grade and level the base for locally quarried hard-core to be delivered and then spread at equal thickness before being vibrated in solid then followed with a topping of compacting gritty ash material. Drainage to low lying parts of the road were also installed so that excess water could be removed quickly.

The old saying of March winds and April showers give way to May's flowers is usually an accurate prediction. March allowed us to cultivate, de-stone and prepare, April provided light beautifully spaced showers which assisted rapid germination. May arrived providing us with welcome sunshine which encouraged the grass to grow. Once established it was gently rolled followed up with a light application of sulphur orientated organic fertiliser. Once satisfactory grass cover became established it would be mutually decided by the contractors and owners that completion documents could be agreed and signed.

Following them another army of contractors arrived to build access roads, Clubhouse and other buildings, install separate sewage and water lines. It never ceases to amaze when seed germinates, assisted by warm weather and light rain showers, and this produces personal satisfaction to whoever seeded it. Our seeding was satisfactory, pushing through and growing vigorously dictating that properly skilled greenstaff be employed with the first appointment of a Golf Course Manager then a Deputy Manager right down to the labourers whose duties would entail the million and one jobs still to be completed.

Stuart McColm, who was the Project Manager with the contractors, was selected to become the new man responsible for the maintenance. Stuart was the ideal candidate having knowledge of the whole workings or the site. On top of that he was also a knowledgeable greenkeeper having been employed by me to work on the St Andrews Old Course for a period of time. Staff now brimming with enthusiasm, all armed with the latest ride-on cutting machines, engrossed with the image of St Andrews fairways or the long snaking putts of Augusta greens, went forward in the creation of fast running Links-type surfaces which was our number one prime objective.

Growing the grass in to provide playing surfaces is a crucial factor. Once contractors have left faults are usually discovered but allowances have got to be made. In our situation these were few owing to the professionalism of the company, Southern Golf, who have built many golf courses through-
Making of a masterpiece

out Europe. Having plenty of time is beneficial but could be termed a luxury to most. It is however inevitable that the owners will want to open sooner rather than later owing to financial commitment and who can blame them. In our situation we were reliably informed that Kingsbarns Links would have to be ready for play just prior to the Year 2000 Open Championship. With this directive we could assess that a large number of golf holes contained reasonable grass surfaces leaving only a few which would have to be managed discreetly without force being used.

Greens are the prepared part of the golf course where most discussion takes place. This is the area where they are good or bad, where scores are made or critical comments heard. Kingsbarns greens were designed to be extra large with a similar strategy which could be found on St Andrews Old Course, put your drive into the correct position on the fairway or suffer the consequences with your approach shot. Before the greens and surrounds were built a thick layer of blown sand was placed onto the total area. It was on top of this that the layer of root zone material was placed. This was the method employed on old fashioned Links many years ago. The rootzone was made up of 70% local sand mixed with selected soil from the site. These were laboratory tested for drainage capabilities. Tees were also large, constructed exactly the same with a variety of shaping to provide a more interesting appearance. On both constructions wind interference was taken into account. Fairways were the areas where we anticipated we would experience most difficulty. Some of the upper level the soil still contained more than average silt levels indicating that problems may occur if we were to become complacent. On account of this we had already organised ver- tidraining, solid-tining followed up with sand applications drag matted down the holes. Hollow-coring then removing the cores was also achieved on five fairways. Again we topdressed this time using soil and sand mix similar to rootzone mix. Overseeding on top of existing grass was also achieved with good results.

The week prior to the 2000 Open Championship and our opening date soon arrived. Cutting routines organised by the Course Manager were succeeding with the modern sit-on speed driven fairway mowers and pedestrian roller mowers on greens soon provided a polish. Heights of cut were kept higher than normal with greens being reduced to 6mm from 10mm. Tees were set at 8mm with fairways gradually reduced to 14mm. Although the fairways were extremely wide the band of semi-rough was extended at landing areas mainly to accommodate high handicappers but also to speed up play. Fertiliser applications were kept deliberately light at regular intervals always using sulphur orientated mixtures spread on all areas throughout all of the golf course except roughs.

Irrigation was also frequently used during this period. Stuart McColm, along with his First Assistant, would regularly walk the whole of the golf course once a week. When inspecting the greens Poa-Annua invasion was the biggest fear. On many newly constructed golf courses if the green structure was incorrect or if the maintenance attitudes were not properly implemented Poa-Annua would be the first to invade. In our situation we decided to pluck it out with the plan adopted of low fertility coupled to minimum irrigation applications. Aeration in the form of 8mm tinning was also organised on a monthly basis.

Although I am sure the owners along with everyone concerned were quietly confident of their product they received a massive boost when the R&A indicated that they would financially assist over the first five years, a deal which would allow their Members along with Local Club Members to play the golf course at a reduced green fee. However, they were overwhelmed with the reaction from the world's press, players and golfing bodies, almost everyone involved in golf, all indicating that this golf course was going to be great. To cap it all, Dunhill Company decided that changes should be made to their existing Tournament to make it into a Pro-Am concept, two Professionals combined with two Amateurs, similar to the AT&T played at Pebble Beach, organised to play at Carnoustie, St Andrews and Kingsbarns - Big Company indeed!
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With as much rain as we have endured over the latter half of last year it was perhaps fitting that a club named the Dyke won the BIGGA Environment Competition, in association with Amazone UK. But it was for its environmental excellence rather than its ability to hold back the tides which brought it its rewards...

Persistence and a continuing progressive approach to environmental management paid off when The Dyke Golf Club, near Brighton, under the stewardship of Course Manager David Ansell won the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone.

The Dyke had consistently finished high up the standings in the competition but had lost out in the hunt for the main prize but such is the excellent work carried out by David and his team that the presentation of the trophy was merely being delayed. That was how it worked out and the much deserved award was presented to Club Captain Gary Thompson. The Dyke adds to an illustrious roll of honour going back to when the competition was run solely by Amazone - Purdis Heath and Rudding Park set the ball rolling before BIGGA took over the running of the competition and Hanley Common, Lindrick and Temple Golf Clubs were the winners in the previous three years.

The presentation, in the splendid Dyke clubhouse, was also a sad occasion in one regard as Rod Baker, Managing Director of Amazone and the inspiration behind the competition announced to the gathering that he was stepping down as Managing Director and that his association with the competition would end. “When we started the competition in 1994 who would have believed that it would have grown to what it is today. I am stepping down a week from today so I’d like to offer my congratulations to everyone who has been involved over the last six years. “We are the third most populated country in the world after Bangladesh and Holland and oasis like golf courses are very important to us. After our three score and 10 we should leave the planet no worse than we found it,” he told the gathering.

Bob Taylor and Jonathan Hart-Woods, two of the principal judges, report on The BIGGA Environment Competition sponsored by Amazone with support from the R&A

As the overall winner of the competition it is tradition that the winning club hosts the prize giving and to say that The Dyke rose to the occasion would not be overstating the case. The food and hospitality sampled by all those lucky enough to attend was outstanding.

The overall winners award was accepted by Gary Thompson, Captain of Dyke Golf Club and David Ansell the Course Manager.

“Today environmental awareness and the concerns arising from environmental issues form part of our modern lives on an increasingly frequent basis,” said Gary. “No matter where we are, or what we are doing, its protection and enhancement is of vital importance to us. We at The Dyke recognised some years ago that we must embrace such awareness and take an active, rather than passive role as custodians of a small part of an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).

“Our own awareness of these issues, and how we could respond to them, was greatly influenced and driven by the quietly determined attitude of one man, our Course Manager, David Ansell. "David not only understood, but managed to convince first the Committee and then the membership of the importance of an environmental programme and our responsibility in taking effective measures to ensure that such a programme was not only implemented but sustained. His work has been tireless. At times it has not been easy but David has always known what was needed, how to plan and record what was done and, most importantly, how to carry out effective environmental management. “On behalf of the club David may I thank and congratulate you and your staff for all of the efforts that you have put in and for which this award is the pinnacle of your achievements to date,” said Gary.

“David was given an additional spur by the BIGGA Competition, sponsored by Amazone and our thanks must go to both of these organisations for initiating and carrying through what has quickly become a prestigious award,” he added.

David, himself, then thanked the...
Club Committee and membership for their support and also acknowledged the massive role his greens staff had played in achieving the course’s environmental objectives to date.

Martin Gunn, Course Manager of Temple Golf Club, last year’s winners, urged the Club to enjoy the next 12 months while using the publicity of the success to positive ends.

He revealed that other clubs were still contacting Temple in connection with winning the competition just days before handing the trophy over. He also stressed how much they had enjoyed receiving the accolade and how much interest both internally and externally at the club the award had generated.

It was then the turn of the judges to give a brief outline of how the competition had fared during 2000. They also took the opportunity to raise some broader issues. "Today’s presentations are very timely given that the world’s major environmental decision makers are, as we speak, discussing global scale environmental management in The Hague," said Bob Taylor, STRI Senior Ecologist.

"Although at first this may seem far removed from this morning’s celebration, the underlying message is clear. Environmental improvement starts at home and that means good housekeeping. It is up to each and every one of us to take steps to do what we can to ensure environmental improvement. The BIGGA Environment Competition is instrumental in raising that awareness within the golfing industry. Through the continued progress of the competition we have been able to demonstrate the positive side of golf. However we must be aware that the golf industry is being faced with new legislation from Government and Europe and Clubs must be aware of these new pressures and remain alert to the sensitivities of the environment and act accordingly."

In summing up, Bob went on to say, "The competition is now over six years old and in that time has evolved to now encompass all aspects of environmental management ranging from the basic issues of nature conservation and habitat management to considering issues such as pollution control and energy efficiency. Golf is a major land use, but it is one that has been criticised over the years for the way in which it has, as an industry undertaken this responsibility. The competition has been a very positive way in which we have been able to demonstrate the positive side of golf. The level of commitment to environmental management by golf clubs has largely been unsurpassed."

Jonathan Hart-Woods, another STRI based Ecologist, who acts as a judge for the Environment Competition, outlined how the selection process had worked during the competition this year before Dr Keith Duff of English Nature summed up for the judges. Keith expressed his admiration for the standard of entrants he had visited during the final judging and added...
"These courses are making a real and practical contribution to the creation and maintenance of habitat continuity in the wider countryside."

He went on to stress the importance of corridors for wildlife that cross different land uses and identified golf courses as having a significant role to play in this capacity.

He pointed out the window at the course and said that it would not have changed significantly in 100 years whereas the surrounding land would have changed dramatically.

He reminded the gathering that we are a small over crowded island that needs to make the most of what little land we have wherever possible and responsible golf clubs were doing just that.

Though the day belonged largely to the Dyke and the regional winners, the announcement that Rod Baker, Managing Director of Amazonia UK, was standing down from the competition after this year was met with genuine sadness from all those present.

A record of 58 clubs entered the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition this year. That is good news for the competition and shows that every year the competition is just getting bigger and bigger (no pun intended). By late July from the original 58 entries received, Bob Taylor, STRI Senior Ecologist and myself had highlighted 25 clubs from all over Britain that we felt were worthy of further investigation through a visit to the Clubs themselves.

It is worth saying from the outset that not only was there a record number of entries this year, that the quality of the entries received was even higher than those from the previous year. That is great news and very encouraging but it also makes the judges' de-selection process extremely difficult and sometimes very painful. It also meant that some very good clubs just missed out on a site visit by the narrowest of margins. With 25 clubs to visit Bob and I split the country into five sections, Scotland, Northern England, Wales, south-east England and south-west England. Visits are then allocated on our personal knowledge of the clubs to some degree. If Bob has been to a club that I have not visited I would visit that one and vice versa, that way we have a good idea of how we compare when it comes to the final judging when we meet up later to discuss our findings.

To get a site visit has its advantages too even if the club does not go beyond this stage. As Bob and I work as Golf Course Ecologists we are happy to discuss any aspects of ecological management during the site visit. The main object of the visit is to assess the golf clubs environmental credentials for the competition but we are both happy to offer constructive advice and answer any queries. It is our hope therefore that by acting on the advice and encouragement offered during these sessions the club may progress further in the competition next year. So even if you feel your club is at an early stage of development when it comes to environmental management you could still benefit from entering the BIGGA 2001 Environmental Competition.

A number of the 25 clubs that narrowly missed out at this stage but were of a very good standard indeed received a highly commended certificate and this year the clubs were in no particular order, Luffenhall Heath, Barkston, Wilsden, Outram Park, Southend-on-Sea, Royal Birkdale, The Lydons, Bobblyshool, Bradley Park, Keswick Golf Club and Arnot Hall. Anyone familiar with any of these clubs will quickly appreciate the very high standard the competition is addressing.

From the 25 site visits made we finally agreed on eight clubs from which to select the five regional winners and one overall winner. With Bob and myself at loggerheads and September giving way to October it is of great benefit that we can call at this stage on the services of Dr Keith Duff, Chief Scientist with English Nature. It is Keith's job to arbitrate between Bob and myself and to visit each of the eight clubs selected with either of us to determine the five regional winners.

This year the final eight were Thoppeness Hotel and Golf Club, Llanymynech, Kilmacolm, Broadstone, the Dyke, Kenwick Park, The Duke's and Merrist Wood. It is fair to say that there was very little separating these Clubs, but there has to be regional winners and in the end Kilmacolm, Scotland; Llanymynech, Wales; Kenwick Park, North Broadstone, South-West, and Thoppeness, South-East, won through. Each of the regional winners received £250 and a wooden plaque. Neumacher Golf Club near Aberdeen won the special initiatives award in its first year for the success of their pond island building scheme.

The overall competition winner deservedly went to the Dyke Golf Club and they received a cheque for £15,000 and a plaque. The award ceremony was held at the Dyke Golf Club on the 23 November 2000. We would like to congratulate all the clubs that took part this year and the Dyke in particular and hope they enjoy the next 12 months. Keith, Bob and myself can relax now for a few months until the competition launches early in 2001. Let's hope it attracts even more entries this year. If you are thinking of entering give it a shot there is nothing to lose and plenty to gain.

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Annual Conference Business Learning Centre Lauder College, Dunfermline.
On March 6, 2001 BIGGA Scottish Region will once again be presenting their Annual Conference at Lauder College Dunfermline. This is the third year we have been at the Business Learning Centre which provides a ideal location for easy access from the motorway and of course the facilities within the Conference Centre are first class. This year’s speakers are from a cross section of the industry and greenkeeping, all prepared to give their time and talents to providing us with an insight into greenkeeping related matters.

The speakers include Neil Baldwin, Arne Larsen, whose talk will be “Biological and Control of Black Layer in Fine Turf”; From the GTCS we have David Golding whose talk is entitled “The GTCS-Raising The Standards”; Peter Jefford, Rufford Soil Technology, his talk will be on “how to select top dressings and Root zones today”; Sandy Armit, from Double A Trading Company will talk about “Modern Machinery Maintenance”.

As in the past we have tried to provide a variety of topics which hopefully appeals to the greenkeeping industry and this year we have taken this a step further. The Conference has always been well supported throughout the years and hopefully this will continue. We look forward to seeing everyone at Dunfermline.

Application forms will be available in the early part of January 2001 and will be posted to all members in the Scottish Region.

North
Three new members to welcome to the Section in the New Year, Richard Cutler from Montrose GC, Barry Huydon from Braemar GC and Graham Mackie from Edzell GC, hopefully these will be the first of many this year.

Congratulations to Newmacher Golf Club, Montrose for their win in the Environmental Competition last year. The club get a trophy and £500 for their work on the pond that guards the 1st green. Well done to Donald Macleod at Pollok GC.

I recently attended the Annual Patrons’ Lunch in Stirling, where we thank the members of the trade for their support throughout the year and award the ten lucky members of the Scottish Region with a book and trip to BTME 2001. We had a great meal and wine and once again paid Billy a visit at his wee local last night. Hopefully next year there will be more new faces to write about.

As Gavin mentioned in last month’s column, Ronnie Bunting is arranging another moderator’s meeting in January at the Central Station Hotel.

Well I am off to clean the webs between my toes before the next show comes round. I am hoping this will continue. We look hopefully this will continue. We look forward to seeing everyone at Dunfermline.

Please see a list of Section members and news of BTME in Harrogate later this month.

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East
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I hope that everyone had a good test at the AGM and you all had what you wanted. (I asked for some dry weather, but you can’t get everything is suppose).

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Congratulations to section committee member Andy Forrest, Oatridge College Golf Course, on winning one of the two Scottish places at the Bernhard & Co trip to the Canadian Greenkeepers Show in Canada in February. We all hope he enjoys this trip with the other nine winners from the UK. Well done to all of them.

When he comes back we hope he will maybe give us a talk on his experiences in Canada and an insight into this country.

Well done to the winners of this year’s Patrons’ Awards for 2000; they are Ian Bell, Glenorce GC and Richard Mullen, Swanston GC.

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a relief. The day did go well starting with bacon baps, and coffee at 9.30am, tee time from 10am, and 18 holes of golf in good conditions without any rain. The course although wet was in great condition, obviously due to the amount of work Steve and his staff have put in, and was a credit to them. Their hard work certainly paid off for them, as Steve Oultram won the "President's Cup"; Andy Bennett, and Steve Johnson won the longest drive and nearest the pin, they are also on the greens staff at Wilmslow, so between them they cleared up on the day. The golf was followed by the AGM, and a great evening meal. The committee had decided at the last meeting, that due to the fact that Wilmslow Golf Club have been so good to the N/W Section over the last four years, allowing us to hold this competition, and AGM, we would show our appreciation by presenting the junior section with a cheque for £100. The cheque was presented to the Chairman of Green, who attended the dinner, and he informed the meeting that the money would be used to purchase a cup, to be called the "The North-West Greenkeepers Trophy", to be played for annually by the junior section.

I would like to thank Wilmslow Golf Club for allowing us courtesy of the course, Green and Dave Chason for great food and for keeping the bar open all day, and Steve and his staff for preparing a great course. That seems to be it for now, but don't forget the Mere Seminar in March. Any news or views give me a ring on 0151 724 5412. Happy new year to everyone Bert Cross

Northern

Unfortunately the Christmas Golf at Huddersfield GC was cancelled despite the best efforts of Alan Loifhouse and his staff, the weather beat us. The 15 who did turn up for the start of the day had an enjoyable day, down at the local Ten Pin bowling alley where we had three games. This was won by Simon Heppenstall and the bring and win was transferred to the bowling, so everybody was a winner with excellent prizes on offer.

The venues for next year are Spring Tournament - Filey GC; President's Day - Harrogate GC; Roses Match - Sand Moor GC; Invitation Day - Howley Hall GC; Autumn Tournament - Woodhouse Hall GC; Winter Golf - Headingley GC. On top of this there are plans to hold 2 further section seminars this year.

Congratulations to Matt Booth, from Howley Hall GC, on passing his PA 2. On the movement front Gary Potter has left Woodhall Hills GC to go to Vitax as a rep. Jim Brown and all the lads from Cookridge Hall G&CC wish John Studdard all the best on his move to Wyke Ridge GC.

Looking forward to seeing you at Harrogate for the show. In the meantime, if you have any queries, don't hesitate in picking the phone up and giving me a call.

There is no other news at the moment. If anybody has anything please let me know.

My address is 67 Asquith Avenue, Morley, Leeds, LS27 9QS or telephone at home 0113 2383188. My mobile is 07790 678572, and my email address is; andy_smith21@hotmail.com

Andy Smith

Sheffield

I would like to start by catching up on events missed over the last few months. On November 2, Farmura was our guest speaker for the first winter lecture at Rotherham Golf Club. Thank you to Alan Dyson and Farmura for a very interesting talk.

Any similarity to the Hayter FM524