the need to get the landing ball to ‘bite’. Since these problems occur everywhere the game is played, the specification will have an application in every location.

“As an all-purpose truck the Pro-Hauler is absolutely ideal, it finds new jobs for itself every day”

Mark Root  Head Greenkeeper
Northampton Golf Club

Anyone with a requirement for sturdy, go anywhere transport, has to consider the benefits of the Yamaha Pro-Hauler.

Whether for the optional turf tyre model for covering sensitive surfaces, or the standard all-terrain machine, the powerful OHV engine, heavy duty suspension and flexible dual range transmission ensure outstanding performance all year round.

YAMAHA
ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES
2: Initial research by Dr Marvin Ferguson on behalf of the USGA confirmed the minimum criterion for essential rootzone properties, namely permeability, water retention, porosity and bulk density. Hence a laboratory evaluation should be a requirement prior to the selection of the rootzone mixture. Whether sand/peat, pure sand or the 'fen' soil recommended by Jim Arthur for the rootzone mixture, it must meet the criterion prescribed.

3: Contrary to Jim Arthur's viewpoint, water demands by turf grasses in tropical countries do not warrant different rootzone specifications. Warm season grasses have adapted to the greater heat stress and provided the rootzone has the tested minimum water retention capacity it will retain adequate water – the water amount further increased due to the 'perching' phenomena. It is not copious watering that is then required – it is frequent light syringing that is of real benefit in such instances. There are instruments available that can be helpful in monitoring minimum watering needs.

4: Grass will germinate well on most soils including pure sand, even in the UK – the absence of organic matter at the onset is not a vital issue – and the difficulties during establishment can be overcome by frequent light irrigation, covering with inexpensive clear plastic sheeting or mulching during the critical germination period.

5: It is essentially the finer fractions of clay and silt that give the rootzone medium its inherent water retention capacity (referred to as 'buffer' in the article). The considerable organic matter produced by the grass plant also drastically reduces the permeability in the green and contributes markedly to the increase in water retention.

6: As stated by Jim Arthur, a good drainage installation is a prerequisite. While he maintains a preference for 40mm stone (a 100mm layer of 6-10mm stone has proved adequate in most situations in the UK and overseas and can be adequately spread with a small tracking machine) there may be reasons for its use, but research work into the use of filtering materials concludes that the overlaying medium should not have an average particle size of more than 5-7 times smaller than the underlying medium. This would apply to the rootzone material overlying the filter or 'blinding' layer as well.

7: Certainly there is scepticism over the success of creeping bentgrass in this country. However, authorities in the breeding of the improved strains maintain that with good management and care it will survive well here. Where management is lacking or soil conditions are unsuitable – and either one or both are generally responsible – it will suffer, but by the nature of its stoloniferous growth, if properly cared for it can be as aggressively as any improved strains of bent grass or fescue. In the past three years Collingtree and East Sussex National have shown that maintenance of good swards are possible and so surely it cannot be condemned for all situations.

Greenskeeper International fully confirms the need for a scientific approach to growing high quality turfgrass and yet so many Clubs follow an established programme with little or no flexibility and virtually no foresight in meeting the problems that can be expected before they arise. If the greenskeeper is motivated he can soon learn from the wide range of published research data which is freely available.

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From Chris Nicholson:

May I comment on Jim Arthur's article of May last, based on my experiences in Australia, where I have spent the past two years constructing sand based greens and maintaining them with much loving care.

I can confirm that such greens sown with Penncross are not the sort that can be maintained on a 'normal' small to medium Club budget, rather they demand intensive maintenance, linked with chemical warfare, a first-rate irrigation system, a vast stable of equipment – most of which is foreign to British greenskeepers – and a fully trained and motivated staff of 20 or more.

A great many courses have had pure sand greens sown with Penncross put into use by constructors/specifiers and are then maintained like an average course in the UK. A few seasons later the Penncross is nowhere to be seen – more the result of lack of know-how and low budgets than the Australian weather.

Those entering into this kind of construction without fully understanding the high cost of maintenance do so at their peril.

I think that golf course consultants are often to blame for the mistakes that have and continue to be made. Some have never worked on a golf course, let alone constructed one, and when they tell a farmer that they can design and construct a course with greens sown with Penncross that will be just like Augusta, they conjure up the farmer's mind a vision of an Augusta at Nether Wapping or some such place. Failing to explain the high cost of maintenance nothing short of criminal.

Whilst on the subject of golf courses, many hundreds of which await planning consent as I write, it seems every farmer who owns a JCB wants to build a course these days. 'Old Ted', who once played on the local pitch & putt, will act as consultant during construction and the farm labourer of some 30 years standing, who has a rusting Flymo in the shed, will be the greenskeeper! Like the rest of the proper greenkeeping fraternity, my advice would be 'stick to farming' and let the real experts deal with golf courses.
Three Problems with One Single Solution

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Editorial Comment

Garbage of the so-called ‘expert’

Nothing is more likely to cause an editorial apoplexy attack than the appearance in print of garbage camouflaged as expert opinion. Thus, along with countless others, I took exception to comments appearing in a turf magazine recently, made by a supposedly learned man – an ‘agricultural consultant’ no less – who took it upon himself to declare that “the art seems to have gone out of greenkeeping” and that, “at the heart of the matter, even ‘basic’ knowledge is lacking in greenkeepers”. This vitriolic offensive continued with his questioning whether the ‘right’ training courses exist, and ended with his ‘original-and-oh-so-clever’ idea that he sees a need for a recognised British national qualification and a co-ordinated group of advisers to organise greenkeeper training.

Where has this man been living? Has he never heard of ‘The Way Forward’? Is he really blind to the multitudes of specialised colleges throughout the British Isles, busily and effectively training young greenkeepers in the art and craft of an honourable profession?

Is he, I wonder, even remotely conscious that hundreds of students pass into their chosen career each year with City and Guilds, Scottvee, B.Tech N.D.’s or even higher qualifications in Sports Turf Management or Turf Science, their training placing emphasis on understanding soil characteristics, drainage, irrigation and construction, the building and maintenance of greens, tees and bunkers, the control and care of a wide variety of sophisticated machinery, the skills and technical knowledge necessary to ensure that pesticides and fertilisers are safely and accurately applied?

As if his assault on British greenkeeping isn’t enough, this ardent four times a week golfer thinks it would be a good idea to have golfers subscribe to a “good greenkeepers’ society”. Step forward for National Health eye test Mister know-it-all, your reading is clearly not what it might be. Far from being incensed, perhaps we should pity one so completely untouched by the publicity machine, and so blind to the realities of maintaining standards in the game he purports to care so passionately about.

I’m prepared to bet our radical anti-hero has never heard of the R&A’s Joint Golf Course Committee, which brings together the very best minds, the policy shapers, bent on ensuring a sound future for all our golf courses. The Home Unions, the Sports Turf Research Institute and our own British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association are, I’ll lay money on it, total mysteries to our critic. Taken a step further, I’ll wager he’s oblivious to the huge problems caused by cantering herds of society golfers and probably thinks over-play is a kinky form of bedroom game. Compaction? Ah, yes, you can almost hear him say, isn’t that some sort of new record disc?

If there is one faint glimmer of hope, it is that he ‘suspects’ (only suspects, mind you) training courses are there, but that Club committees fail to recognise the benefits good training can have. Yes sir, fine training courses are there in great profusion and yes, the committee think-tanks do very often fail to see how training will benefit their course. The sadness is that it is often left to greenkeepers themselves – by any standard not over-paid – to finance their own academic advancement. It is to their great credit that so many of them do.

This man’s real worry, however, is that at all levels – players, officials and greenkeepers – he thinks there’s a lot of rubbish talked about how to improve golf courses. If we accept the premise that two out of three isn’t bad, and thus delete the greenkeeper from his ‘rubbish’ list, we can nevertheless see still more to be done added to the pile, this time from one ‘expert’ who ought to know better.

DAVID WHITE
Tom O'Brien was instantly impressed with Royal Birkdale when he walked the course for the first time 13 years ago. At the age of 48, he accepted the Head Greenkeeper’s post in what could have been his last opportunity to handle an Open Championship, as well as his first. JOHN NELSON met the man who is again preparing his course for a world-class test of golf.

Tom O’Brien, B.E.M., is the name. On his shoulders rests the reputation of Royal Birkdale for providing a world-class test of golf at The 120th Open in July. It could not be in better hands.

Tom’s the head greenkeeper and this will be his second Open preparation. He had his baptism in 1983 and although it was an experience not without its traumas, his course was universally acclaimed. Now, once again, he’s in the hot seat, under the spotlight. What kind of man is he? How has he gone about preparing the course? Was it a benefit having done it before? How can other head greenkeepers gain from such experience?

Golf and greenkeeping have been his whole life. Indeed, he grew up as part of the Scottish tradition whereby golf was the natural thing to do. Everyone played and virtually every village had its own course. He comes from Muirhead, Glasgow originally and on leaving school immediately started a career as a greenkeeper. He joined his local club – Mount Ellen – as the junior member of its green staff.

Mount Ellen is a downland course and Tom joined a team of four. He stayed 17 years and there he learnt his craft – as well as marrying a local girl and raising two sons. In those days – as always I guess – it was the head greenkeeper who determined whether or not you made the grade. Tom was lucky. The Mount Ellen head insisted on the highest standards, taught Tom all he knew, and made sure he got a thorough training. It was all practical training and know-how, of course. Tom didn’t have the opportunity for studying college theory, but this didn’t turn him against academic learning or against those who were college trained. He accepts the academic view – except when it goes against common-sense! He was taught always to listen to other views – and then make up his own mind.

Anyway it paid off. He was able to join the ranks of head greenkeeper and get his own course. It was not initially...
eventually felt the urge to return to Scotland. He successfully attended a USAF Base course near Paris. He liked it there, but three courses. This was his first exposure to links courses and he was, and remains, full of praise for the Gullane links. He also got to know Muirfield and its head greenkeeper. Muirfield was a current venue for The Open and the Gullane links were used for qualifying. It was at Gullane that he first began to have ambitions to handle an Open Championship. He realised, however, that this would mean leaving Gullane and although he speculated about Muirfield he decided it would be foolish to wait for the vacancy of head greenkeeper to occur since there was no guarantee of his getting it. He would have to look elsewhere.

Then as now, there were just seven Open Championship venues, four in Scotland and three in England, so the choice was limited. He accepted the need for patience and resigned himself to possibly a long wait. The first to become vacant was Royal Birkdale in 1978. Tom discussed it with his wife, applied - and the rest, as they say, is history. He was 48, and felt this could be his last opportunity - as well as his first!

Arriving early, he walked the course and was instantly impressed. Notwithstanding the splendour of Gullane, he'd never seen a more inviting course and it instantly appealed. 'You can tell immediately' he said, 'if a course is for you', and Royal Birkdale was. He felt at home with its sense of feel, of visual appeal and scale, and it all felt right.

Tom hadn't rated his chances over highly. He lacked academic qualifications, but had 33 years experience of greenkeeping, caring for top class links courses as well as downland and parkland courses and, of course, he was a successful head greenkeeper.

He got the job and he's never looked back. He's enjoyed every minute and the family immediately took to Southport where they've settled. When the day comes to retire, he'll stay there.

He was all set to realise every greenkeeper's ambition - to handle an Open Championship. This was to be in 1983, so he had ample opportunity to get to know his course and its idiosyncrasies - and to worry about it, of course. In the event - apart from one hiccup - it all turned out alright. But he found it a humbling experience. 'The realisation comes' he said, 'that you've been entrusted with ensuring that your course stand up to scrutiny - that it provides the best test for the world's best golfers'.

The R&A help beforehand by inviting head greenkeepers from all Open venues to be its guests at prior Opens, and in Tom's case he was to visit four other venues before his own ordeal.

He now thinks he was perhaps a bit too cautious with his cutting of the greens in 1983 and also revealed that it was during this, his first Open, that he suffered his greatest upset. A 'phone call in the early hours told that the 6th green had been sabotaged. Could he come at once? He was collected by police car.

Vandals had dug it up in six places to a depth and width of over a foot and slogans had been spray painted all over the green. A protest group claimed responsibility. Tom inspected the damage by torchlight and made plans for a 4am start to patch things up. But by daylight it was obvious that it would take months to restore the green to its former glory. It must have come close to breaking Tom's heart. He said he'd never felt so low.

In the event, start of play was delayed by just 20 minutes - to allow the repair work to be completed. The tee was brought forward 30-40 yards to make it possible to carry the cross bunkers and then play a short iron to the green. Part of the fringe was cut to make it part of the putting surface. Five white slogans were repainted green to make them less legible and the BBC agreed not to give any TV exposure, thus minimising the publicity sought by the vandals.

The R&A subsequently stated that it would meet any cost involved and give any assistance required in restoring the green to the very fine standard of the other 17 greens.

Tom explained his preparation for this year's Open - especially the greens - and his thinking behind it. He was somewhat sceptical about media talk that there was a special programme. 'Royal Birkdale', he said, 'is a members' course and they expect to be able to play on it every day.' So his programme is special every day. The course must be maintained in first class condition 365 days a year - including Christmas Day! Unlike Augusta, the course is not closed for work to be carried out without interruption. Nor is there the luxury of a few days grace once The Open is over. People queue to be first to play the course the very next day.

It's all very well for tournament players to say that the greens will be great for members when they leave. He appreciates the need for greens to be at their peak from the beginning of the tournament, but they don't have to maintain them afterwards - day in, day out - or carry the can if he loses them afterwards. The same applies to tees, for although some are created just for The Open, many are not. Many are members tees of limited size, and used continually up to, during and immediately after by members and visitors. Some holes would lose their character if played from new tees, the 9th being a good example, for they would have to remove the legendary marker post landmark for the drive!

Having said this, Tom readily admitted that he took his preparation for The Open very seriously. His approach is systematic and includes aeration, feeding, minimum watering and measured grass cutting.

Commenting on the quality of Birkdale sand, he said it was very fine, didn't retain water and therefore must be kept
damp but not swamped. This, he emphasised, is where local knowledge was so important – as it was with the weather – and why he would stick with his hard-won knowledge about his own course and not be overawed by those who, whilst undisputably expert in their own fields, lacked detailed local knowledge.

The variable and unpredictable local weather proved that a rigid programme wouldn’t work. To plan to carry out the same jobs every Monday morning would result in complete frustration. Thus he’d learnt to adapt to what each day brought with it.

Asked if the snow in February, which stayed around, had affected his schedule, he opined that it had been a blessing in disguise. It allowed the ground to rest and there had been no ill-effects, the often magnifying action of sun on snow causing no burn-up.

Happy with his preparation up to the start of the golf season, he’d been very gratified when the R&A at their first Open preview for the media, held in March, declared themselves very satisfied with the course.

But then he’d had to cope with a prolonged drought. Throughout May there’d been the least rainfall for 100 years. The Weather Centre reported a record low of 8.4mm for the month and there was no sign of rain to come!

Nonetheless conscious that he would be judged by his greens, he drew a contrast between Birkdale and Augusta, where the one topic of player conversation would be the greens and their speed compared with previous years, by saying that his test of golf started with each tee and the winner would be the one who played the best golf from tee to green as well as putting the best.

His greens, he promised, would have enough pace to pose a real challenge although they would not be as fast as Augusta. Nor did they have Augusta’s severe undulations – in fact they appear on TV as seemingly bland and flat. But they do have their own subtleties – ask any member!

He smiled with gentle irony as he told of the extra staff drafted in for The Open. ‘If they’re necessary now, they’re surely necessary all the time, aren’t they?’ he asked.

A golfer himself, he thought it helped him as a greenkeeper. He plays much less now and his handicap has risen from nine to nearer 18. He doesn’t play at Royal Birkdale although he started off that way, finding he didn’t enjoy his golf as he was always seeing little things that demanded his attention.

He is looking forward to his second Open Championship, not least because he meets greenkeepers from other Open venues and BIGGA members who come to help him keep the course in good order during the event. For their part I am sure they also will be looking forward to meeting Tom. I doubt if any other greenkeeper is held in higher esteem than Tom O’Brien, Head Greenkeeper, Royal Birkdale Golf Club.
How to create your own policy on handling chemical waste

JON ALLBUTT on the disposal of chemical containers and tank washings

As NPTC examiners we listen as the Foundation Module Test candidates recite the litany of options available for disposing of old chemicals, used containers and tank washings. It sounds impressive enough until you look closely at those options and try to see how they might work on a golf course.

Take for example the disposing of used containers. The problems of finding a suitable site for burying are so great as to make this option unworkable on a golf course, similarly the option of burning certain types of container is also a non-starter. Most containers find their way into a skip or on a rubbish tip... try explaining that to the Inspector when he or she visits and starts asking those awkward questions! So what is the best way of dealing with the problem?

All containers must be rinsed and the rinsings put into the spray tank. The empty containers must then be rendered unusable again, with puncturing in several places being the best way of ensuring that they are not re-used for carrying petrol, or worse! The containers should then be kept in a safe place until there are enough to justify a trip to the council tip, enquiring of your local authority first to be sure you take them to the right place. An alternative strategy is to use the disposal services offered by the manufacturer or distributor - both Chipman and Envirogreen (Maxwell Hart) offer such a service.

There are no options available for disposing of unwanted concentrate. An authorised waste disposal contractor is the only route available for this job. Remember, it is a breach of the Pesticides Regulations to store non-approved pesticides and this includes old wood preservatives.

The options for disposing of tank washings also become a problem when looked at in the context of the golf course. The options of constructing a soakaway or using a 'designated area' fall down when you approach your local office of the National Rivers Authority. In general you can expect your local official to be less than enthusiastic! There are units available that will filter the pesticides out of the washings, though these are more suitable to those who use much more pesticide than we do and are also quite expensive to buy.

It is possible to have a specially constructed wash down and rinsing area that drains into a tank which is periodically pumped out and disposed of by a licensed contractor. You will need to take care that rain does not fill the tank by fitting a cover over the drain when not in use. The best method is to spray out the washings on an area compatible with the product label approval, for example if greens have been sprayed with a selective weed-killer, the rinsings and tank washings can then be sprayed on the fairway. In certain circumstances the tank washings can be re-used for another spraying job providing the same product is to be used again. If the washings are to be re-used they must be kept in a sealed container properly labelled to avoid misuse.

The new edition of the Amenity Code of Practice for the use of Approved Pesticides is in the process of being revised and reprinted. It will contain advice on how the job of using some pesticides is now subject to risk assessments under the COSHH Regulations and having a copy of this Code of Practice is an essential first step in forming a policy on the handling of chemical waste. Copies will be available from the NTC in the autumn, with details appearing in this magazine.

There is a lot of concern about the pollution of water and the NRA is responsible for enforcing the new Regulations under the Water Act and the Pesticides Regulations. The very new Environment Protection Act will also have an impact for users of potential pollutants of any kind.

To avoid the risk of prosecution under one or all of the Regulations now in force, make sure you have a clearly written policy on how you will tackle the problem of disposals. Before you establish your policy make a draft and consult those listed in the Code of Practice. After their comments have been taken into account, introduce the policy to your staff and make sure they follow it. It will be necessary to carry out periodic checks to make sure the policy is being carried out correctly - don't assume that staff will follow it to the letter!

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@ Jon Allbutt will be presenting his highly informative lectures on COSHH and the Food and Environment Protection Act at BIGGA Management Courses in November.
Letters

is causing increased anxiety amongst both purchasers and suppliers of naturally processed home produced barks. As a major handler of solely British bark from sustainable resource forests which is naturally processed, I feel it is important to draw attention to this controversial issue.

Imports of bark are banned under Britain's plant health organisations. However, it appears that if it is proved to the Forestry Commission's satisfaction that the product does not present a plant health risk to British forests, the Commission has the power to grant licences to import normally prohibited material. So, to ensure there is no such risk, the imported bark is fumigated, before being landed, with methyl bromide gas to kill any insect or fungal infestation.

As I see it, this is an act of environmental vandalism. It is contaminating an otherwise sound natural product with a poison, a halogenated hydrocarbon – the same family in fact as CFCs. Methyl bromide is toxic and leaves residues on organic materials and bark thus treated cannot be accepted as wholly natural. Certainly the Soil Association will not endorse it as such.

In the current climate of environmental awareness untreated British bark must be the preferred product, but how can the buyer know which is treated with pesticides and which is not?

We feel strongly that products should pass an environmental audit to prove they ecologically sound in terms of origin, process and use and guarantee that the bark is free of any chemical additives. It is hoped that those professional companies with sound environmental ethics will make similar statements. Buyers should ask for written guarantees to state that the bark has not been treated or mixed with methyl bromide or any other harmful chemicals.

Imported bark may make economic sense but environmentally, while it is chemically treated, it is simply unacceptable.

JOHN LATTER Mealcourt Industries, Gloucester

The article appearing in your April issue (Keith McKee on ‘Nitrogen versus other nutrients’) gives rise to a point on which I must take issue. Because fertiliser rates are the subject of argument, and if printed articles, by Keith or others in the fertiliser industry, are not crystal-clear and accurate, how can the poor greenkeeper, struggling with a flood of information, be expected to discount mis-information?

Okay, Keith would say ‘Yes, everyone knows I meant P2O5’. But he and your excellent magazine (as a source of reliable information) should be as near perfect as possible. The expression of phosphorus and potassium content needs care in the use of the elemental symbols P and K. They can be used by themselves in text as abbreviations for phosphorus and potassium respectively. But when used with numerals, as in ‘5 kg/ha P’ or ‘6 oz/yd 2 K’ they relate to the oxides P2O5 (phosphate) and K2O (potash) which are the usual forms for expressing fertiliser content. The factors for converting units P to units P2O5, etc., are:

\[ P \times 2.29 = P_2O_5 \]
\[ P_2O_5 \times 0.44 = P \]
\[ K \times 1.21 = K_2O \]
\[ K_2O \times 0.83 = K \]

If your magazine was not so good I’d not bother. It’s only because of the trust it generates that I want to see reliability on this point!

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John Shildrick is Chief Executive of The National Turfgrass Council.

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How to win the battle against compaction: a Greenkeeper International special report

One of the major battles every greenkeeper must win if he is to gain the respect of his employers and Club members is the battle against compaction. We hear so much these days about compaction and its associated problems that it is important for our members to understand precisely what is meant by compaction, how it affects our courses, and what can be done to alleviate it.

First, let us identify the problem. Plants have basic requirements if they are to thrive: food, water, warmth and light are all obvious and readily spring to mind. In addition to this they require the right growing medium. This usually means soil. Soil should be open and contain a high proportion of air as healthy plants require oxygen within the root zones. These air gaps and pockets provide the passageways through which water can easily move and be stored. This aids both drainage and irrigation. It is also through these gaps that the plant pushes its root systems.

Compaction exists within the soil when it has been pressed together, causing these air gaps and pockets to close. As soon as compaction starts, the micro-environment within the soil moves in a downward spiral. Having closed the air gaps, oxygen can no longer keep the soil sweet. Decaying organic matter gives off methane, which will now remain locked in the soil, making it sour. Water can no longer drain through the soil, which adds to this problem as it becomes stagnant.

Neither can the water be drawn up through the soil by capillary action to supply the plants' requirements. The grass roots are now in a hostile environment and start to retreat towards the surface. The plant can no longer thrive and will begin to lose its healthy green colour. The technical term for this is chlorotic.

If nothing is done to correct the basic problem it becomes tempting for Clubs to treat the symptoms. More water is required to keep shallow rooted grasses alive. Since shallow roots find it difficult to obtain food, fertiliser is also applied, and as every greenkeeper will tell you, we now have the classic situation for a build-up of thatch. If allowed to continue, the thatch will cause the soil to dry out even more.

The root zones will become even more shallow until they almost only exist within their own layer of thatch. This causes a root break, where the turf on the greens is often not attached to the soil layer at all. More water and more fertiliser is required to keep the grass alive, and so the spiral continues.

By now the ideal environment has been created for the build up of various bugs and diseases which tend to survive in the sour damp micro-climate of thatch. The most obvious of these is fusarium, although there are several others which can be just as devastating. At this point many a strong man has been known to go weak at the knees, but let us not despair. Rather let us ask ourselves a few questions which may help us to avoid getting to this point, or if we are already there, help us to reverse the cycle.

The first question is: 'What causes compaction?' The answer is traffic. Traffic through construction, traffic through maintenance and traffic through play. While there is little that may be done about traffic in construction, there is a great deal which can be done by greenkeepers and the Club to reduce unnecessary maintenance and play traffic. It seems obvious to us that players and maintenance vehicles should be kept to the proper paths and walk-ways. However, greenkeepers often complain that golfers ignore barriers and signs, but I wonder how often they are set a bad example by green staff sometimes riding un neces-
A micro climate is created within the thatch layer where pests and diseases thrive.

Air channels are closed; the air is forced out and water can no longer move freely in the soil.

Having said all this, it has to be acknowledged that most courses are being subjected to an amount of play which is far in excess of anything imagined even ten years ago, let alone when many courses were built, possibly over a hundred years ago.

Having identified compaction and its causes, what can be done to alleviate the problem? The answer is a great deal.
In the past many different systems of cultivation have been devised and used. These include solid, hollow, and slit tining. Solid tining is simply driving a spiked shape tine into the ground and provides, in my view, no useful purpose whatsoever. It forces soil sideways and can increase compaction around the hole rather than alleviate the problem.

By contrast, hollow coring does have a positive role to play. It removes some thatch and soil and if the resultant holes are left open throughout the winter, frost again can break down the hole sides, helping the surrounding soil to open up. Should the greenkeeper wish to conduct a soil exchange programme, because for instance his greens have been built on clay or some other unsuitable matter, he can simply remove the cones and replace them with a suitable top dressing. The depth of hollow tining is of paramount importance when carrying out such an operation, and a machine capable of penetrating the soil up to eight inches or more should be used.

Slit tining also has its benefits. Deep slitting in the autumn connects the surface of the soil to the drainage layers. This helps to take away any heavy winter rain and, in the same way, fine slitting in the spring and summer ensures that rain and irrigation soaks through the turf rather than being shed sideways by the thatch. Slitting is also a useful means of root pruning rhizomes and stolons.

In recent years the appearance of the Verti-Drain has transformed compaction relief by using its unique shatter tining action. This machine penetrates the ground up to 16 inches deep, piercing any pan which may exist. The tines then heave the soil, cracking up the compaction before they are withdrawn. This heaving action lifts the soil in a uniform manner, the lift representing the amount of air that has been incorporated into the ground. Like most machines, the Verti-Drain has to be used conscientiously, and soil conditions need to be taken into account. The operation should be undertaken at an intensity of hole spacings and to a depth which is consistent with the greenkeeper’s maintenance programme. It may be that the greenkeeper would wish to start at, say, four inch centres going down to a six inch depth and progressively increase the depth as well as decrease the distance between centres. Such a programme may well be necessary if the greens have a root break. In such circumstances the surface of the soil needs to be opened up so that the grass carpet can anchor itself to the soil before a more vigorous treatment is attempted.

Whichever method of compaction relief is used, it is important for greenkeepers and Clubs alike to realise that the benefit is not indefinite, and that it will be necessary to continue with their compaction relief programme as long as their courses are extensively played.

Finally, let us consider our objective, which is to have a healthy grass cover despite the excessive wear and possible drought conditions which we are experiencing. Open friable soil should enable the right grasses to put down deep root systems which can obtain moisture in all but the worst drought conditions. These deep rooting grasses should be able to sustain heavy wear and regenerate growth after intensive play. Using the right machinery at the right time can assist every greenkeeper in achieving this objective.
For a reason that I find difficult to understand, some chairmen of green and greenkeepers dislike the idea of a specialist coming to their course. They seem to think that if anyone has to give them advice, they have failed. Actually nothing is further from the truth. The world outside of Golf Clubs operates on that very basis. The larger the company the greater the number of specialists employed. They take the sensible view that no one person can keep up with all the latest developments and that if they are to maintain their own standing in the business environment they must employ specialists to keep them advised.

Briefly, the STRI was established in 1929 under the title of 'The Board of Greenkeeping Research' to provide a service to Golf Clubs. It was re-constituted in 1951 as the 'Sports Turf Research Institute' and its work expanded to cover all sports played on a grass surface. Most of the major sport-controlled bodies of the British Isles are members through nominated representatives. Its affairs are administered by a board of management which includes representatives from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and the Golf Unions, together with those from Association Football; Rugby; Lawn Tennis; Bowling; Cricket; Hockey; The British Association of Golf Course Architects and of course your own Association, BIGGA.

Many Golf Clubs like my own have joined the Institute and receive an annual visit from one of their agronomists. His visit takes the form of a walk-about. We select a route which takes in locations on our course that have received his previously recommended treatment and also includes areas where we feel in need of advice. We are always pleasantly surprised at his detailed knowledge of our course, it being obvious that he does us the honour of preparing well for his visit.

After our course walk-about, we retire to the board room for a cup of tea and a chat. This is a most valuable part of the visit, affording the opportunity to both check our notes and confirm recommendations which can be put in hand prior to publication of the report.

Shortly after the visit we receive his report which usually includes these sections:

- Introductory remarks: A brief survey of the general condition of the course.
- Course Survey: A detailed survey of those parts of the course on which the agronomist wishes to make comment, together with those where he was asked for advice.
- Recommendations: Discussed recommendations for course maintenance together with detailed treatments, quantities and rates of application.
- Other points: Comments, suggestions and recommendations as a result of the visit. Our own reports have included details on the building of a bunker with a revetted face, arboreal work, the extension of a green and the emotive problem of trolley use in winter.

As a definite policy, my committee arrange for a copy of the report to be displayed for all to see in the clubhouse. Naturally, the greenkeeper also receives a copy which he displays on the notice board in the mess room. When the report arrives I have an immediate responsibility to evaluate the cost of the recommendations, together with the effect such changes may make on the regular maintenance programme.

To obtain an overall view of the recommendations I prepare a large sheet of paper with the operations along the top and the work locations - Green; Temporary Green; Collars; Aprons; Tees; Fairways and Rough - down the left hand side. By working through the report and noting the details in the appropriate section I can be sure of making a full evaluation.

This type of analysis allows me to see at a glance the requirements at each location. The greenkeeper also has a copy for his notice board and uses it as a reference. It removes the need for him or his staff to spend their valuable time sorting through paragraphs of the report.

While I am obviously advocating the use of the STRI and a visit by an agronomist I have made no mention of their research facilities, which are concerned not only with sports turf but with all amenity grass areas and artificial turf surfaces. Some of their research is funded by outside bodies, but we all benefit when results are published. Their activities also extend from feasibility studies on potential golf course sites to the ecological and conservationist issues of established courses. We should all make use of their good offices.
How the PGA provides a
Bruce Jamieson, pictured, is a man who gets results. As Director of Agronomy for the PGA European Tour, that’s one of many required skills. DAVID WHITE reports

The final shot on the first play-off hole at Wentworth, a stiff-to-the-flag five iron from Seve... he’s home and dry, a worthy winner of the PGA Championship. Such is the stuff of which dreams are made and which makes golf such a perfect spectacle.

But how are such courses prepared for a major championship?

To get the facts was not difficult, for the PGA European Tour boast as their Director of Agronomy Bruce Jamieson, a talented young Scot with a dead cert family background – his father and brother are both professionals – who has achieved his goal by working through the ranks as greenkeeper, head greenkeeper (at Powfoot and Royal Porthcawl) and who has never once dismissed the need to follow the learning curve. Learning was the very key to his present role and followed a familiar Scottish pattern of Elmwood College for City & Guilds in Greenkeeping, a positive and substantial portfolio of turf management and self-improvement courses at other colleges and finally graduation into ‘fully trained management’ – his ultimate aim – via examination and graduate membership of the Institute of Industrial Management. He is proof positive that greenkeeper education works!

At Porthcawl, where he masterminded the course for at least two National Championships, his skills were instantly recognised. In their wisdom the Club saw that he was outstripping his earning potential and planned for him to be released, as a designed campaign, to give advice to other Clubs in the area. In the event a different challenge presented itself and he joined the PGA European Tour as a Tour Administrator. Suddenly things were not the same. Opportunities abound for a man of knowledge and in offering advice to the green staff at a Tour venue in Italy and subsequently at other European venues, his skills of communication were observed and monitored to an extent that within a short space of time he was appointed to his present role by PGA European Tour Executive Director, Ken Schofield.

How did it happen? It seems simple enough, for he has a gentleness and calm that inspires confidence. He talks with people, not at them. He listens; he has sympathy; he understands. He’s been there. Above all he doesn’t tell people what to do, he merely suggests better or different ways of achieving a goal – the goal that both parties want. And he gets results.

I was interested to learn how he ensured reaching what is all-important to tournament players: that the quality of the course and the condition in which it is presented to them is as good as it possibly can be. How, for example, does the whole thing start?

A tour venue, once mooted, gets to first base only after several imponderables have been thoroughly examined and the site found to meet specific criteria. Location is, naturally enough,
one such criteria and access for traffic and spectator accommodation another. The course must have playability and this will be ascertained only after several rounds have been played by senior Tour officials.

Achieving playing conditions that challenge the world's best golfers may necessitate minor alterations and within reason some changes may need to be made to, say, the levelling of a tee or its enlargement. It is the Tour's role to give such advice, to work alongside golf course personnel, to help them achieve the standards of preparation that are required for tournament play. A venue is visited six months prior to an event and informed discussions will take place with the head greenkeeper about his planning for the event and the logical approach seen to be necessary leading up to the tournament. The head greenkeeper is free to talk to Bruce at any time if he has a query, or seeks confirmation of a planned course of action. Bruce has a lengthy check list which outlines a programme to be attained, but the impression I gained was always of joint consultation, advice, suggestion. Never insistence.

If, for example the Club is short on greenkeeping staff, and if the head greenkeeper is happy to accept help, the Tour can supply the Club with three qualified greenkeepers – Roger and Richard Stillwell and Mark Lewis – and they arrive a week prior to the event and stay on until the event is over. Roger Stillwell, who like Richard is an independent consultant greenkeeper, is seen as something of a 'fire-fighter' - a problem shooter if you like. He's around if needed and often attends three or four months in advance. Now they've added to the team, with BIGGA TORO Student Greenkeeper of The Year finalists attending during a tournament. This year two finalists attended St Mellion for two weeks and proved invaluable to the team, whilst gaining additional skills.

I touched on the grass species conundrum and asked about Poa annua. It was a subject that Bruce instantly warmed to and one on which he holds firm views. He believes that the Poa problem can be solved quite easily.

'We have this dogma in Britain about

Get rid of

'We've had a situation over the past 20 years where consultants like Jim Arthur and the STRI have given good solid advice for maintaining bents and fescues and achieving them back into the sward' he said. 'But it's a very slow process and I believe golfers today are too impatient and don't want to wait years for good surfaces. Anyone thinking they can revert 100% Poa to bent and fescue in under ten years by slow management methods is dreaming. They'll maybe knock it back to 30% in the first two years, but getting rid of that 30% is going to take another ten years. Then you have the problem of seed that's been laid down in the thatch layer still germinating maybe two years after. Therefore you can have an invasion of the sward any time opportunity presents itself to the Poa remaining.

'You've also got several different types of Poa in greens, not just one. There's a stoloniferous variety and one that grows by rhizomes as well, so all the slitting that we do to greens, although it encourages the bent grass to shoot stolons and rhizomes, actually encourages the Poa as well. It's easy to say you will get rid of Poa annua - meaning the seeded head producing variety - yes, you certainly will, but whether you get rid of the variety spreading by stolons, that's another matter, and I don't believe you will.

'At El Salar they have a Poa problem and every three years they take four greens, cover them with polythene after aerifying with a hollow tiner, and gas them with Methyl Bromide. It kills the greens stone dead to a depth of four inches. They clean up the thatch, leave it for two weeks, score new seed into the soil - in their case pure Penncross, which germinates in six days - and in six weeks they have a fine putting surface which lasts for three to five years, or even longer, depending on how they're managed. I believe that's a route we should consider in Britain. If you've got a Poa green and want to get rid of it, gas it! Get it cleaned out, sterilise the soil, re-seed it with what you want and manage it accordingly. I believe you can then retain it, but
you've got to do something to kill all the seeds in the ground and sterilisation by the Methyl Bromide method is, in my opinion, as good as any.

'Why', I asked 'is this not more widely known, why don't the STRI advocate such a programme?'. 'I don't know', he said. 'Maybe they have thought about it but think it's an unacceptable option. For those Clubs that come off their greens in October, and there are more and more enlightened ones that do - for protection, or to attempt to solve high percentage Poa problems, bad thatch layer or what have you - and when a sensible man-

Again Bruce stressed that the PGA European Tour is not in the business of changing golf courses. 'We're criticised enough for the height of cut used during tournaments, but before I came into this post there wasn't a Tour official who had ever worked on a golf course full time. No official ever advocated a specific height of cut. It was a greenkeeper that set the height at one-eighth, no one else. To scream blue murder because someone comes along and wants the greens quicker and the only way he knows is by cutting them lower - that has nothing to do with us'.

We discussed alternatives, the use of the Australian Turf Iron for example. In a word, 'fantastic' was his answer. 'It gives you what you want, doesn't damage the putting surface, gives you the surface you need, quickly. It may cause compaction, but so do players and that's why we have Cushmans with a slit tiler on the back. Twice over after the tournament and you're back where you started. It's easy to scream "don't do it" because it's damaging, everything we do is damaging to grass, cutting to an eighth isn't very helpful to it, cutting at five-eighths if it's Poa pratensis isn't very healthy - it's going to die. We put grass in a situation where it's meant to grow tall and we hack it back every day.'

Bruce also suggested that much more research was needed in Britain on fertilisation. Not enough scientific data was available to the greenkeeper, with inaccurate application often causing root desiccation in most grasses - the only one growing healthily being Poa! He feels that too little research is being done into what nitrogen actually does to the roots and shoots. 'There's a point where you actually start losing roots for shoot growth', he says. 'Everybody knows it's there in the research industry, but no definitive figures are forthcoming. If you look at American books they talk about pounds of N per thousand square feet, a much more professional approach. It's all a bit hit and miss in this country'.

We returned to the subject of green speed, my suggestion that aiming for eight feet was too much for Club golf on a regular basis being dismissed. 'I think they should', he said, 'when the grass is growing healthily, though there may be exceptions when fertiliser has been applied and the grass is lush, then the surface speed will be slower, or when water has been applied heavily. But in general terms, cutting at three-sixteenths makes a speed of eight an achievable figure if all the correct management procedures are followed. On tournaments a speed of 9.5 to 10.6, consistent on all greens, is ideal, though on severe sloping ground a speed of eight is better and avoids the vexing problem of a ball scampering several feet past the cup and off the green. That's silly, it doesn't create good golf, rather it -
The Bigga Personal Pension Plan

BIGGA is pleased to announce that with immediate effect, the minimum premium for the BIGGA Personal Pension Plan is reduced to only £15 per month for all greenkeepers. So now you can take full advantage of the tremendous benefits that the plan offers for a lower monthly outlay.

The Bigga Mortgage Service

BIGGA is pleased to announce a new service for all members, which will make it easier for greenkeepers to secure the best mortgage offer when they are either buying a new house or refinancing the purchase of their existing property. The Association is well aware of the exceptional demands placed upon its members because of the nature of their work. Greenkeepers do not always have the time to explore all the mortgage possibilities available.

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Destroys the ability of a good golfer to score'

He talked of The Masters and how each green has a single greenkeeper, each responsible for a consistent speed, some may need one cut, others four or five, but each will be the same as the other. Greenkeepers in Britain and on the continent, however, are under resourced and have perhaps two or three triples for a whole course. No problem, in Bruce's view, providing each mower is set on the accubar gauge to the same tolerance. A good triple cut, cut at a 45 degree angle on the second cut can present the greens very nicely. The stimpmeter is also a useful tool, he says, giving the greenkeeper information that he should want to have.

Many Clubs do not get paid to stage a Tour event, yet there are more and more who are actively seeking to be on the rota. What do they get from it? Members can expect to gain from their hard work and sacrifice. Benefits are tangible and intangible. The clubhouse may receive a face-lift, the golf course will certainly benefit from the maintenance programme, from the picture it presents to the world, and the spirit that pervades throughout ensures that pride is increased. One positive bonus is the knowledge gleaned on how to manage a course through a stressful period, the increase in traffic and wear and tear. Greenkeepers are often pleasantly surprised at how much the course can take when preparation is programmed and the experience of managing turf 'at peak performance' for a week becomes a priceless bonus when preparing for future Club championships. The kudos to a greenkeeper in seeing a job well done is beyond measure. Taking a direct comparison between Wentworth, a world-renowned course designed by Harry Colt, and Coombe Hill, another Colt design and in many ways very similar in quality and playability, but little known outside of London, the Wentworth course has hosted tournaments for the past 30 years and is the one everyone wants to play. That international recognition continues to the benefit of members long into the future.
B.E.M. for former BIGGA Chairman

It is with great pleasure that the Association learnt of the award of the British Empire Medal to Walter Woods in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours list.

The Award was made to recognise his services both as Links Supervisor at St Andrews and to the greenkeeping profession. Walter, pictured, played a leading part in the establishment of BIGGA in 1987 and indeed was the first Chairman of the Association. His has been a key role in the development and progress of the Association and rarely a week goes by without Walter contacting the office with a new idea or some relevant suggestion. Those who know him will vouch for his forthright views, warmth of personality and at all times his determination to enhance the greenkeeping profession and the well-being of greenkeepers.

I am sure that the Association will continue to enjoy his practical support and be able to call on his technical expertise for many years to come. Many congratulations Walter on this very much deserved recognition for all you have achieved for the greenkeeping profession.

NEIL THOMAS, Executive Director

BIGGA National Golf Tournament
Royal St David's, Harlech, 5th, 6th, 7th August

The final date for entry is Friday 19th July. If you haven’t already done so, mail your completed entry form to BIGGA Headquarters – now!

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TORO REELMASTER 450-D

This exceptional machine has been designed with its weight evenly distributed around a centre mounted 50 hp engine. Climbing ability and traction is so easy ... in virtually all weather or ground conditions. All controls are in easy reach of the operator to provide greater comfort. And with transport speed of 15 mph and mowing capacity up to 7.5 mph productivity will be increased considerably.

O-ring seals protect connections. Low PS1 ... it all adds up to the 450-D.

□ High winds can make a pipe smoker thoroughly niggardly on a golf course when the matches won't stay lit. Thus at The Belfry I was impressed with the super Western Log Company shelters, which offer a comforting break from any wind and rain. With 12 of 'em dotted strategically around, this smoker was able to indulge his filthy habit with nary a problem. The golf was good too! Western Log are on 0639 896715.

□ A new bunker/green rake - called the Ulti-Mate - has been given the thumbs-up at the Belfry and looks set to make its mark elsewhere. All-plastic, it features a grip guard to keep the handle free of sand and a blade which the makers suggest can be used to clear a path to the hole when early morning golfers are faced with dew. Forgive me for mentioning it, gentlemen, but isn't that not a contravention of rule 23? For details, call 0792 296624.

□ Toro's innovative Hydroject 3000, featured in June, has its first UK buyer, D & E Turf Maintenance of Shildon, Co. Durham. First announced at BIGGA's January exhibition, we understand that enquiries received were quite staggering. Original sales forecasts have been rapidly ditched and are now expected to be at least 100% in excess of target.

□ Booker Seeds Ltd, acquired recently by the Dutch Royal Vanderhave Group BV, has changed its name to Sharpes International Seeds Ltd. For day to day trading the company will immediately adopt the more streamlined title of Sharpes International. To coincide with the launch of the new name, Sharpes International has also published a comprehensive brochure which provides a detailed insight into their breeding/trialing programmes, quality control facilities and extensive varietal portfolio. Copies from Boston Road, Sleaford, Lincs, telephone 0529 304511.

□ Supaturf have produced a colourful new eight-page brochure detailing their range of Top Line pressure spray line marking machines that are streets ahead of the hand-held aerosol. Well worth investigating, copies are free by phoning 0533 750256.

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On December 31st the JLO factory in Germany ceased production of their two-stroke engines. Some JLO engines will continue to be made at Technamotor's Italian facility to the original design and full spares and service support is assured for both past and future production. In the UK and Eire, IPU of Wolverhampton will continue to provide service until September, when Technamotor (UK) Ltd will assume responsibility for all JLO related matters. Their number is 0784 450785.

To help maintain putting green quality at four of the 14 Whitbread courses, a delivery of 11 Lloyds Paladins has been made. Explaining the choice, Derek Keen, Area Course Manager for Tudor Park, Meon Valley, Breadsall Priory and Goodwood Park, said: 'We have trodden the triplex road for speed and cost-effectiveness but found they can mark the greens when used regularly... with pedestrian operated machines, we found they produced a better finish. Another factor is our greenskeepers. They get terrific job satisfaction from caring for the greens and it is very rewarding to use a machine that gives that final touch of perfection.' The 53cm width Paladin is powered by a Honda GX110 3.5hp engine and gives 138 cuts per metre.

Colin Pryce, who has been operating a Terralift soil aeration service for the past four years, has formed a new company, C & P Soilcare Ltd. The new company will provide a complete soil care service and includes compressed air soil aeration, soil analysis and supply of conditioners which can be injected by Terralift or incorporated by convention means. They have the knowledge to sort out seemingly unsolvable soil problems, or know a man who can!

Pictured: The Terralift pneumatic Soil Conditioning Unit.

Ransomes have been chosen to supply a range of equipment to the Earls Colne Golf and Country Club, Colchester, built on the site of a World War II airfield, part of which is still used for flying. The full 18 hole course, together with 4 hole training academy and 20 bay floodlit range covers 300 acres and features 14 lakes and 25,000 trees. Praising Ransomes for their wide range, owner Mr Eric Hobbs said: 'I am a firm believer in buying British and Ransomes equipment really impresses me, it fits my bill perfectly.'

Agar Equipment Ltd have announced a new front mounted mower specially designed for use with Ford's CM224 Front Mowing Tractor. Featuring a fully floating head, fully castorised wheels, solid rubber tyres, high clearance and blade access by tipping the deck over, the new FM constitutes an exceptionally efficient grass cutting machine, especially where grass is difficult and uneven. Agar Equipment Ltd are on 0905 52717.
This feature was to have focussed on Britain’s Local Authorities and their golfing activities. The many hours spent by your editor on asking questions – and receiving totally negative answers or being stone-walled – turned out to be the most un rewarding experience of all time. What have they to hide? Why are they so negative? Whose corner are they protecting? One highly capable head greenkeeper in charge of a local authority course in Kent summed it up rather succinctly by declaring that in his case the reason was one of ignorance: “None of the faceless ones from my authority know ‘beans’ about golf”, he said, “and they frankly couldn’t care less.”

Local Authority Golf – getting it right

GOLF AT THAMESDOWN – a dutiful local authority and its golf programme

Thamesdown – the borough centred around Swindon – is extremely conscious of its duties to its citizens and over the years has invested in many amenity facilities. Their golf includes an 18 hole and two 9 hole courses, three pitch & putt courses and a 34 bay driving range. The majority of these are centred around the Broome Manor Golf Complex, where Kelvin Dudley is the head greenkeeper with a staff of six. Also under the same management in the adjoining Coate Water Country Park are extensive pitch & putt, mini golf and putting green facilities. The complex, under the management of Tom Watt, has a pro shop and a restaurant and bar, these being available for private functions.

The driving range, which re-opened recently with an additional 14 bays, has been given a sand-filled synthetic surface to allow the majority of balls to roll towards the centre for mechanical retrieval. It was the need to mechanise the facility (six million balls a year) which led to the refurbishment. Kelvin said that in wet weather balls ‘plugged’ and had to be picked and washed by hand.

The new carpet was made specifically for Thamesdown and extends over six acres. In re-contouring the site a considerable tonnage of clay subsoil was removed and replaced with a stone sub-base over which 500 tonnes of sand was placed. New lighting was installed and the range is now open from 8am until 9pm, seven days a week.

In common with most local authorities, the advent of competitive tendering has placed restrictions on availability of facts or figures which could be used by a competitive tender. Tom said this was regrettable, as they (Thamesdown BC) liked to be helpful, but CCT was a fact of local authority life and you never knew if the next complex manager might not be from a Dutch or French firm. Thamesdown have tendered for their own contract, and while expecting to win they are nervously awaiting an answer on their future.

Tom claimed not to be political, and within the popular meaning he certainly is not, however he is proud and possessive of Thamesdown’s attainments and their ‘value for money’ services. In particular he is sincere in his belief of the...
rightness of providing rate-payers with golf a reasonable prices, green fees being a maximum £6.85 at weekends, with concessions for the unemployed mid-week. Even at these modest levels Thamesdown's golf makes a substantial contribution to the borough's income. Perhaps as a result, councillors are positive about the facility and willing to re-invest.

Thamesdown has invested £800,000 in golf in the last two years, the major projects being at Highworth and the extensions and improvements at Broome Manor. They also plan a further £250,000 for a substantial expansion of the Clubhouse. The authority's interest in golf stems from 1976 when the original 18 holes were laid out, the range coming in '82 and the additional 9 holes a year later.

Neither men claim that these courses are the country's best and are well aware of the problems, many of which stem from past work carried out while working to a budget, resulting in obvious deficiencies. Kelvin is acutely aware that the courses are over-used, adding that compaction required a lot more work to be carried out.

Soil at Broome Manor is predominantly clay, allowing the formation of several ponds and streams, and adding significantly to interest. While there is only limited under-drainage there have been few problems in recent dry years, though one specific area of more sandy soil is heir to compaction as it slumps in the wet. However, the complex has its own Verti-drain.

The golf side works autonomously within the parks department and they have their own machinery, which is relatively modern and well maintained by their own fitter. Tractors are usually second-hand after Parks and Highways have finished with them, as they do no road mileage, nor is their duty onerous. Mainstays of the mower fleet are two trailed gangs for rough and fairways, changing duty being a matter of altering the height rollers. Rough is kept short to minimise searching for lost balls. For greens and tees they have a fleet of GreenKings and Tri-Kings at Broome Manor, whilst at Highworth, where the nine holed only opened this April, pedestrian mowers are used. Both sites have irrigation on all greens, but this is used fairly frugally, with water abstracted from the mains.

However, they are meeting popular demand with an annual 60,000 rounds at each of Broome Manor's two courses and an anticipated 40,000 at Highworth. Nor will Tom allow that the standard of play is sub-standard, for they have several county players and one junior national player (Gary Harris).

The atmosphere is one of relaxed, informal friendliness, though there are disciplines, with perhaps the biggest problem being slow play. A ranger is employed to keep matches moving, though no-one admits to being slow – they always have an excuse – was Tom's comment.

Tom's view on the expansion of golf courses was entirely consistent. He considers there should be more 'village' courses of nine holes, based (perhaps) in a redundant farm building and run by a village sports club. Such facilities, he suggests, could be set up for around £120,000 and would give the maximum amount of pleasure to the maximum amount of people.

Furthermore, obtaining planning permission would be easier.
As the acceptance of - and demand for - benefits provided by the automatic watering of extensive sports turf playing surfaces gains momentum, it is evident that the sourcing and conservation of viable water supplies are fast becoming major issues. This is especially relevant to golf where, in addition to the numbers of new courses being constructed every year, more and more existing clubs, faced by increases in traffic, are investing in automatic watering systems to help greenkeepers overcome maintenance problems created by wear and tear - and equally important, present courses on a par to those seen during televised tournaments.

In the south, the vast growth of residential development plus a big increase in the building of industrial estates requiring water has compounded the situation. These factors and the undoubted change in climatic conditions which we are experiencing is now reaching a point of real concern. But all is not lost! The key to future sports turf irrigation and golf course watering in particular is the provision of large scale water storage facilities in the form of a reservoir or ornamental lake.

Utilising impounded water - out of season water supplies boosted by natural, winter rainfall - the storage facility, if designed to match the needs of an automatic watering system, could provide sufficient water to last through the bulk of most long, dry summers.

Examples of this far-sighted approach are already beginning to take shape. In Devon, the design for a new 27 hole golf course at Dartmouth, currently under construction, includes a lake capable of storing 1.5 million gallons of water. It is from boreholes for which an abstraction licence has been obtained, water will be pumped into the lake to service their automatic watering system, which, unusually, consists of 216 full circle pop-up sprinklers covering all 27 greens and tees. Despite the fact that full circle sprinklers use 50% more water than the more conventional pop-up heads, the capacity of the lake is such that in the unlikely event of the boreholes drying up, the automatic watering system would be able to continue to operate daily for up to six weeks before supplies were exhausted.

In real terms, the lake, full of 'winter water' for use in early March or early April onwards, would only require topping-up through the summer. If the watering programme was carried out over six months, the use of 'peak season water' could be reduced by up to 50% - a substantial saving.

In contrast, the specification for the nine-hole pay and play Thorney Farm golf course, being developed close to Heathrow Airport, includes the provision of a lake capable of holding 1.25 million gallons, sufficient water to service the system without replenishment for up to three and a half months!

On the Solent coast, the Barton-on-Sea Golf Club - founded in 1898 - have embarked upon an imaginative, phased re-development of their existing 18 hole course which, when completed, will consist of 27 holes plus an ornamental lake featuring an island green.

Watering in particular is the provision of large scale water storage facilities in the form of a reservoir or ornamental lake.

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In contrast, the specification for the nine-hole pay and play Thorney Farm golf course, being developed close to Heathrow Airport, includes the construction of a five million gallon lake. From what Richard Skehan, director of the company developing what was
Courses designed for everyone

The day when your editor can sit through a day of lectures, aimed at members of that much maligned and supposedly misunderstood group The Golf Club Committee – and come out smiling – has finally dawned. At such a seminar, given recently by the National Golf Clubs’ Advisory Association, it gave me much pleasure not only to listen to three speakers, but to listen to those who listened. Each an expert in his own sphere: Keith Wright spoke on "The EGU/Club Partnership", our own David Golding on "The Need for Greenkeeper Training" and John Crowther on "The Responsibilities of a Golf Club Member when elected to a Committee."

Each in his own way proved highly entertaining and, of greater importance, each had a message to put across. That they succeeded in winning 100% approval from the audience would be almost too good to be true, but the overriding message I received, in both eavesdropping and in discussion with green chairmen and secretaries, was of how those greenkeepers who had attended BIGGA’s management courses returned as changed men. Words bâtherto taboo in committee speak, like employee training; job progression; course excellence and college education, were no longer whispered. I even heard, and dare repeat it, ‘greenkeeping management autonomy’!

I can read your mind, and anticipate your quizzical ‘what’s all this got to do with me?’ The aim of this campaign, BIGGA’s management training courses, a feast of which are scheduled for October and November at Aldwark Manor (see insert card for application), are planned specifically to take the heat off those who, perhaps like you, think education is not for them. BIGGA management courses are entertaining. Sure they’re educational, but not at the expense of being boring and never at the expense of technobabble, of talking over your head.

Still not convinced? Talk to anyone who has already attended, ask about the courses and what they gained from them, ask about the spirit of informal good fellowship that pervades throughout the whole period – the exchange of ideas and the sheer good fun of it all. If that doesn’t convince, look hard at the sits. vac. columns and see how the better educated command higher pay!

The BIGGA management courses, I repeat, are meant just for you. Tell your Club secretary I said so and show him this column.

* Book your place at one of the BIGGA management courses – see the card facing Page 2 for details.

Elmwood ‘top college in Britain’

Jack Humphries, Chairman of the Midlands Golf Union and President of The E.G.U. Executive Committee, which, amongst other things, is concerned with the training of greenkeepers, paid a visit to Elmwood College, saying: ‘There is no doubt that Elmwood is the pinnacle college in Britain for training greenkeepers’.

A personal opinion, naturally enough, but doesn’t that sound like fighting talk? I predict it will be viewed as red-rag-to-the-bull by other approved colleges, hell-bent, proud, and fiercely competitive in their education of future generations of greenkeepers.

Good jobs for first full-time students

The value of a full-time education course for potential greenkeepers has been amply demonstrated by news of four young men who attended the first such course ever held in Britain, all of whom have been appointed to good positions.

It was four years ago that a three year B. Tech National Diploma in Turf Science and Sportsground Management started at The Lancashire College of Agriculture and Horticulture, near Preston, under the direction of John Hacker.

Seven young men from around the country started the course, part of their first year being spent in college and 20 weeks – one term – at a variety of placements where they gained practical experience. The All-England Lawn Tennis Club at Wimbledon, Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club, Cardiff Arms Park, Guernsey Golf Club and Grimsby Leisure Centre were amongst the organisations that took the budding greenkeepers.

The second year was spent solely at the college, whilst in the third most students went to golf courses for 32 weeks – in Florida.

Now comes news that Chris Harvey, one of the students on that path-finding course run by John Hacker (now running his own consultancy), has been appointed course manager at Isle of Purbeck GC in Dorset, where he is in charge of the 27 hole complex. Chris, who had previously worked as groundsman for Portsmouth FC, incidentally married an American girl whilst in the US last year.

Another, John Huntington from York, has recently been first assistant at Farnham GC and on June 11th took over as deputy head greenkeeper of the Kings Course at Gleneagles.

Graham Wallace, a third group member, is deputy head greenkeeper on the Monarch Course at Glenaig.

 unveiled, in both eavesdropping and in discussion with green chairmen and secretaries, was of how those greenkeepers who had attend-

While Geoff Allison, from Peterlee, is an assistant on the new Wisley Course due to open in August.

It is good to learn that their hard work is paying off and equally gratifying that similar courses have been running successfully at The Lancashire College each year thereafter.

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Keeping in touch with news and comment from the regions

NORTHERN IRELAND
This was my first visit to Northern Ireland and my thanks to Peter Powell of Iseki for transporting and hosting me. It really is a beautiful part of the world. Portstewart GC, now with an additional nine holes of distinguished linksland added to the original fabulous 18, was the venue for the Iseki Northern Ireland regional qualifying event, under the expert management of Frank Larkin. The wind was at gale force but golfers are hardy in these parts and without exception all those participating enjoyed the day and the excellent hospitality and catering. Results were: First class: 1st Patrick Devine, Carrickfergus GC; 2nd Sidney Arrowsmith, Royal Portrush GC; 3rd Godfrey Freeman, Dungannon GC. Second: 1st Alec Lafferty, Royal Portrush GC; 2nd Ray McMaith, Royal Portrush GC; 3rd Tony Bradshaw, Malone GC. Third: 1st Eric O'Niel, Portstewart GC; 2nd Paul McIsland, Royal Belfast GC; 3rd Joe Millar. Knock GC. We look forward to welcoming them at Hillside on September 12th. This was a successful first event in this part of the world and I am sure the Northern Ireland round will go from strength to strength.

SOUTHERN IRELAND
The course at Forrest Little, for the Iseki regional qualifier under the expert management of Owen O'Connor (pictured), was in sparkling condition and an excellent day's golf ensued. The warmth of welcome at the club is something special — nothing is too much trouble and the catering throughout the day was excellent. BIGGA is now developing close relationships with greenkeeper members and non-members alike 'across the water' and in this connection the Iseki tournament makes a great contribution. My thanks to all concerned for a truly Irish welcome. Results were: First class: 1st Frank Donlon, Malahide GC; 2nd Paul Fitzgerald, Beech Park GC; 3rd Gerry Byrne, Westmanstown GC. Second class: 1st Edward Donlon, Rush GC; 2nd Frank Larkin, Castle GC; 3rd Owen O'Connor, Forrest Little GC. Third class: 1st Sean Mungall, Knockclog GC; 2nd Joe Walsh, Beavertown GC; 3rd Chris Nolan, Forrest Little GC. We shall look forward to meeting them all at Hillside on September 12th.

NORTH WEST
The Spring Tournament at Saddleworth GC was attended and enjoyed by 40 greenkeepers on May 15th. The day started with weather best suited to winning Paradise. Alec Lafferty, Patrick Devine, Eric O'Niel, Peter Powell, Iseki

The competition, consisting of a member and guest, will be the usual format of an 18 hole four-ball better ball.

Following a recent committee decision it was agreed to define a guest as either a member from our own members Club, or a greenkeeper from a different Club to their own.

Written entries, giving name and address, name of partner and current handicaps, together with the current fee, should be sent to: Joe Burdett, 948 Castle Lane East, Bournemouth BH7 6SP. Tel: 0202 483017.

I hear that Phil Nason has taken a greenkeeping job in Norway. Good luck, Phil, perhaps I could book you for a winter lecture when you are under 3ft of snow next year! Maybe our editor would like an article on your greenkeeping experiences once you have settled down.

BOB DENNIS

NORTH SCOTLAND
May 16th was the day for our Spring Outing at Nairn GC, the event turning out to be one of the best supported ever with over 70 members, traders and guests playing and another handful enjoying the general good fun. Our sincere thanks to everyone concerned at Nairn GC for hospitality and friendliness and for granting us the courtesy of the course. Although a light drizzle hung around for most of the day, it did little to dampen the spirits of golfers as they enjoyed playing a splendidly prepared championship course, ably presented and maintained by Ian Carson and his staff.


Trevor Mackay of Royal Dornoch was best apprentice with a nett 71 off 8 whilst John Taylor of Forbes won the Vets with a fine nett 78 off 5. Steven Frost of Royal Aberdeen succeeded again in the division for members without official handicaps by turning in a 92-26=66, duly being allotted a 20 handicap! John Robertson retained the Trade Shield whilst Ian Carson used local knowledge (and his hole cutter!) to win nearest-the-pin at the 4th.

Howard Evans addressed members prior to prizegiving with an informative talk on the benefits of a pension plan. The committee's thanks to Howard for making the long journey to help us. We hope he enjoyed this part of the world.

Members should note that our August outing at Peterhead has been brought forward one week to Thursday Sept. 5th, thus avoiding a clash with the Ladies' Eve. The lottery will also be drawn on that day. There is little truth in the rumour that Peterhead has snow in mid-September and I hope as many members as attended Nairn will make the journey.

At this time the section has 130 members, though it is disappointing to note that around 20 have not yet re-joined.

GORDON MOIR

EAST MIDLANDS
May 16th saw the start of the East Midlands golfing programme with a bonny day of golf at Kibworth GC, a grand course delightfully prepared. As is often the case with these events the play was quite outstanding, the food delicious and the company just perfect. Thanks to all concerned.

The best score was 74 from Paul Sewell, with the best nett being a staggering 61 from Craig Watt. Other scores were: (0-9) R Barker 75-4=71. P Sewell 74-2=72. M Emery 88-8=90. (10-18) C Hare 81-14=95. S Freter 86-18=104. S Goode 82-12-70. (19-28) C Watt 84-23=61. M Binley 92-24=68. M Billings 93-22=71. Trade and Associates: I Toon 89-9=71. P Fell 83-10=73. J Bars 91-18=73. Well done all you winners and remember if you did not win something this time there is still the Autumn meeting at Rushcliffe GC on September 19th.

May I make my continuous appeal for news or opinions for this column, no matter how insignificant. Please call me on 0654 61642.

GORDON MITCHELL

DEVON and CORNWALL
Third year unlucky was how the weatherman caught us at Westurf '91, though such inclement stuff doesn't stop the Devon and Cornwall members from attending in force and enjoying themselves! The whispers are reaching roaring pitch as the good word gets around about this excellent show and our thanks to all who make it thus, especially Gordon and Marion Child.

Our Iseki qualifiers tested their skills against the Tredegar Park course

NEIL THOMAS

SOUTH COAST
Details of the Section Summer Tournament are as follows:
Venue: Brockenhurst Manor GC. Date: Thursday 1st August 1991. Time: teeing off from 1.00 pm Closing date: 22nd July 1991.

GORDON MITCHELL

BART CROSS
SOUTH WEST

Bob Gates (pictured) is getting sick at having his leg pulled. It seems that being chairman of the section counts for nothing when mischief is in the air. Indeed, he told me only yesterday that if one more greenkeeper offers a tongue in cheek 'congratulations Bob, I've never seen your course looking so good' only for Bob to have to grudgingly admit that he retired last Christmas, then we may be one member short for some considerable time.

Seriously, the course at Westonbirt, considering the awful spring weather, was looking very tidy and playing well. Out thanks to the bursar of Westonbirt School for allowing us the use of the course for our annual John Ireland Greensomes on May 2nd. This event, which combines greenkeepers playing with amateur partners, has proved very popular over the years since its inauguration in 1976. This year was no exception with prizes keenly contested from the start. The bright idea is to find the biggest bandit in your Club and make him an offer he can't refuse...

The nett results were: 1st R Greaves and T Reaves (Bristol and Clifton) 60, 2nd D Dobie and M Coburn (Marlborough) 63, 3rd T Roberts and C Middledon (Lilleybrook) 62. 4th P Baynton and J Scoones (Long Ashton) 65.

5th M McFarlane and J Cooper (Saltford) 65. Best front nine: D Eves and W Smith (Painswick) 37. Best back nine: C Tozer and D Rendell (Bridport) 34.

Thanks to St Budle of the Spa and Anthony Miller for prizes and to mine hosts Ken and Pauline at The Carpenters Arms for catering to inner needs.

It seems that some of you did not receive entry forms before the competition and if this should happen again; please feel free to telephone (0285 651998) and ask for one. One thing – don’t leave it until the night before an event – give me a week’s notice otherwise I cannot guarantee a place.

PHILIP WORSTER

SURREY

May I first apologise to you for the lack of Surrey section news in the last issue. I missed the copy deadline date. So far no one has contacted me regarding the two trips mentioned in previous issues etc. Could this possibly be due to the very difficult greenkeeping conditions prevailing, but not when working.

In the morning medal there was a tie on 73 nett, with a count-back to Graham Cox to take the Browns Shield and Tankard and a nett 69 won Anthony Miller the Waycott Cup and Tankard.

A raffle was held to swell funds and Dennis Jones was again a winner, this time a shirt donated by SISIS. Anthony Jones won a bottle of shochi donated by Munro’s and Les Hallid won a bottle of sherry donated by Avoncrop.

The regional seminar is in Surrey this year, at Merrist Wood College on November 6th, and numbers are limited. If you are interested in reserving places please contact a committee member.

I’m off to Canada on holiday – tough life ain’t it? I hope it rains steadily for the next two weeks, purely for the sake of your golf course – naturally!

PHIL BALDOCK

KENT

Our Spring Tournament and Ikei qualifying round was played on May 14th at Sittingbourne GC, our qualifying representatives at Ham Manor will be: 0-1 category Ian Rawlings, Alan Sheppard, George Brown and Steven Suttle, with David Goodhew in reserve. 10-18 category: Jason Bean, Peter Briscoe, Michael Love and John Millen, with Malcolm Arthur in reserve.

I'm just back from the Iseki Scottish finals at Fraserburgh and must tell you what a delight it was to play on such a natural old links course. Even trouble to ask their opinions regarding the letter mentioned. Then let me know.

Finally, there are still a few places left for the Roses Match and the Autumn Tournament.

BOB UPTON

AYRSHIRE

Our Spring Meeting was held at Irvine Bogside on May 20th, where an excellent day’s golf was enjoyed, though by a disappointingly small turn-out. Could this possibly be due to the very difficult greenkeeping conditions enjoyed in our area over the past few weeks? What we lacked in quantity was replaced by quality, both in standard of play and the Bogside course, ably presented by head greenkeeper Derek Wilson, who did wonders when one considers the vagaries of recent weather.


Will all section members make sure that lottery tickets are returned in good time (early July) to ensure they all get into the draw for The Open.

I’m just back from the Ikei Scottish finals at Fraserburgh and must tell you what a delight it was to play on such a natural old links course. Even the new holes being built have been kept in tune with the natural terrain. Architects please take note. Those of you who missed out this year on the Ikei Championship will just have to try harder in 92, otherwise you’ll not get to play on gems like Fraserburgh.

DUNCAN GRAY

EAST ANGLIA

Channels GC saw our first medal round for many a year and disaster is the word that springs to mind. Must have been a force ten blowing and it was always against us!

I managed a ten on one hole to equal Simon, who was playing equally scintillating golf. Hot Toddly managed several 'Barnes Wallace's across'...

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RECRUITMENT

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The Managing Secretary
Downfield Golf Club
Turnberry Avenue
Dundee DD2 3QP

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Salary by negotiation.

Please post or fax CV with references to:

Jim Lynch
Golf Des Etangs De Fiac
Brazis 81500 Lavaur
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Telephone: 010 33 63 70 70 85
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Fax: 010 33 63 75 75 09

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Hearsall Golf Club (1924) Ltd require a
FIRST ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER

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No accommodation.

Replies in writing with CV to:
The Secretary, Hearsall Golf Club,
Beechwood Avenue, Coventry CV5 6DF

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Closing date: 12th July 1991.

Please quote reference CH65

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No accommodation.

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**35° the lakes but failed to make the leader board on this occasion. Those who made it were (all nett): 0-18: Mike Fance, 70. Ernie Hart, 74. Andy Shin, 75. 19-28: Mel Brown, 70. Martin Forester, 75. Martin Myson, 81.**

Our thanks to Channels for an interesting day and to their captain, Bob Salmon, for presenting prizes donated by Colliers, Kings, Cowies, CMW, Rigby Taylor and Pattissons.

**SCOTTISH REGION**

Fraserburgh GC was the venue for the Scottish Region Iseki finals on May 28th. Travelling up the evening before it was a beautiful night and all looked set for a great day to follow. Came the dawn the sky was overcast and grey and the temperature was chilly to say the least. However it was dry and it warmed as the day wore on.

The course was in excellent order, thanks to Gordon Moir and his team, and the hospitality and catering was first class – thanks to Brian and Karen Thomson and their staff. We especially thank Alan Bolt, Captain of Fraserburgh, for joining us at the presentation to say a few kind words, and to his council for giving us the courtesy of the course. Our thanks also to beki – represented by Peter Powell and ably abetted by Hadyen Wheeler for their sponsor-ship and to Reekie Plant for their demonstration tractor.

**RESULTS:**
- 1st Class: 1 Kevin Peace 72-2= 70. 2 Gordon Moir 75-4= 71. 32
41 3 Graham Robbins 79-8=71. 4 Stuart Taylor 73-1=72. 2nd Class: 1 David Montgomery 76-12=64. 2 Kenny Anderson 81-14=67. 3 Stuart Sime 85-15 = 70. 4 David Sinclair 86-15 = 71. 3rd Class: Wilson Morrison 93-24=69. 2 Alasdair Fraser 96-24=72. 3 Stuart Donald 94-22=72. 4 Steven Frost 94-20=74.

The team prize was won by the North Section with a total of 571, just pipping the West with 576.

Peter Powell gave a special prize to Ian McDougall of Crieff for determination. His car expired 60 miles from Fraserburgh at 9.30am, but after seeing it into the hands of a motoring organisation, he arrived by taxi at 1pm. Ian's 80-6=74 was not a bad score in the circumstances. All in all it was a good day and as I said last year, with the road system we now have, it is not nearly as far as it sounds.

ELLIOTT SMALL

NORTH EAST

Our annual Spring Competition was held at Bamburgh Castle on April 25th, the first time we had played there, though hopefully not the last. Set in idyllic surroundings with the famous castle behind us and miles of golden sands in the distance, this course is a 'must' for all who have not experienced its charms. Our thanks then to the greenkeeping staff for such excellent preparation and to the committee for granting us courtesy. The event, sponsored by Ryton Gravel Co; Turf Care Supplies; Bland Short; Stewarts; Thompsons Quarries and Maxwell Hart, was a great success and we acknowledge with thanks their generosity.


Our congratulations to Craig Kilgour, 19, assistant greenkeeper at Ponteland GC, on winning the Durham County 72 hole Stroke Championship. Membership of the North East section continues to rise, now up to nearly 90, due in no small part to the efforts made in spreading the good word about the benefits of joining BIGGA. Keep them coming in!

JIMMY RICHARDSON

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