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**ADVERTISERS' INDEX**  
a quick reference guide

|                           | Ad Ref | Page   |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|
| Abcon North East Ltd      | 380    | 2      |
| Allen Power               | 126    | 31     |
| Allott Mowers             | 55     | 29     |
| All Seasons Dressing      | 375    | 12     |
| Blec                      | 98     | 22     |
| Boughton Loam             | 113    | 10     |
| British Overhead          | 229    | 35     |
| David Hemstock Associates | 396    | 38     |
| Eric Hunter               | 73     | 33     |
| Fen Turf Dressings        | 168    | 14     |
| Fisons                    | 102    | 6      |
| Flanderblade              | 218    | 36     |
| Hardi                     | 25     | 45     |
| Hayter PLC                | 90     | 28     |
| HF Seeds                  | 353    | 22     |
| Hunter                    | 397    | 36     |
| ICI                       | 54     | 40     |
| Iriserve                  | 355    | 34     |
| John Deere                | 103    | 26     |
| Kubota                    | 86     | 13     |
| Lely (UK) Ltd Toro        | 61     | 32     |
| Liquid Sod                | 394    | 4,8,24 |
| Maestro                   | 306    | 58     |
| Midland Irrigation        | 356    | 35     |
| North Staffs Irrigation   | 217    | 34     |
| Par 4                     | 27     | 37     |
| Pattisson                 | 35     | 10     |
| Rhône Poulenc             | 59     | 16,21  |
| Rigby Taylor              | 127    | 20     |
| SISIS                     | 176    | 60     |
| Syntenni                  | 398    | 42     |
| Wrighttrain               | 74     | 35     |
| Colleges                  |        | 43     |
| Buyers Guide              |        | 49-53  |
| Classified                |        | 53     |
| Recruitment               |        | 54-57  |

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Official publication of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association  
**MARCH 1993**



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# GREENKEEPER

International

## CONTENTS

### At the cutting edge...

With warmer weather beckoning – and all that that entails – we take a comprehensive look at the latest mowing technology and developments to see what's new in grass cutting in 1993 .....Pages 27–33



### A case of do or dry

The STRI's Kate York discusses results of a three year study into dry patch, in the first part of a technical feature which aims to get the bottom of this perennial problem.....Pages 11, 12

### On your Deutschmarks

A Dutchman in Scotland talks about the German approach to golf greenkeeping...*Greenkeeper International* lives up to its name .....Pages 14, 15

### Chemicals and the greenkeeper

Clampdowns on certain chemicals mean greenkeepers need to look elsewhere for answers to pesticide and fungicide problems .....Pages 17–21

### You think you've got problems

Three case histories of greenkeepers faced with trying conditions. If you're feeling down, these will certainly help pick you up.....Pages 38–39

WIN £50 CASH IN OUR FUN COMPETITION - TURN TO BUYERS GUIDE P49

## DEPARTMENTS

### Faces and places

Sunningdale blaze wipes out club's machinery and equipment... new top job at Ransomes... it's the page which keeps you in touch .....Page 5

### Education

The concluding profiles of speakers for this year's sparkling BIGGA National Education Conference. Don't miss your chance to attend .....Page 44

### Around the Green

Regular updates from our correspondents. Find out what's going on .....Pages 46-48, 58

### COVER PICTURE:

Muirfield, venue for last year's Open Tournament and gearing up like everyone else for a busy spring

### Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

Launched by Viscount Whitelaw at BTME 1992, the Fund provides the key to the future for greenkeeper, golf club and game. Individuals and companies can join the Golden Key Circle and Silver Key Circle. For details, contact BIGGA on 03473 581.

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**Jim Poole**  
Course Manager  
Stratford on Avon  
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# Faces and places



■ Continuing its policy of regionalisation, the STRI has announced the hiring of Peter Winter as regional advisory agronomist in the south west of England. Peter is well known in the region, having worked for Fisons plc Horticulture Division for some 20 years, responsible for both sales and technical advice in the turf, amenity and commercial grower markets. Peter previously worked with the STRI back in the early 1970s.

■ Jeremy Howarth has also rejoined the STRI as an advisory agronomist, this after a 12 year break in industry where he gained considerable experience in marketing, promotion and PR. In addition to marketing and promoting the Institute, he will also be visiting subscribers, offering advice on the correct management of golf courses, sports grounds and amenity facilities.

■ Supreme Mowing Ltd have appointed Paul Wakefield as sales engineer, an eminently suitable post as Paul has been with the company since leaving school. He has worked in just about every department and his speciality has developed on the grinding machine business. Paul's first task began in early February when he visited customers within the Pacific Rim – Japan, Thailand and Malaysia – countries offering considerable scope for Supreme Mowing's expanding activities.



■ It's just as well that Roy Kates, chairman of BIGGA, arrived at BTME by car as he left with a surprise gift of a 25kg bag of Barenbrug grass seed. The grass seed mixture, including Barenbrug's high quality Barcrow, Bargreen and Bardot, was presented to Roy by Anthony Compson, managing director and Michel Mulder, marketing director of Barenbrug.

If Roy decides against turning his home lawn into a luxurious practice green, Wexham Park Golf Club is bound to stake a claim.

■ Horseman Harvey Smith is to appear in court in March, charged with assault, following an alleged incident at Baildon Golf Club in which two greenkeepers were taken to Bradford Royal Infirmary, one nursing a black eye and a colleague needing five stitches in a head wound. Smith, whose house borders the course, has been involved in a long running dispute over horses damaging the course and churning up fairways.

Greenkeeper International understands that staff were laying paths to keep horses off the greens when the alleged incident took place.



■ Winner of the Farmura 'See Your Spray' Blazon competition, Norman Fenwick, course manager of Sandford Springs Golf Course, is pictured here presented with his ticket to the GCSAA Show in Los Angeles by Jonathan Harmer, managing director of Farmura Environmental Products.

■ Falling under the editorial label of 'it was bound to happen, sooner or later', the Lancashire College of Agriculture and Horticulture has officially changed its name and title to Myerscough College, for donkey's years the monicker by which it had been affectionately known by greenkeepers. Though the name has changed, the college wish it to be known that Myerscough College remains a GTC approved centre for greenkeeper training.

■ On the evening of 4 February shortly after staff finished for the day, the four year old purpose built facility which housed most of Sunningdale's maintenance equipment was discovered burning fiercely, resulting in a near wipe-out of the club's machinery and equipment. Sunningdale's course manager, Lawson Bingham, told Greenkeeper International that major losses thus far include four tractors, a JCB, eight triplexes, five Cushman/derivatives, a GA 30, a Vertidrain, a Toro outfield spiker and every rotary mower and strimmer in the place! Came the reckoning, losses were so great that Lawson declared he was hard pushed to find a shovel for each staff member to help with the clear-up. The cause is still under investigation, though a forensic expert believes that an electrical short on a tractor will likely prove the culprit.



■ The SISIS Tankard, awarded annually to the Sparsholt College student achieving the highest grades whilst attending, on block release, Level II Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management, has this year been won by Adrian Johnson. Thirty year old Adrian, attending Sparsholt on a continuation course in Greenkeeping Phase III, Supervisory Studies, is head greenkeeper at Broadstone Park GC., a public nine hole facility situated south of Guildford. The course was built on a land infill site and opened in March 1989.

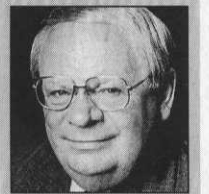
• Pictured, from left, Adrian Johnson, Russell Jordan (Sisis) and Bob Young (Sparsholt College).



■ Mike Taylor, who until recently was head of the Horticultural Division, has been appointed to the post of deputy principal at Elmwood College. The college has a roll of 350 full time and around 2000 part time students, following courses in Horticulture and Greenkeeping, Engineering, Agriculture, Food Studies and Business & General Studies. Elmwood College Horticultural Division remains at the forefront of developments in greenkeeping education and training

■ Greenkeeping staff from the three neighbouring golf courses Newmarket, Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill have taken part in the 'Toro West Suffolk Greenkeepers Challenge Trophy' sponsored by Atterton and Ellis. Newmarket take first honours with A&E's sales manager, Roger Denson, presenting the trophy to Arnold Mynott. This was a Stapleford competition over a period of six months with the final scores reading: Newmarket 369 points, Bury 332 points, Haverhill 327 points.

This is the first of what is intended to be an annual Toro Golf Challenge, played between local greenkeepers or BIGGA members on a home and away basis, with perhaps one match played each month during the summer. Toro are keen for other local greenkeepers to join this 'challenge' and are seeking to recruit an additional three club teams.



■ John Kerridge, current deputy chairman of Ransomes PLC, is to succeed Astley Whitall as non-executive chairman of the company in April. Mr Kerridge joined Ransomes PLC board in 1984 and became deputy chairman in 1990.



■ Guy Longbottom, latterly operations director with Rolawn Ltd, has formed his own fine turf supply company, Turf International, operating from Wressle, North Yorkshire. He can be contacted on 0757 638964.





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# Yee har: Rounding up Ma Rion and the Westurf gang



I was on special assignment. I'd had the whisper from my 'grass' and come up with a place and a date – Long Ashton Golf Club, Wednesday 28th April.

Something big was going down but I was not sure how big. The word was that Ma Rion and her boys had organised something special. All the local 'dealers' were in on the act and some of the big 'gangs' from up country were in for their share of the 'cut'.

I didn't know what to expect so I went prepared for anything. It was my big chance to catch all these 'operators' in one go so I packed my shooter, jumped in my jalopy and headed out for Westurf.

They were sure of their security and as I swung in off the road a guy in uniform smiled and waved me through. I parked up and went to take a look around.

I was amazed, everyone was there and thousands of punters were checking out the merchandise. Some of the hardware on show was unbelievable. I kept my ear to the ground and one gang boasting about how it had cut down some 'bent grass' and another said he had a 'bandit' that did the best 'topping' job around. One dealer was openly offering 'ransom' deals while the main talk among the punters was about two hit men, Jim and Arthur, who had clashed with the authorities many times but no-one had managed to put them down.

There was one spot in particular that was crawling with uniforms. I was sure this was HQ and decided to take a closer look. When I got near, the uniforms closed in. A big guy asked me if I had seen the latest magazine. I couldn't

even see his machine gun but I took his drift and told him I was looking for the John. He directed me to this crazy guy who said he was a big 'supplier' and had some of the 'purist organics' around and did I want to sniff some. The man next to me said he'd tried some and it was the best 'grass' he'd ever had.

I glanced through the window of HQ and my blood froze. There was no mistaking that profile and that curl of smoke, it was Ma Rion herself and something big was happening. I could see the infamous Red Coats from up north, I knew it was my one chance to bag them all at once.

One of the Red Coats came out of HQ and the uniforms huddled round to protect him. Without a second thought, I made my move. I burst through the door my gun at the ready. Ma Rion didn't flinch, she looked me straight in the eye and said did I know anything about the 'Silver Key'. This threw me completely off guard and at that moment I felt an almighty thump on the back of my head and I passed out.

When I regained consciousness my head was spinning and I had a lump on my skull the size of a golf ball. This wasn't surprising as it was a golf ball that had hit me. Men in weird hats and funny shoes were bending over me and asking if I was alright and didn't I hear them shout 'Fore'?

As my head cleared I asked them what the date was? – March 25th – Thank God! For one minute I thought I had missed Westurf.

Catch the Action. Westurf – Long Ashton Golf Club – April 28th – be there!



Ma Rion – organising 'something special'

'SUPERGRASS'

## Campaigner for every greenkeeper in the land

The life of Norman Exley is best understood not by what he achieved for himself, considerable though this was, but by what he achieved for his fellow man. Listening to him at the BTME just days before his death, it was clear that the widespread euphoria celebrated that week was something he identified with as being in part of his making, albeit in the most modest of ways, for no man strove harder or worked more diligently than he to improve the greenkeeper's image, awareness or need for professionalism.

In a quiet moment he said, "I always knew we would get there in the end, and this week has proved my point beyond doubt – our profession has arrived!" His pride positively radiated.

Norman came to greenkeeping



Norman Exley: always optimistic

as a mature student after studying at Askham Bryan College, settling comfortably into work that he found totally rewarding, for the past ten years a cornerstone member of the staff at his beloved Northwood Golf Club. From his home base at Northwood he masterminded the Association's affairs

for his fellow greenkeepers, at first managing the old EIGGA London section, along with Martin Peters, and eventually taking on the major administrative role for the BIGGA South East Region, cajoling, coaxing, organising and rebelling as only he knew how.

Always optimistic, often against the odds prevalent in the hierarchy of golf club management, Norman could best be described as having the zeal of an evangelist when fighting his corner, for his corner was also that of his fellow man, his resolve never wavering for a moment – he was a campaigner for every greenkeeper in the land, and he was winning the battle.

An avid golfer, Norman demonstrated his love for the game not only by playing, but by again

being an organiser of such wonderful events in the greenkeeping calendar as the Walton Heath Gentlemen's Golf Tournament and Dinner and, his lasting memorial amongst so many, the 1992 BIGGA National Tournament at Littlestone.

Norman Exley's influence and contribution within the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association will not be forgotten, his example an encouragement for others to stride forward with real purpose and genuine pride.

The sincere condolences of all BIGGA's members are extended to Linda at this sad time.

■ Norman Exley, greenkeeper, golfer, BIGGA regional administrator, born Manchester 11 June 1936, died London 6 February 1993.

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# Break in very lives

**B**eware the burglar, the damage he causes is not always just to property!

Intruders broke into our equipment store overnight recently, smashing the radiator on a tractor, spraying tins of marker paint on the walls and discharging a fire extinguisher. Upon entering the shed I discovered that the chemical cabinet had also been ripped open and without delay summoned the police. They arrived and did what they had to do before asking us to assess any loss.

The shed was in such a mess that we had to start at one side and work our way around. Only after 45 minutes did we reach the cabinet, discovering that a number of Phostoxin tablets were missing.

I informed the police immediately, having left instruction that the shed was OOB, as we had discovered two tablets on the floor, exuding toxic fumes as they reacted with the radiator leakage.

An hour later three of my staff were taken ill and an ambulance was summoned. The Fire Service was also contacted and three appliances attended. Some 45 minutes later I also was overcome by sickness.

For a while we were all on the critical list, needing oxygen overnight and some put on heart monitors – a spell in hospital was deemed necessary for us all.

The Local Authority Health & Safety officer has given us (the club) a clean bill as far as storage, security, assessments and handling was concerned, declaring us to be blameless.

The moral of this tale? Should my sheds be broken into in the future, I will be wearing protective clothing when I enter to check damage or loss. According to the doctors, my staff and I are lucky to have survived.

The police have charged three men with the offence of breaking and entering and causing damage... but there is no charge that

we can bring against them for what happened to us.

**GORDON MITCHELL**

Head Greenkeeper, Westwood Golf Club, Leek, Staffordshire

**O**n behalf of the Northern region may I thank those members who gave freely of their time at BTME, acting as stewards and working on our regional stand. Everyone did an excellent job, behaved most courteously and appeared smartly turned-out – indeed, they were a credit to our Association.

To those not familiar with the BTME, the first people encountered by visitors as they enter the exhibition are the BIGGA stewards, our front-line ambassadors. I see it as vitally important that they present themselves well for the good of the Association. The whole event was a great success and I hope everyone enjoyed it. Well done lads! May I have your names for next year please?

**BOB LUPTON**

Northern Regional Administrator, Shipley, W Yorkshire

**M**ay I use the columns of Greenkeeper International to thank the many kind people, too numerous to mention or respond to individually, who contacted me following my husband Norman's untimely death on 6 February?

The huge numbers of letters, cards and floral tributes that were sent gave true indication of Norman's popularity, especially within BIGGA, and I was deeply moved that so many people were thinking of him – and me – at this time. I am sincerely grateful.

**Linda Exley**

Northwood Golf Club, Northwood, Middlesex

**I** read with interest the letter from the president of Boldmere Golf Club concerning the condition of public golf courses in the Birmingham area and the sorry tale he told. I must point out that



## put greenkeepers' on the line

whether or not the courses are maintained by a private contractor, the standards of grounds maintenance are determined by the Council through its specification and the subsequent management of the contract by the client. The limiting factor is generally financial, and I am left wondering how much a round of golf on Birmingham municipal courses costs and whether a reasonable price increase to pay for an increase in the standard of maintenance is called for.

At Bradley Park Golf Course in Huddersfield the specification for grounds maintenance (contract won by the in-house direct works organisation) is designed to produce high standards of maintenance and has achieved this through the endeavour of the contractor and the co-operative but watchful eye of the Council's client officers. This specification is achieved on a green fee of approximately £8 a round.

However, it will also interest your readers to note that the course has been closed to date (11 December) for some six weeks. The relatively new course, built on a clay sub-soil, has experienced saturated top soil conditions because of the record rainfall in October and November and even those areas of the course with extensive drainage systems have been unplayable. What is remarkable is that two miles down the road a 100 year old course has been open throughout with most areas in good condition: firm underfoot with few areas which could be considered unplayable. The main reason for this amazing contrast is the effect of thatch on the fairways, in this case preventing the downward movement of water to the soil to such an extent that, despite the record rainfall, test holes reveal a bone dry soil underneath the 3" thatch layer. This all bodes ill for the summer when drought conditions will soon be prevalent because of the lack of moisture in

the soil – but what a boon for winter golf!

When extended course closure results in a loss in revenue of many thousands of pounds, I find myself wondering whether the thatch we see as a villain and spend so much time eradicating is in fact a friend of the fairway and not a foe as widely believed. Perhaps a case for thatch management rather than control?

**JOHN S FLETCHER**

Operations Manager,  
Kirklees Metropolitan Council,  
Huddersfield

**M**ay I respond to John Turner's letter in the December issue, by saying that many municipal greenkeeping staff strive under very difficult circumstances to achieve the same high standards of presentation and quality as those found on many private courses. The tone of Mr Turner's letter tars all concerned with the same brush, yet there are good and bad courses, both public and private.

CCT, however, seems to be the latest spanner in the public golf works. For many years municipal golf received a bad press due in the main to the lack of interest paid by some local authorities in the game of golf itself. With the realisation that there was valuable income to be gained and a demand to be met, many have attempted to put their house in order.

Situations that have arisen, as appears in Mr Turner's case, are a direct result of the process that many authorities have taken under CCT. The area that Mr Turner is concerned with is the grounds maintenance/course maintenance operation, whether put out to tender as an individual service or undertaken as an entire golf course management operation by a private company. The key to successful operation under this system lies in the course maintenance specification.

In my experience, because the

specification is written without skilled input from experienced greenkeepers and course managers, it is often outdated and inappropriate. Poorly written, it can provide an unscrupulous contractor with many loop-holes by which vital areas of maintenance may be overlooked.

At the other extreme, specifications have been written in such fine and rigid detail that work is often carried out completely unnecessarily, eg. spraying for fusarium patch on a set date, even when none is present! Both extremes threaten the success of the tenderer and the quality of the course by:

- a) The contractor being kicked off the site as the course deteriorates into such a bad state, as he is deliberately allowed to miss jobs out – the 'if I don't say it, he won't do it' syndrome – along with employing unskilled staff, using poor quality materials etc.
- b) Placing a burden of financial pressure on the contractor – even the better, conscientious one – and often placing him in real financial difficulty when he is forced to carry out unnecessary tasks.

As a final point here, the Local Authority invariably make the mistake of opting for the cheapest bid when buying course maintenance as a direct service, or awarding the contract to the highest bidder when the entire management package of a golf site is put out to tender. In this case may I suggest that Mr Turner digs a bit deeper, for there are courses of action he can take. He should be hounding the Local Authority concerned and going through the course maintenance specification with a fine tooth comb. If the contractor is not meeting required standards, the Local Authority should be issuing him with default notices. If a number of these do not suffice, then they should be relieving him of his contract. Perhaps the final twist in this bureaucratic nightmare is that

some Authorities are unwilling to do this, as the cost of re-writing the tender specifications – the documentation and the pure laborious process of it all – is one they are reluctant to undertake a second time, especially so soon after a contract is awarded. In these cases we only hope that come the next round of CCT they get it right!

What is required is rational and expert management communication and understanding of the whole process – from town clerk's pen to assistant greenkeeper's mower – in order that delivery of the high class facilities and courses all golfers deserve may be achieved.

**PAUL COPSEY**

Head Greenkeeper, Barnehurst  
Golf Club, Kent

**B**ringing the dangers of Fluorolaster and Veton to the attention of your readers (October, Flying Divots) is to be applauded.

Our company contracts maintenance work all over the UK and on many occasions, especially in the early morning, we have come across stolen burnt-out vehicles that have been abandoned, both on inner city and rural courses.

The temptation to ferret around in such vehicles is considerable, yet without a knowledge of the dangers that lurk therein, anyone without a COSHH assessment is literally playing with fire.

Sanity alone suggests that before approaching such dangerous substances, which when melted turn into highly corrosive Hydrofluoric acid, the handler should at very least wear industrial gloves, for should the product come into contact with bare flesh, amputation is the only solution – too horrible to contemplate.

Congratulations on a very well presented magazine. Continue to keep education to the fore.

**DAVID STEPHENSON**

Company Secretary,  
D&E Turf Maintenance Ltd.  
Shildon, Co. Durham



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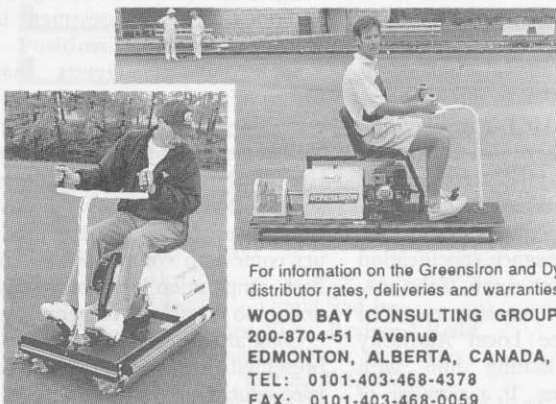
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