A privilege under threat?

One issue which the Association will need to address this year is the use of membership cards for seeking courses of the golf course. This is a privilege extended only to full greenkeeper members who are reminded on the reverse of their membership cards of the etiquette involved. These cards are most certainly not a passport to free golf and they need to be used both sensitively and conservatively. The majority of BIGGA’s greenkeeper members respect the privilege of obtaining courtesy of the golf course and benefit greatly from the opportunity not only to play golf but to experience other golf courses in many varied conditions, thus learning from the other knowledge and expertise. Long may this continue but some notes of caution need to be struck. Whilst we are talking of a small minority, there is increasing evidence of misuse of cards not only by greenkeepers seeking to use cards over frequently and for purely selfish purposes but by members in categories of membership other than full greenkeeper, who, quite simply, are not entitled to seek courtesy of the golf course.

It is essential that members becoming aware of card misuse report such instances to Headquarters in order that appropriate action be taken. Turning a blind eye will achieve nothing other than I suspect an increasing reluctance by golf clubs to grant courtesy. During the course of BIGGA’s review this year we shall be looking to tighten our procedures still further to protect this privilege and ensure the continued cooperation of the many golf clubs across the country who welcome our members onto their golf courses.

Appeal for books

The news of an R & A grant of £10,000 to establish an Association library is to be warmly welcomed. The vast majority of BIGGA’s greenkeepers appreciate the library to implement a review and further to protect this privilege and ensure the continued cooperation of the many golf clubs across the country who welcome our members onto their golf courses.

Yet if BIGGA is not prepared to make a start in locating and initiating such literature the profession will continue to bemoan the lack of a vital resource in disseminating information and enhancing the learning process. So whilst an authentic library is not going to appear overnight, I would urge our readers to blow away the attic dust and see if they can discover some long lost literary masterpieces which might be better located at BIGGA Headquarters.

Book donations, loans or sales will all be welcomed and this library will only be a success if there are concerted moves within the membership to support it. Let’s be hearing from you. In thanking our R & A grant, we thank them not only for the finance involved but also throughout the last seven years for their steadfast and ongoing support of BIGGA. The R & A was instrumental in the formation of BIGGA and it continues to actively support our growth and development acknowledging the need for a strong greenkeepers’ association. The R & A welcomes the improved education and training opportunities now available for greenkeepers and the enhancement of the status of those working in the profession as the evidence of better maintained and quality golf courses becomes clearer with each passing year.

Your views wanted

In this issue you will read of the passing of John Shildrick. I first had the privilege of meeting John when the Association commenced its activities at the Sports Turf Research Institute and it was an opportunity to put forward a view. Views can be submitted either individually, by sections or by regions. You may wish to see a change in procedure or policy at section, region or national level. If so, please let us know. If you have a concern communicate it to Headquarters. Members should not see this as an intimidating or onerous task – it was never meant to be and the administrative details will fall on your Headquarters office. This exercise should not be viewed as an attempt to restructure the Association. We will not be the growing and successful organisation we are today if our structure and policies were fundamentally unsound. Essentially we are seeing where the existing structure and policies can be improved and strengthened. Viewed in this context I hope that many members will feel able to make a contribution to the present exercise.

With regret...

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Association membership at new high

BIGGA membership is at an all-time high.

Already the number of members so far in 1994 has surpassed 1993's total - which itself was a record. There are now 5,183 members of the Association, compared to 5,162 at the end of last year.

"This is fantastic news and helps give BIGGA an even more powerful voice to act on behalf of greenkeepers everywhere," said the Association's sales and marketing manager Bill Lynch.

"And what's more, this figure doesn't include those members from last year who still haven't paid their subscriptions.

"If you know a greenkeeper who is not a member or has forgotten to renew, tell him what he's missing. Some 5,183 paid-up members can't be wrong!"

For information on how to join BIGGA, complete the post-paid reply card facing Page 2 in this issue.

John Shildrick dies of cancer

John Shildrick, one of the world's foremost authorities on sport and amenity turf cultivars and turf science generally, has died after a six-month battle against cancer. He was 65.

John was known to many greenkeepers through his 20 years as assistant director of the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley, West Yorkshire, and latterly as both chief executive of the National Turfgrass Council and secretary of the British Turf and Landscape Irrigation Association.

Born in 1928, he graduated in agriculture at Cambridge University in 1952 and joined the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, also in Cambridge. As head of the herbage seed section, he researched into new cultivars.

In 1968 he joined the STRI as assistant director, introducing and coordinating large-scale trials of sports turf cultivars. Many people believe the methods he developed dictated the path of subsequent research throughout the UK and in many overseas countries.

In 1980 he additionally became part-time secretary of the newly-formed NTC, consolidating information on amenity grass and non-grass surfaces, and was appointed secretary of the BTLIA in 1986. John continued both jobs from his home after retiring from the STRI in 1988, becoming NTC chief executive that year.

Very much a private man, John devoted his life to the turfgrass industry, frequently working seven days a week, and he contributed articles and research papers to virtually all major turfgrass publications and conferences in the UK and overseas.

Many tributes from friends and former colleagues have poured in. STRI director Dr Peter Hayes said: "At all times John was absolutely thorough, accurate and conscientious. His knowledge was tremendous."

Current NTC chairman Jon Bauer commented: "One of John's major gifts was the ability to explain difficult scientific concepts to the lay person, verbally and in print - he was the plain man's interpreter."

Mike Chance, the NTC's first chairman, said: "John was a great friend and a true professional. Working for the NTC gave him a tremendous grasp of the industry, complementing his research knowledge with a deep awareness of the commercial side of the profession. He was quite unique."

BTLIA chairman Paul de Rham said: "John's dedication, knowledge and professionalism helped us all immensely."

John leaves a sister, Ann, and a close friend Barbara whom he met while working in Cambridge and who, with her husband, was particularly supportive during his illness.

Fancy a trip to America?

Are you good at what you do? Do you fancy a free trip to San Francisco? Well, why haven't you entered the ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year award? The closing date for entries has been extended to May 27 - just for you! Contact your section secretary for details and an application form. If you don't win the top prize - a trip to next year's GCSAA exhibition in San Francisco - you could win a weekend for two in London (including a West End show) or a weekend for two at Aldwark Manor.
'Too easy' tournament course criticised

The US superintendents at the legendary Stadium Course at the Tournament Players Club at Sawgrass came in for some heavy criticism during The Players Championships (the so-called fifth 'major') – because the course was too easy.

Tom Kite, a former TPC winner, said it was in excellent condition but it's not in the condition the architect intended. He explained it was way too soft, that the rough had been brought in by 6-8 yards on some holes, stopping wayward drives from running into the trees, and some hazards and mounds are now covered with grass.

The tournament was won by Greg Norman who shot a 24-under total and runner-up Fuzzy Zoeller was 20-under. The 36-hole cut was made on level par.

Ideal for verti-drain use

In last month's Greenkeeper International an ex-contributor got the details of the Kubota tractor wrong. We apologise for the error. The tractor tested was the L3250. The 40 SAE hp (36.5 DIN hp) L3250 has a four-cylinder direct injection diesel engine, 540 rpm rear PTO and power steering as standard.

Particularly suited to meet turf maintenance needs in the golf, sports grounds and local authority markets, the L3250 has mechanical shuttle transmission providing the operator with 16 forward and 16 reverse gears including creep speed as standard, making it ideal for verti-drain operations. Partially synchronised transmission enables the operator to bring the tractor up to full speed quickly and easily for road travel.

Attachments compatible with this tractor include rear mounted flail units, quick attach front loaders and backhoes together with cultivators and post hole diggers.

Long service rewarded

Two employees at Ransomes have been given premium bonds in recognition of 40 years of service for the Ipswich-based company. Barry Saunders, left, joined as an apprentice and is now the quality audit engineer. Ron Pyke, who is blind, joined as a machinist in the threshing department and is now an assembler. They are pictured with Peter Wilson, Ransomes group chief executive.

Kevin Garffitt has taken up the head greenkeeper's job at Ely Golf Club and is looking forward to hosting the county championship there next year. The 31-year-old was previously head greenkeeper at Pontefract. He takes over from 33-year-old Mark Jones who has gone to Preston Golf Club.

Myerscough College will soon be re-introducing a course which established it as one of the foremost centres of turf technology training. The new 'Sports turf Construction and Drainage Course' will run from July 18-22. Tel: 0995 640611.

Aintree, the Liverpool racecourse that stages the Grand National, is off to a good start with its plans to build a £500,000 nine-hole golf course. It should be ready for an autumn opening, they say.

Sisis Equipment (Macclesfield) Ltd has sent its Kent, Sussex and Surrey area rep, Keith Morris, to America to boost sales there. He has now set up home in Florida.

Flower power

If you're under pressure to turn your course into Augusta National, Charles Hill Nursery tell us they have a collection of over 200 hybrid and species rhododendrons and azaleas – and at least one variety in flower every month of the year. Tel: 0252 703375.