



# Advances in turf production

## Derek Edwards takes a look at the improvements in the turf industry since the mid 70s.

The cultivated turf industry has seen many changes and much growth since the mid 70s, largely driven by advances in turf grass technology and better standards of greenkeeping/groundsmanship. Because of the wide variety of good quality turf now available, a huge increase in demand for high standard and specific products has been generated.

Twenty years or so ago the average greenkeeper would not

consider for one moment the use of turf for repairing or constructing a golf green. The choices would have been limited to buying turf from parkland, meadowland or coastal regions (seawashed) representing roughly 90% of the then turf industry. Only a mere handful of purpose grown cultivated turf producers existed with limited or questionable supplies. Invariably the greenkeeper would end up seeding or creating an on-course turf nursery simply because adequate material could not be readily purchased. Even if the grass was suitable, the soil types would

not necessarily be compatible and vice versa. If anything, seawashed turf, because of its fescue dominated swards was purchased in comparatively large quantities for those who wanted a fine textured sward for bowling, golf or luxury lawns. However, for most of these applications the grass quality and strength were questionable as was the soil type which invariably was silty.

In the late 70s a few turf growers began purpose growing turf for various specific applications. For example a lighter, stone free soil would have been chosen and a grass seeds mixture or say an

80/20 fescue/bent mixture would be drilled (grasses of known quality and availability) and then the area intensively managed to produce golf or bowling green turf. To begin with this was slow to catch on, mainly due to its relatively high price but more especially greenkeepers were sceptical; because of the historical bad record of turf supply quality they would not trust the description of the turf given by the grower to match the product. Invariably, however, the material would sell but the quantities were small and very quickly the continuity of supply failed and the turf



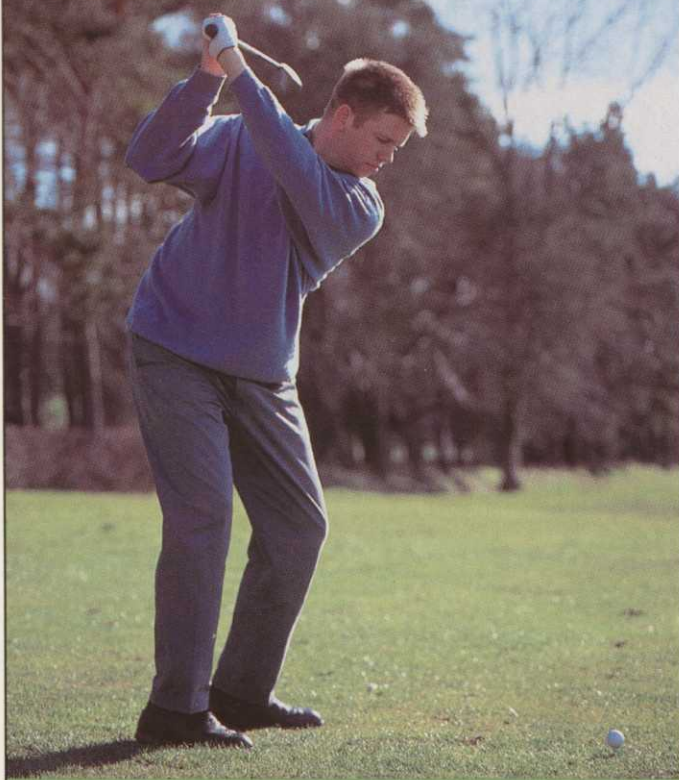
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# Advances in turf production

grower, lacking much experience, would resort to supplying material of an inferior nature which would then further disillusion the greenkeeper.

Gradually the increasingly discriminating greenkeeper was being converted and by shopping around could, by the early 80s, find reasonable sources of supply of turf which not only contained appropriate grasses but was grown on reasonable soil types and was produced with quality seed providing a very acceptable and attractive result. So it was catching on.

The boom in golf course construction during the 1980s fuelled the demand and as this coincided with an increase in agricultural land availability (thousands of acres taken out of crop production) a whole and significant industry was developing with many farmers turning to turf production as an alternative crop. Owing to the wide gulf between agriculture and horticulture many of these projects proved a disaster. However some farmers who took the trouble to learn the subject and to get advice from experts did and have succeeded in producing consistently good turf products.

This activity was being reflected throughout the whole of the country and abroad and encouraged turf machinery manufacturers, amenity seed producers and trade suppliers generally to increase production and introduce new and improved materials and equipment, further encouraging growth in the industry.

The first notable change was in the quality and reliability and choice of machinery specifically designed for turf growing (eg harvesters and mowers). To cope with the increasing acreages of cultivated turf, all these items were essential and the acreages since the 70s have grown from around 1500 to now well over 15000 acres of quality purpose grown material under production in the UK alone.

So advances in grass quality, improved growing techniques, better equipment and more knowledge have provided product availability, and demand has been born from this. Turf is now used in a amazing array of appli-



Harvesting turf tiles

cations – areas where turfing at one time would never have been considered. The main markets for cultivated turf are golf, bowling, tennis, cricket, football, landscaping and lawn usage, however we now see turf being used on industrial sites, roadside verges, river embankments airfields and so on.

Many planners, specifiers and especially end users today look for an immediate result, that is that the area is initially green and will quickly be ready for use – keeping the members or customers happy. Only by using quality purpose grown turf can these requirements be fulfilled.

For years the turf growers have battled against environmentalists who only see turf as denuding the area of its greenness and depleting the land of its rich topsoils. This has proved a nonsense in terms of modern high standard cultivations by skilled turf growers and emphasis is now being switched to the environmental benefits of turf. These benefits are too numerous to details in this article but briefly turfgrass provides erosion control, ground water recharge, surface water quality, chemical decomposition, soil improvement and restoration, heat dissipation, noise abatement, glare reduction, decreasing

pests and allergic pollens and probably most important of all to the environment, enormous quantities of oxygen that are given off into the atmosphere.

The one time “cowboy” image is rapidly disappearing and the launch of a turfgrowers trade association in 1995 for the United Kingdom has not only helped with the marketing of turfgrass benefits but has also taken steps to improve standards of the product and to improve the conduct of members growers who now total around 35. Named Turfgrass Producers International UK its members represent almost 80% of the total turf production in the country. With much work still to be done with the association barely two years old, already TPI UK has achieved the introduction of minimum standards of turf, a code of conduct for its members, a research and development fund and arranged seminars and talks for the industry in their regular meetings. All these from an association which has started off extremely successfully and provides the only group of turf growers with common and worthwhile objectives in the country.

Methods of turf installation or laying have also dramatically affected the industry in recent

years. We have seen the development of Big Roll turving systems (the original invented by Lawn Technology – now part of the Inturf Group). These systems allow mechanised handling of large sections of turf more accurately, less disturbing and several times faster than the traditional small roll of turf laying that used to be undertaken laboriously.

The industry has also seen developments in turf washing, where soil incompatibility could cause problems. Pressure jetted water onto the harvested turf removes the offending soil and the soilless turf is then laid on the prepared rootzone base, avoiding possible interface difficulties subsequently.

Reinforced turf – where soil stability can present problems such as in goal mouth areas on football pitches is also gaining in popularity. The problem with the modern rootzone mixture for say football pitches is that it tends to be designed for rapid drainage and therefore tends to be extremely sandy. The problem with sand is that it lacks stability and this is where the reinforced material can assist greatly. This stabilisation process is not, however, to be confused with turf or sod netting – sometimes referred

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to as reinforced netting. This netting merely assists the turf grower to harvest turf prematurely providing absolutely no benefit to the end user. It can be a hazard in certain applications. Beware.

Custom grown turf – this is where turf is pre-grown for a customer's exacting or unusual requirements. The specialist turf grower will import the specified rootzone spreading it to a predetermined depth according to the type of harvesting dimensions and transplanted when the facility construction has been completed. This turf can be laid by either traditional methods, big roll turfing or if there is not time remaining, the deep section turf tile can be employed and subsequently used also for instant repair work on damaged areas.

While many of these new developments are highly specialised and handled only by a very few growers the trend is



Installing big rolls

however, one of improvement of turf types and turf systems and associated services. The summer of '95 did cause a blip in the development and improvement of the turfgrass industry generally, leaving many growers with huge areas of droughted land, but it is accustomed to major variations in

climatic conditions and being a strong industry with innovative products and an ever growing demand for quality turf and services the future is both secure and exciting.

■ Derek Edwards is Managing Director of the Inturf Group and Chairman of Turfgrass Producers

International UK.

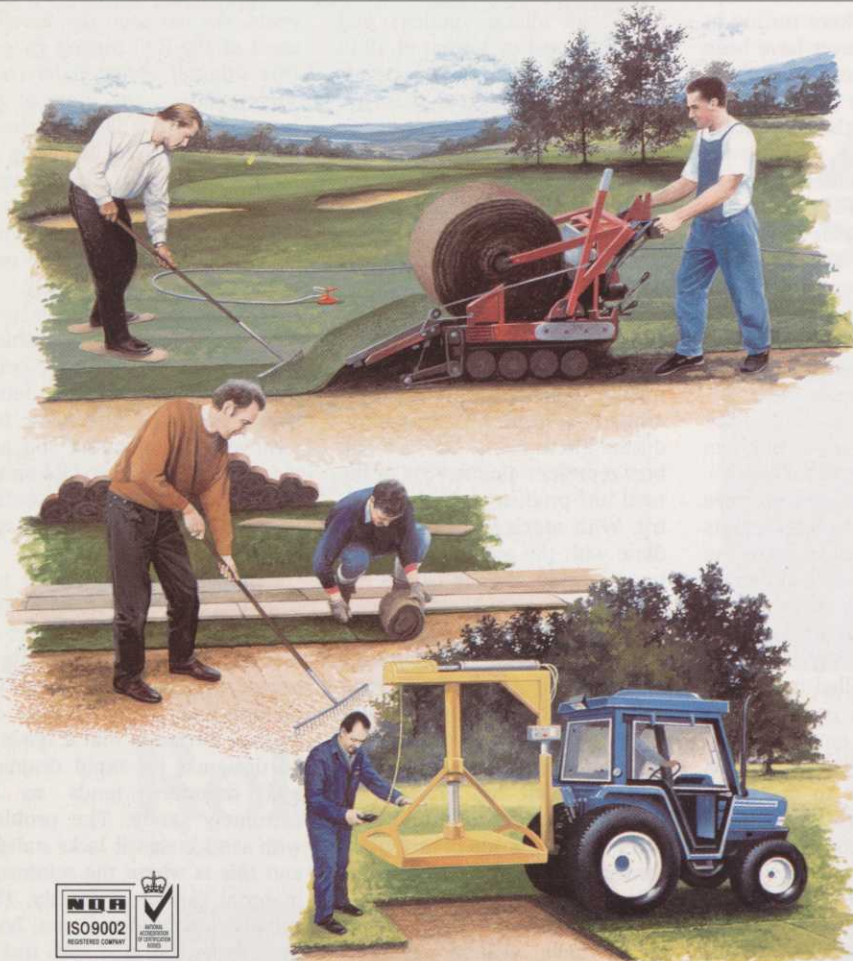
For more information about the Turfgrowers Association please contact Peter Adams, 12 Vixen Walk, Danewood, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 5RU. Tel: 01425 638934 Fax: 01425 639195.

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# Slow down to move ahead

In all these years of maintaining golf greens the green speed has changed. The greens have become faster, but where is the end and how far can we go?

In my opinion, we cannot go any further, but we have to go backwards. First of all, green speed depends upon grass species and professional maintenance. However, we are cutting lower and lower to create fast greens for big tournaments or to have the fastest greens in the area. Being cut below 5 mm, however, fescues, brown top bent and creeping bent will not survive. What we are doing is encouraging annual meadow grass, and this is the opposite of what we want. After all, we would like to play golf in autumn and winter too. The worst thing, that happened was introducing the stimp-meter, and setting standards for faster greens.

In Harrogate, I was talking to a Course Manager and he said his greens were 13 feet on the stimp-meter and members were still complaining about slow greens. These ridiculous comments should be stopped. Also talking to Dr Joe Vargas, Plant Pathologist at Michigan State University, I said, that by raising up the cutting height of greens we would solve various problems like diseases, heat-stress wear and tear etc. He said: "Don't tell me. I know you're right. Tell your committee and members."

We are cutting too close to what grass species on greens can withstand. But what is the problem? If everybody start to make these changes at his golf course, committees will see the improvements in turf quality. Of course a Course Manager will say that by doing so he will lose his job. If that is the case he should wonder whether he is employed by the right club.

Because of the above argument, I would like to ask, and I seriously hope that are willing to, organisations which have influence on this matter, to help Course Managers in this never ending story of fast, faster, fastest greens. I am hereby thinking of organisations like the Royal and Ancient, the PGA., the STRI, BIGGA, USGA, Golf Monthly and people like agronomists, architects, and the top media commentators. I would like them to stand up and tell the world that the direction we are going in is the wrong one. We should give grass species a chance to survive, and with the parties mentioned above standing behind this matter, life for the Course Managers would be made a little bit easier.

As long as we have greens of smooth trueness and green speed adapted to the characteristics of the

available grass species of the green, it is all right. And a good professional golfer can adapt his game to the quality of the available green.

In my opinion raising up the cutting height enough to keep the required grass species alive is the way forward and not what we have been doing all these years.

**Arne van Amerongen  
Lauterbach  
Germany**

## Caution over cures

Through your magazine I am interested to find out how many Golf Course/Turf Managers, Green Chairman and Secretaries consider, like myself, that information about a large number of products leads us into tunnel thinking, especially when it comes to the understanding of grass and soil growing mediums, its requirements, tolerances, maintenance regimes etc.

More and more we see wonderful cures in bottles and bags which the turf manager is expected to buy as the latest developments. These cures quite often lead to another purchase to counteract the reaction of the first and so on.

Are we moving away from good cultural turf management? Do we as an industry agree what good cultural turf management is? Are sports clubs, golf clubs, realistic and consistent in their expectations of the turf they play on? Are these expectations leading the turf manager to look for the quick cure in the bottle?

These are a few of the questions that I feel need answering to enable those of us involved in turf care to produce the results that satisfy both the sportsman's need and the turf manager's needs.

This is too deep a subject to discuss in one letter so perhaps anybody with views on the subject would contact me to ascertain whether an open discussion would be justified at a venue.

**Steven Pell  
Course Manager  
Lansdown GC**

## First class event

I would like to thank BIGGA for the wonderful job of putting a first class class conference together. As it was my first time there, and I hope it won't be my last, and I had such a great time, I will certainly recommend it to other greenkeepers in the North Section.

I have been in greenkeeping now for 31 years and I can honestly say it was

the best conference I have ever been to and the most friendly people I have ever met.

**Hugh McLatchie  
Head Greenkeeper  
Peterhead GC**

## Excellent value

Through the pages of *Greenkeeper International* may we thank the BIGGA delegation who attended the GCSAA Conference and Show in Orlando for their company and friendship throughout our visit.

We felt the organisation, hotels and plane seats from Gatwick to Orlando were excellent value.

Hope it is not too long 'till we all meet again.

**Craig and Mhairi Stewart  
Wittelsbacher GC  
Rohrehfeld-Neuburg  
Germany**

## A great week

I write to you to convey my thanks through your magazine to the North Section (Scottish Region) on my receiving the Patron's Award for the Section.

This enabled me to attend BTME '96 which I thoroughly enjoyed, also giving me the chance to meet many more friends from the greenkeeping profession.

I must also give a vote of thanks to Elliott Small for arranging another great but strip for everybody from Scotland.

I am surer I can say on behalf of everybody it was a great week.

Thank you once again.

**Gordon McKie  
Deputy Head Greenkeeper  
Eden Course  
St Andrews**

## Fair deals ignored

I am writing in frustration at the disregard that golf club committee's seem to show towards the BIGGA wage scale. In the four and a half years that I have been in greenkeeping, it has been laughed at, screwed up and usually totally ignored.

Isn't it about time that somebody stood up for the greenkeeper and made the wage scale a compulsory minimum, as it is in agriculture, on which the BIGGA rate is based? I really think that the BIGGA Board of Management should start to think about the ordinary greenkeeper, instead of concentrating on the top few greenkeepers who may be earning a decent wage. I also think that a craftsman's wage sys-

tem should be introduced to reward greenkeepers who take the time to learn new skills and who gain recognised qualifications, but until the golf clubs are told that they must pay for the time and skill put into the preparation of their golf courses, I'm sure they will just carry on paying derisory wages and in some cases letting people work in dangerous conditions under the health and safety laws. Maybe it's about time for less bowing and scraping to the golf clubs and a bit more effort being put into the welfare and earnings of the membership of their Association. After all it is the humble greenkeeper who makes up the majority of the membership.

**Name and Address Supplied**

## Appreciated

I have been requested by my fellow students who attended the Massey Ferguson Tractor Appreciation Course at Oaklands College to convey our heartfelt thanks to all those concerned with the organisation of this course.

We all feel that the instruction given to us by Guy Stewart of Massey Ferguson was of the highest quality in explaining the nuts and bolts approach to tractors and other grass machinery.

We would also like to thank the Principle and Chris Bishop of Oaklands College for the hospitality shown to us during our stay.

We all hope that this type of course will be available again to greenkeepers who, like us, would find it a very rewarding experience.

**Mark Anderson  
Head Greenkeeper  
Newbury Racecourse Golf Club**

## Generous gift

May I thank the Northern Section of BIGGA for its generous gift of £84 donated to Kasisi orphanage. The orphanage that my wife Marie and I help to support is situated in Zambia, approximately 30 kilometres east of Lusaka and at present there are 140 children there with ages ranging from one day old to teenagers.

Part of the orphanage houses 40 babies suffering either from the HIV virus or AIDS. These children do not live very long, but with the help of donations received from caring people and the love given to them by the Sisters running the orphanage it does allow them to die with dignity.

Once again many thanks to you all for your generosity.

**Bert and Marie Cross  
Liverpool**

# New on the market

After 23 years marketing Billy Goat outdoor vacuums Bob Andrews Ltd has signed up with new American partners **Giant Vac Inc**, from New England.

The new range includes push and power driven pedestrian vacs from 5-11hp; blowers of 5, 8 and 11hp; tailgate loaders and truck loaders from 11-20hp.

Giant Vac vacuum machines are designed on a modular basis and a range of options including engines, snouts, wheels or wanderhoses can be attached to the basic wheeled chassis.

Bob Andrews will arrange a trial anywhere in Britain free and without obligation. Tel: 01344 862111.

**Farmura** is launching a spring promotion offering a free wax body warmer to help increase awareness of its Liquid Organics and Liquid Concentrates as part of balanced turf management.

Spend £350 on selected Farmura products between now and May 31 and you will be sent a

free body warmer.

The Imperial Cancer Research Fund has developed its own range of sun care products – **Sun Safe** – which is unique in that it is the only range of the market with no products which actively help people to tan.

"We do not want to encourage people to seek a tan and we are very concerned about giving the public the right message on sun protection. This is why the lowest factor in the Sun Safe range is SPF 15. But to avoid burning, people must follow the pack instructions carefully," said Dr Julia Newton Bishop, the ICRF skin cancer expert who guided the development of Sun Safe.

All profits from the sale of Sun Safe products will go to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and its research programme and even 1% of the of the sun care market would be worth up to £1.5 million per annum.

This year over 40,000 people in the UK will be diagnosed with

skin cancer yet many could prevent the disease by taking simple precautions against the sun – such as wearing protective clothing and a high protection sunscreen or sunblock on exposed skin.

The ICRF recommends the following tips some of which could be utilised by greenkeepers, others not!

- Stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm.
- Keep in the shade where possible.
- Cover up. Wear loose-fitting close-weave cotton clothes which protect the shoulders and neck, a wide-brimmed hat which shades the face and sunglasses with a UV filter.
- Cover exposed parts of the skin with sunscreen or sunblock which is at least SPF 15.

**Hayter** has re-designed and up-graded its Condor after an extensive campaign to canvas opinion from customers.

Among the advances this has



brought about are easier more comfortable controls, a strengthened deck and a fuller skirt.

The new Condor Elite, pictured above, is available in two models – the Hydrostatic and the Bank. The Hydrostatic is driven by a Honda GX340 11hp engine with hydrostatic transmission and allows infinite speed variation

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forward and reverse without gears or clutch.

The Bank model is purpose-built for negotiating difficult slopes and embankments. It is powered by a Kohler Magnum M8T 8hp engine and has a ratchet-driven transmission to ensure positive traction on steep gradients.

Both are available with the option of 30' and 36" rotary attachments or a 30", three and five bladed cylinder verge attachment.

On the well worn premise that "Every new development in the States inevitably crosses the Atlantic and becomes a trend in the United Kingdom" we can soon expect **Softspikes** to be the accepted norm for anchoring golf shoes to turf.

Softspikes were introduced in the USA in 1993 and already more than 175 courses throughout the States have banned traditional metal spikes, as tests have proved that softspikes



reduce damage to turf, carpet and may even be easier on the human body.

The non-penetrating urethane spikes have a plastic flange with ridges fashioned in a fan-like design to provide traction.

Literature from the American manufacturers of Softspikes gives the enlightening statistic that a fourball "leaves approximately 500 footprints, which translates into 6,000 spike wounds on each green. For most courses that's about a million spikemarks a day. The company also claims that the spikes reduce the spread of Poa Annua and other grass diseases and saves the club money on fer-

tiliser and fungicides.

"The theory that metal spikes somehow aerate the turf is largely disproved," said Jim Snow, National Director of the USGA's greens section. "Metal spikes actually increase compacting."

Since their initial launch the company -Softspikes - has introduced a new improved version aimed at providing more traction.

The company also provides information on how to implement metal spike bans at golf clubs.

The current cost of the new spikes is currently around \$7 to \$9 for a set of 24.

So we wait with bated breath for the arrival of the Softspike revolution which will consign traditional metal spikes to the same footnote in history as the Great British roast dinner.

A new seeding machine, recently used at Gog Magog GC in Cambridgeshire, has helped to reduce seed waste and bare patches due to wind drift.

The new machine, the **Pro-seeder TP1700** from Denmark, and bought from Greensward Engineering Company of Leeds, discharges the seed at such a low height that it eliminates wind drift while it also gently rakes the seed into the surface and covers it with a thin layer of soil which was scattered by its special mesh rear roller.

At Gog Magog the process was so successful that despite problems with wind erosion on the fairways the seed stayed in place and excellent germination was achieved.

The TP1700 is the largest in a range which also includes the TP1100 for small compact tractors and the HP600 pedestrian seeder.

Greensward said that one customer has reported saving £400 on seed with his HP600 and that the machine paid for itself in the first few months.

Further information can be obtained from Greensward on 0113 267 6000.

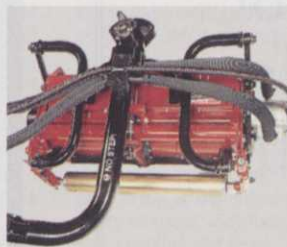
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# Around the Green

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the regions

## Scotland East Section

Welcome to this month's report. Hope everyone is well into their spring renovation work as the weather has taken a turn for the better. Well not a lot to tell you about this month but here we go.

We had a day out at Souter's of Stirling and a great day was had by all 16 members who made the journey – yet again a very poor turnout. What do we have to do to get our members interested in these days that we organise for you? If someone could let me know it would be much appreciated. So thanks again to John Souter and his company for a great day.

The East Section played host to the Scottish Conference at the Edinburgh Airport Stakis Hotel. I could not make it due to work commitments but I got all the details from Steve Dixon and Robert Hogarth who informed me of the good turnout, speakers etc. Also it was good to see our Chairman, Dean Cleaver, in attendance and our Executive Director, Neil Thomas, also made the trip north to be with us.

We hope to see a good turnout on April 11 at Longniddry GC for our first outing of the new season which is also the second round of our Hayter Qualifier, so you had better get some practice in if you wish to qualify for this year's Scottish Final.

You will soon have your fixture card and a social committee newsletter with all details of upcoming events for the first time this year.

Well that's it all for this month folks and I'll speak to you all next month. Chris Yeaman

## Scotland North Section

Well it is April and next month at the superb links of Cruden Bay near Peterhead we have our Spring outing. You better get your entry in quickly as I am sure there will be a big demand for places. You have been warned!

While on the subject I must mention that the first four draws of the 200 Club will take place at Cruden Bay so it is imperative that all tickets are sold prior to the day to maximise the funds raised. Please buy the ticket sent to you to support your Section, or at least return it in good time so that it can be sold on to someone else. If you are going to pay for it on the day that is fine but let a member of the committee know to save time consuming and costly phone calls. There should really be no need to chase people in this matter. A simple yes or no as soon as the card is delivered is all that is required. 200 Club organiser Gordon McKie has moved into his new flat in Cupar now and can be contacted on 01334 653995.

As forecast last month here is the anticipated influx of new members to the Section. Royal Dornoch has two new trainees to welcome, Marcus Ross and Gary Gruber from Huntly; we have Stuart Angus, Alford's new

trainee John Morton joins us as does Boat of Garten's James Hutchison. From the new Craggan course at Grantown-on-Spey we welcome assistant Mark Brennan and finally, for this month anyway, joining us is Richard Cutler, assistant at Montrose Links. Keep them coming. The more the merrier.

Good times and not so good times for a couple of members to report. The good news concerns Westhill greenkeeper Bradley Wood who married his first love, Donna, at the venue of his second love (I hope that is the right order) Pittodrie Stadium, home of Aberdeen FC. We wish them all the best for the future. The not so good news is of Hopeman greenkeeper Stevie Dunn, who in his other role as goalkeeper of Rothes FC, just failed to help them reach their first cup final for many years when they went down 2-0 to Inverness Clach in the North of Scotland Cup semi-final. Better luck next time Stevie.

Congratulations to Mike Wilson on his appointment as Head Greenkeeper at the newly privatised Forres GC.

Another group of North members went through their D32/33 training at Nairn recently and should be building up their portfolios for assessment now. All Head Greenkeepers should go through this so that they can assess their trainees in the future. Details are available from the GTC or by contacting Section Education conveners, Stewart McBain on 01224 733347 or Kevin Peace on 01467 623125. Iain Macleod

## West of Scotland

On a sad note I must mention the recent death of Richard Aitken Snr, a respected businessman and life member of the Association. Richard Aitken started his business in 1963 when the company he worked for decided to uproot from the west and move east. The father of two, son Richard and daughter Grace, our best wishes and thoughts are with them at this time. Richard was a great supporter of the West Section and was well respected within the trade. I'm sure a good friend has been lost to all who knew him.

Recently a football match was arranged between the West Section and a Kevin Brunton Select under the guise of Central Section. The West came out on top winning 7-3. The first half proved to be the battle for supremacy with a 3-2 lead to the West, although keeping errors were about due to myself. Finally the West's strong legs got the better of Central and goals came fast and furiously. The goal scorers were Brian Hillan, Peter Cowan, two from George Nisbet and a hat trick from "Mr Greed" Stevie McGeachie. Well done everybody and thanks to the opposition for a well contested and enjoyable game. Special mention to Ronnie Miles, Helens-

burgh, for refereeing the match so well and making the boys tow the line so to speak. Brian Hillan should be thanked for supplying the team with strips on the day, even if they had us worried. They looked the picture, maybe that helped them play better.

The Spring Outing forms will be issued by now so be sure and enter quickly. There's sure to be a large entry at such a good course. Remember the winners qualify for the Hayter Challenge in May with the opportunity to go south in September. Something to look forward to.

The Scottish outing looks as though Elie will be the host. So another good venue!

Balmore has confirmed the Autumn Outing and I'm sure it will be in great condition. I wonder if this year quick greens and nice pin placements will be the norm.

The proposed trip to Royal Lytham had to be called off due to difficulties with bookings and arrangements for the time.

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members of the Section: Gavin Rutherford, Strathendrick GC; Andrew Cairns, Drumpellier; Stuart Ferguson, Stuart McDonald, Alan Hay, Edward Dully and Colin Shanks, all Bonnyton. We wish them well and hope to see them at the Section events.

Remember please, if there is any information for the Section please phone on 0141 942 5554. James S Taylor

## Scottish Region

Once again the Scottish Region Conference was a successful day, 160 including the speakers, enjoyed a varied and interesting programme. With the sun shining and a lovely dry working day, concern that some of the delegates might be tempted to stay on the course was expressed, but obviously all the hard work had been done in the good weather before the turn of the year.

We were delighted to have our National Chairman Dean Cleaver and Executive Director Neil Thomas with us for the day. Along with the fact that they might have learnt something, it gave many of our members an opportunity to speak with them as they mingled at coffee and lunch breaks.

It was a great turnout covering from as far north as Dornoch to Seahouses southward and from Fort William on the west to St Andrews on the east. As well as the greenkeepers we had the largest turnout of club officials ever, most of whom expressed how much they had enjoyed it. We also had a representative from the Scottish Golf Union and from the IOG. It is good to see more and more clubs appreciating that the golf course is the most important part of any club and that the continual improvement of the standards of their courses is essential.

It was not all plain sailing as firstly the room temperature soared and the heating had to be adjusted, the microphone developed a squeal now and again and when a workman in the next room started up with his drill I thought "Oh no. This is not going to be my day". However all these little things were sorted out as they arose. As to the speakers themselves, after a few words from the BIGGA Chairman we were off on the morning session under the chairmanship of Alasdair McLaren, Education Convener for Scotland. Our regular Education update was ably delivered by Steve Miller, from Oatridge College, and he was followed by Ken Gordon from Filpumps on Golf Course Irrigation with emphasis on the design of systems. Gordon Moir, Head Greenkeeper at the Eden Course, spoke next of how he and his staff reconstructed the pond on the Eden to give it a more natural look. The morning was finished off by David Roy, Course Manager at Linlithgow GC, on Conservation, how important it is, how it is not as difficult to implement as some may think and how it must fit the needs of the golfer.

The afternoon session was chaired by Stephen Dixon, Chairman of the East Section, and started with Iain MacLeod from Tain, on working on a big project with a small budget on a highland course. Ian Henderson of Ian Henderson Finance gave an interesting talk on financial leasing and how to achieve the optimum fleet. Buying Time, Buying Turf was the title of Graeme Forbes, MD Stewarts & Co, talk.

Explaining the problems of turf nursery production and also giving handy hints on how to look after your turf once it is in place. The last speaker of the day was John Souter MD, Grass Technology International, on Golf Course design and construction and with the use of slides of courses all over the world showed the difference between natural and artificial courses. All in all an excellent conference finished off by a vote of thanks from Jimmy Neilson, Vice Chairman of the Scottish Region. The Region wishes to thank all its patrons for their marvellous support, not just at the conference but through the year as well.

My thanks to Robert Hogarth, East Section Secretary and his team of helpers and especially to Edna for all her work before, during and after the event.

I will just close the conference with one point. Lunch will definitely be seated next year.

The Hayter Region Final will be held this year at Royal Aberdeen GC on Wednesday May 29. The Scottish National Tournament will be held at Elie Golf House Club on Tuesday June 18.

## Northern: Sheffield

Our Spring competition will be held at

Sherwood Forest GC on April 15 at 2pm. This will be the Hayter qualifier and Hayter will be the main sponsor at Sherwood.

I would like to congratulate Barry Lax on the completion of 25 years service as Head Greenkeeper at Workshop GC in February. The club presented Barry with a watch as thanks for his loyal service. Barry also received a commemorative plaque from the English Golf Union in recognition of his 25 years service after an EGU event at Workshop last autumn. One EGU official was amazed that Barry had been the Head Greenkeeper for 25 years. He had never heard of anyone serving that long at the same club.

New members this month include Darren Hayes and John Wilson of Oakmere Park; Gary Marsh, Hickledon GC; Andrew Lomas, Matlock GC and Gary Chafer Ashby Deroy GC - formerly known as Scunthorpe GC. J.V. Lax

### Northern

At our AGM last month the following officers were elected. President Bill Mountain (reelected); Vice-President, Mel Guy; Chairman, Alan Gamble (reelected), Vice Chairman, Robin Smith; Secretary/Treasurer, Simon Heppenstall. The rest of the committee is made up as follows:- Telford Jarvis, Denis Cockburn, Ian Thomson, Mick Hannon, Colin Garnett, David Thackray, John Waite, R. Harris and P. Mitchell. Thank you to all members who attended. It was a good turnout.

As you may have noticed we have a new Secretary and very best wishes and good luck to Simon, Course Manager at Pontefract GC, in his new post. I am sure he will do an excellent job.

Our annual dinner dance at Shipley GC recently was a great success with 92 members and guests present. Thanks to our colleagues in the trade who provided prizes for the raffle, Martin Brothers, Henton & Chattel and also Ken Christie. The raffle raised £84 which was given to Bert Cross, Secretary of the North West Section towards the Kasisi Orphanage he supports in Zambia.

On to the golf now and a reminder that the Hayter Qualifier is on April 24 at Scarborough South Cliff. All bookings, together with £10 deposits must be received a week before the event.

We were sorry to hear that Bill Mountain's wife has unfortunately been taken ill again and our best wishes from all in the Section to them both.

## Around the Green



On a happier note, it was very good to see Alan Gamble looking fit and sprightly at our dinner dance after his recent illness.

In future all queries, news correspondence, bookings for golf etc should be addressed to Simon Heppenstall, at 2 Newby Walk, Kirkheaton, Huddersfield, HD5 0LQ Tel 01484 519829. Do give him a call with any information or gossip for him to pass on. I am sure he will be pleased to hear from you. Bob Lupton

### Cleveland

The Annual General Meeting took place on February 15 at Darlington GC. Reports were given and we have a healthy balance sheet. Thanks to Secretary/Treasurer Gary Munro and Regional Representative Ian Holoran for sterling work during the past year. Thanks to Bob Lawton for being golf event organiser. We hope to have better attendances at meetings and request help before arranging speakers for next autumn. We have over 100 members which is very good but we want to have your presence gentlemen.

We are to have only one golf event in December for greenkeepers, which you can all afford. Gary will announce the venue in a newsletter.

We send best wishes to Alan Gamble and hope he gets fully fit and active again.

One vacancy on our Cleveland committee was taken by Tony Mears. Welcome Tony and thanks for your teaching efforts at Houghall College, Durham, on a part-time basis.

See you at the Spring Golf Tournament at Ramside Hall Hotel GC, Durham on Wednesday May 15. Bruce Burnell

### North East

The Autumn competition has now been confirmed and will be played at the City of Newcastle GC on September 19.

The Section welcomes the following new members - Garry Batson, Burgham Park GC; Garry Bolton, Crook GC; Cliff Bunn, Stocksfield GC;

Edward Curry, Bellingham GC; Simon Dobson, Prudhoe GC; Neil Irvin, South Moor GC; Thomas Moore, Allendale GC; Simon Reid, South Shields GC; George Wright, Crook GC and Ian Kerr, Tynemouth GC.

Congratulations to Craig Kilgour on his recent appointment and move from Ponteland GC to Hexham GC. Jimmy Richardson

### North West Section

The theme of the N/W Seminar at Mere Golf and Country Club "Forward Together" was planned to involve everybody in the golf business. It was an excellent day with 100 delegates in attendance and six very knowledgeable speakers. The seminar started with Neil Thomas taking us from the inception of BIGGA in 1987 to the present day, sharing with us some of the teething problems that occur when starting a new association. David Golding, of the GTC, spoke on the need for education and NVQs. David left little doubt that the GTC is doing everything possible to educate, not only the greenkeeper but also the golf clubs in allowing their staff to attend the colleges.

The role of the Course Manager was the title for the following speaker, and Duncan McGilvray spoke on this subject admirably. Speaking as a Course Manager, Duncan referred to his own position and how forward planning, budgeting, communicating and training, are all part of the job, as well as the most important thing - maintaining the course.

The first part of the afternoon was shared by, Peter Dutton and Dr Frank Harkins, who are both involved with the English Golf Union. Peter Dutton spoke of the role of the EGU and their involvement with the GTC. Dr Harkins spoke about training junior golfers through the EGU and how difficult it is for those young golfers to eventually become professionals.

John Hacker was the final speaker and the subject was Communication on the Golf Course. John, who is a former lecturer at Myerscough College and is now an agronomist spoke well on the subject and how important it is for greenkeepers, club officials, and members to communicate with each other and eradicate the us and them ideas of the past.

I would like to thank all the speakers for giving us an excellent educational day, Bob Lupton for chairing the seminar, Mere Golf and Country Club for use of their marvellous facilities, members of the trade for their

support and the delegates who make you feel it is worth all the hard work.

The N/W Section has gained many new members since the BTME and I would like to welcome you all into the Section. Any new members who have not received a fixture list for the year, please contact me on 0151 724 5412 and I will send you one immediately.

The Spring Tournament this year will be played at Morecambe GC on Thursday May 30. This is also a qualifier for the Hayter Regional final and the closing date for entries is May 24. So send off your entries to Bill Merritt, 225 Utting Avenue, Clubmoor, Liverpool. Tel: 0151 284 4416 including your deposit of £10. That's it for now and I hope you have a good golfing season.

Bert Cross

### Midland Section

To start with this month all Midland Section members should have received their entrance sheet and fixture list for the coming season's tournaments. If anybody has not yet received theirs, then please contact me so I can send one to you.

The first winter lecture was held at Walsall GC on February 14. Unfortunately, it was not very well supported with only 22 members in attendance. The talks were given by David Golding, of the GTC, and Peter Jefford, of Rufford Top Dress Supplies. Both were very informative. The committee would like to thank both speakers for given up their time to come and speak to us.

The next item of news is the sudden illness of David Franks, formerly of Avoncrop Amenity Products. Dave had a heart attack and has been very poorly. As of writing these notes he has greatly improved and is hoping to leave hospital in the foreseeable future. From all the members who know Dave we wish him well and a speedy recovery.

Still on a sad note, I have informed of a sudden death of fellow greenkeeper Darrell Cooper. May we send our condolences to his family and friends.

On a happier note, Steve Mucklow is now a proud father. Congratulations to both Steve and his family on the new addition.

And finally, I have been asked to attend liaison committee meetings at the Warwickshire College. At the last meeting it was felt that a questionnaire should be circulated around the Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers asking what levels of training they



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