

Viva Las Vegas!

Bude and North Cornwall GC Assistant, Jason Chidley, made his local paper with his marriage to Bridgette recently.

The couple had headed off on holiday to Las Vegas having assured their parents that there was no way they were going to get married only for Bridgette to phone home at 2.15am one morning to announce that they had indeed got themselves spliced... which, in fact, had been the plan for the previous nine months.

Having wed in the glitz capital of the world the newly weds then spent their honeymoon in Hawaii.

Congratulations to you both.



Chidley—Brooks, Las Vegas.
THIS marriage of Jason Chidley and Bridgette Ann Brooks took place at the Imperial Palace, Las Vegas, on November 20, the groom being the only son of Pat and late David Chidley, of Bude, and the bride being the youngest daughter of Gordon and Valerie Brooks, of Holford, Bude. The honeymoon is being spent in Hawaii.

US trip goes with a surprise hitch

A BUDE couple feared bad news when their daughter

Gleneagles Conference "a success"

Jimmy Kidd, Gleneagles Hotel Golf Courses and Estates Director, declared the inaugural Gleneagles Turf Care Conference, sponsored by Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products, "a resounding success".

Speaking to over 135 delegates at the conclusion of the three day conference he said, "The conference has surpassed all my expectations and, without fear of contradiction, I can say that it achieved all of its aims...and more. We had a diverse range of delegates from all parts of globe and it provided the ideal forum for them to expand their knowledge and understanding of the golf industry. The speakers, many of whom had travelled from across the world, were first rate and question time at the end of each session provided the opportunity for a lively debate on the various issues raised."

Keynote speaker, Fred Green, the renowned golf course developer whose projects include Nantucket Golf Club, Eagle Springs in Colorado and, more recently, the new Queenwood Golf Club in London, expounded his philosophy on golf club development and the impact of modern technology on course design. He was particularly concerned with the advances in club and ball design, suggesting that a review would be necessary to ensure that all the major courses remain challenging to the top professionals.

This theme was continued later with course designer, David McLay Kidd, providing a fascinating insight into designing courses that are challenging for the professional, while remaining playable for the majority of golfing enthusiasts.

Further topics relating to other aspects of the design and management of a course were discussed including grass types, the use of seed or turf, the future of turf maintenance equipment, water sourcing and usage, tournament preparation which included an interesting case study from Paul Latshaw on his regime for the 2001 Walker Cup.

Melvin Thomas, of Barreldfield Golf, looked at project finance and management structures, and George Shiels, consultant agronomist with PGA European Tour, spoke on the use of fertilisers and maintenance procedures. Various environmental issues including site planning, bio-diversity and wildlife management were discussed, before the final session on marketing, promoting the business and working with the media completed the conference.

"Jimmy Kidd has been nurturing



At the podium: Jimmy Kidd

this idea for the past three years and it didn't take us long to accept his request to support what has proved to be an absolutely superb event. As principal sponsor we are delighted with its success. Through Jimmy's vision and the efforts of everyone involved, this inaugural conference has achieved its goal by providing an international perspective on golf course management and providing a forum where best practice can be explored to the benefit of all the participants," said Glynn Patrick, Sales Director at Textron.



When a greenkeeper of Duncan's (McGilvray) experience and status expresses concerns about the state of our profession it must be noted (See Greenkeeper International November issue page 9). Clearly from the tone of Duncan's letter he wishes to stimulate a debate, on that I wholly endorse him, I too feel that stagnancy has crept over us recently, and that the stature of our profession is diminishing.

I do not believe that our profession has become complacent. However I do think that our profession is struggling to cope with the golfers expectations of year round perfection, that changing work patterns due to climatic change is exacerbating the problem and that a lack of support mechanisms for the Course Manager can leave him feeling isolated.

I believe that what our profession is suffering from is a crisis of confidence. A lack of confidence deriving from that feeling of isolation. At a time when the demands made of our golf courses are increasing, The Course Manager is too often left slogging it out with Committees, Boards, Golfers, and Secretaries in the pursuit of best practice.

The source of the demands is quite simply the constant drive for higher standards, and the need for clubs to

Response to Duncan McGilvray

generate revenue. Now that is a good thing, as professionals we should welcome it, yet realism demands that higher standards require resourcing, and nature insists that golf courses have limitations. To balance those certainties with the demands of golfers requires an employer who is sympathetic to the situation. Sadly in too many golf clubs that is not the case. When that occurs the Course Manager's options are limited, and his job is often on the line. Let's not avoid this fact. We are talking about careers and livelihoods here.

If I have a concern with Duncan's letter it is that it ignores the elements of our industry that can make greenkeeping a tenuous hold on a career. Unfortunately this is one thing that despite all attempts, has not changed, and it is this that must be at the core of any debate about the state of our profession.

Duncan's suggestion that some Course Managers are lacking in proactiveness may well be valid, but the fact that he knows potentially pro-active managers who have abandoned the industry really does demand scrutiny. What is it about our industry that demoralises young enthusiasts, to the point that they will walk away? What is it about our industry that results in short-term reactive management?

Our profession is golf course management, our industry is Golf. We need

to look at all the elements within the industry, the structures (the golfing authorities) the employers (the golf clubs), the decision-making processes (committees, boards of management), Golfers (our customers) the education system and finally support mechanisms for the Course Manager. That means BIGGA. We have to analyse the extent to which these various elements impact our capacity to deliver a product. We have to consider whether the nett sum of these elements means that golf courses suffer, and golf Course Managers are hindered.

"The Way Forward" the R&A, for a period managed to pull these elements together. But it is inherent within our industry that change occurs. The constant turnover of club committee members guarantees that last year's decisions are next year's debates. The inevitable consequence of this is that even as valid a document as "The Way Forward" annually becomes diluted, and eventually ineffective.

If the Golf Club is not always an ideal environment for golf Course Managers to work, how can we change it?

I believe that all the elements need pulling together and refocusing, and that the condition of golf courses needs to be moved to the very top of the industry agenda. To do this we have to start at the top. The Golf Authorities are respected enough throughout the

industry to have influence within individual clubs. They could impart this influence by issuing a code of conduct to clubs, or even club officials, controversial yes, but if it was dependant on affiliation it would be effective.

The golf clubs have to reconsider priorities, and accept that pro-active management commences in the committee room or boardroom. A return to the principles of "The Way Forward" in those clubs where it has lapsed, or an adoption of those principles where they never existed would be a positive step.

Golfers need educating, and every avenue has to be pursued in this goal. The Course Manager has to be active within his club, Golfing magazines should be persuaded to take up our cause, and TV commentators must be told to refrain from filling in time by commenting upon a subject that they know nothing about. For golfers take their word as gospel.

The education system needs an urgent review. I believe that the worst thing that has happened to our profession in my time has been the introduction of NVQ's. (I speak from experience here because I have taken NVQ3 and C&G3) If knowledge is power, and power breeds confidence, then NVQs are eroding the confidence of the greenkeeper. To make the step from greenkeeper to Course Manager you need to be furnished with more

Industry stalwart retires



From left to right: Mrs Heather Brown, Mr George Brown, Ian Bridges (Area Sales Manager), David McInroy (Managing Director), Steven McInroy (General Manager)

One of the biggest supporters of the Scottish golf industry has retired after 50 years career servicing, repairing and selling equipment to golf courses throughout Scotland.

At a special celebration at the headquarters of Scottish Grass Machinery George Brown received £200 golf vouchers.

Since 1951, George has become one of the leading UK authorities on the Ransomes brand of grass cutting equipment experiencing the high manpower requirements of horse-drawn

and pedestrian machines to the latest high output equipment.

Over the years George has become one of the most knowledgeable and best known characters on golf courses across Scotland. Professionally, he will be missed by us all, but given the number of invitations that he has had to play golf from all of his hundreds of customers, I am sure that we will constantly be bumping into him as he plays the country's finest courses!" said David McInroy, Managing Director, of Scottish Grass Machinery.

Are we stagnating?

than group assessments of simple tasks, and the barest of essentials on soil science and amenity horticulture. The lack of theory and scientific background in NVQ's is simply disgraceful. We as a profession should not be accepting these as industry standards, and should be encouraging the educationalists to produce a qualification that is viable.

And finally BIGGA, we may well look back with pride, where it all started, how far we have come, but we must continue to strive forward. We must question whether the goals set up at creation have been attained, and whether those goals are still what the membership requires? Does the Association interact with clubs enough? Is the Association offering the support mechanisms the Course Manager needs? What input does the Association pursue in the items discussed above? I believe that BIGGA has a huge input to make in the representation of our profession, and that it must do so forcefully and with confidence.

Finally, having had my tuppence worth let me say that I am not pessimistic about our future. I see around me hungry young men, articulate, dedicated and keen to take up the baton. If the industry, and all those in it behaves responsibly then the future for them is bright and prosperous. However if the industry is irresponsi-

ble, then it is to those young men that they will eventually turn to for a solution. Ultimately, they cannot get by without us.

John Ross, Course Manager,
Laleham GC, Chertsey

Thanks!

I would like to thank the Golden & Silver Key sponsors for supporting the Regional Training Programme. I attended the Risk Assessment and COSHH Awareness Course on 29 November at West Hill Golf Club. They offer excellent value for money and I would urge other greenkeepers to attend the training provided by BIGGA.

Stuart Hogg,
Fortrose and Rosemarkie Golf Club

Editor: For further information on the latest Regional Training Courses on offer, see the Education and Training article overleaf on page 10

Address your letters to The Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to scott@bigga.co.uk

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