OnCourse
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Golf Club members and owners are continually demanding better quality playing conditions, which brings the roll of Golf Course Managers into sharp focus. Not only are they expected to keep the course in excellent condition they also have to be skilled administrators and personnel managers. Additionally, Golf Club Managers need detailed and well-structured reports on golf course operations, which can be a time consuming task. OnCourse™ has been developed to make all of these things easier.

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For more detailed information and a free demonstration CD, please contact

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Epani is a continually expanding company specialising in Information Technology for the game of Golf. Bringing satisfaction and enjoyment to golfers around the world is our highest priority. In doing so, we offer a complete national IT system aimed towards golf associations, golf districts, golf clubs and even the individual golfer. We want to utilise our system’s accessibility, simplicity and cost-effective management in boosting the world of golf in the 21st century.

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In March and April I had the opportunity to visit three fantastic and informative Educational Seminars at section level. This not only gave me the opportunity to meet BIGGA members and for them to meet me, but it also provided me with a valuable insight and an essential overview into what goes on behind the scenes in greenkeeping.

That’s why it is important for you to try and attend and support these seminars, they provide an excellent opportunity to improve knowledge, meet peers and trade and to engage in interesting conversation regarding your chosen profession. Many people spend a lot of their own personal time organising these seminars and section events. Don’t let them down, please make every effort to attend.

We realise you cannot attend them all but it would be nice to see you at others. I know it can be difficult if you are new to the section, but if you haven’t got a fixture card one or two. I know it can be difficult to get the full picture from a seminar, they provide an excellent insight and an essential overview into what goes on behind the scenes in greenkeeping.

Don’t Drift Away

If you’re membership expired on 31 December 2000, 31 January 2001, 28 February 2001, 31 March 2001, don’t miss out any longer, renew your membership this month. Providing you are working as a greenkeeper, you will still have all your details on our database and can renew your membership with a new expiry date, you can even pay by direct debit if you wish. Don’t leave it any longer!

If you need a renewal form or further information contact Tracey or Susan in Membership Services today ring (01347) 833800.

This was your chance ... did you take it? As mentioned in both March and April’s magazine BIGGA have commissioned an independent market research study. Financially supported by the R & A and carried out by J. W. Williams of MW Associates, based in Edinburgh, 2000 questionnaires were sent out to a random sample of members. If you received one of these surveys from Mike and have returned it - thank you for taking part! Just to remind you of the two main aims of this survey:

We want to know what our members, and those with whom we work most closely in the golf industry, think of the services we offer and the way we deliver them.

We are also looking for new ideas, particularly in the areas of sales and marketing, so that we can protect and enhance the income base on which our continuing growth depends.

Eurocheque reminder to Overseas Members

For all those overseas BIGGA members who have previously or are thinking of paying for their membership by Eurocheque, unfortunately, the UK banks are no longer accepting these as valid forms of payment. Included within your renewal form should be information on other ways to pay including BIGGA’s banking details.

If in any doubt please send an email to either tracey@bigga.co.uk or susanah@bigga.co.uk, for further information.

April’s Monthly Membership Draw Winner

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win a fantastic BIGGA sportswatch. Our congratulations go to April’s winner, Tony Gerrard of Halifax GC.

You’ve got m@!l!

If you’ve got an email account why not send an email to the membership department, where we can place you into our exclusive members email address book. We can then keep you up to date with membership and events as they happen.

Send an email to: membership@bigga.co.uk

Tracey@bigga.co.uk

susanah@bigga.co.uk

Usually the spotlight falls on the Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper at a Club. Now it is the turn of those whose work often goes unheralded to star.

Names: Stephen Smees

Club: Southwick Park Naval Recreation Centre, Portsmouth

Position: First Assistant

Age: 31

1. How long have you been a greenkeeper? 10 years

2. What education are you currently undertaking? NVQ Level 3, Sparsholt College

3. Which one task do you most enjoy doing? Irrigation

4. Which one task do you most dislike doing? Digging Ditches

5. What job other than greenkeeping might you have ended up doing? Plumber

6. Who has been the biggest influence on your career? Head Greenkeeper, Nick Beadie

7. What would you do to improve the life of a greenkeeper? Better understanding between golfers and greenkeepers

8. What are your hobbies? Football and darts

9. What do you get out of BIGGA? Good magazine and a chance to meet other greenkeepers from the area

10. What do you hope to do in 10 years time? Be a Head Greenkeeper of a course somewhere

Section seminars well worth a visit!

Tracey Maddison, BIGGA’s Membership Services Officer, would like to welcome over 130 new members, and those with whom we work most closely in the golf industry, think of the services we offer and the way we deliver them. We are also looking for new ideas, particularly in the areas of sales and marketing, so that we can protect and enhance the income base on which our continuing growth depends.

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Information updates: Blink and you’ll miss ’em!

Towards the end of April, we received a call at BIGGA HOUSE from Allison Sloan, Section Secretary for Northern Ireland. He was organising a Section event, and wondered if it would be possible for us to help him publicise it. Within minutes of receiving his call, the BIGGA website was being updated with the relevant information, and within the hour, the new page had populated every major server, worldwide.

That’s just a small demonstration of the speed of the internet, and the power of the BIGGA website. Absolutely packed to the brim with news, events, features and information, the BIGGA site is so much more than just a collection of web pages and digital pictures. It’s a powerful information tool which can be accessed by every member and visitor alike, and any of the content contained within it can be searched using the online search engine, contained at the bottom of every page.

Indeed, scrolling through the online events page, with so many events taking place, both socially and educationally, it’s a wonder where you manage to find all that time!

The site statistics continue to amaze us here at BIGGA HQ. Since the launch of the new site, (nine months ago, in July last year), we have welcomed over 50,000 visitors to the site, and each month, the number of visitors continue to grow.

As more and more people get online, start surfing and join up to the digital generation, they find the possibilities of distributing information and sharing knowledge become a reality.

As a member, by logging on to the BIGGA site, you can have instant access to a whole host of education and training information. If you have a query regarding your membership, you can access the FAQ area (Frequently Asked Questions), or even send us an email. If you just can’t bear to wait for your copy of Greenkeeper International, simply log on to the website, and check out the previews, before the magazine hits your doorstep!

The BIGGA site is yet another tool to help you get the very latest information about your Association, your membership, regional and section events and the turfcare industry news. So why wait? Get online, and start surfing today!
COURSE

NO ACCESS DUE TO FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE
The economic cost reaches far beyond the slaughter of Britain’s livestock.

Golf, as a recreational business and tourist attraction, has suffered a major blow.

This countrywide investigation by John Lelean uncovers how the industry is coping...

Two years after serving King and Country and for the first time legally entitled to vote I was given what I thought at the time was some pretty sound advice.

"Listen to what they all have to say, take your pick and no matter which party you vote for it won’t make a scrap of difference. Politicians don’t run the country - it’s the Civil Service."

They may have done so reasonably efficiently in the early 1950s, but having researched this report on the affects of ‘foot and mouth’ on the game of golf, I have come to the conclusion that the State machine has grown into such a gargantuan bureaucratic autocracy, the country is no longer run, it is being strangled!

Without hopefully being too political, it would appear that the Prime Minister did eventually recognise the problem, which is why he moved the centre of operations away from Whitehall into Downing Street and gave the Army a significant role as the only organisation capable of cutting through the ‘red-tape’.

The spread of the virus infection caught most in the know by surprise, not least the civil servants at the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food. Though it was their policies involving the closure of local abattoirs and the encouragement of nationwide livestock dealing that transmitted the disease from Northumberland to Essex, Cumbria and Devon overnight.

There are many tales to tell, some golf related others worth an airing in print, all point to one of the most serious economic crises since the middle-eastern sheikhs shocked the world by picking up the oil prices in the 1970s.

One lady in the office of a golf club secretary in Devon was almost in tears as she related the affects of the disease in her village. Every aspect of business and the social life of the community had come to a stop. The shops and pubs were empty, darts matches cancelled, all the guesthouses and hotels reported cancellations, even the Women’s Institute meetings were postponed indefinitely.

"It is just like a ghost-town, people have been laid off, there is no money to spend and no end in sight."

Devon has been hit very hard, with Westward Ho, Torrington and Yelverton forced to close before the end of February. Not because there has been an outbreak of foot and mouth on their land or near it, purely because both are on common land with footpaths crossing the course.

Head Greenkeeper Mark Evans at Royal North Devon has 120 sheep on his course that the local graziers refuse to move. They could if they applied for a licence, but by mid-April refused to act. This has led to the Torridge District Council who own the land banning access.

Mark, who normally operates with five staff, has been forced to lay-off two and cut the working hours of those still employed. To add insult to injury a council official has ordered that no maintenance work can take place, apart from cutting the greens once every ten days. Even the grass cuttings cannot be removed, they have to be deposited in a designated storage area.

"It is very frustrating, added Mark. "If we could only carry out our normal daily work schedules, the course would be in first class condition when play is resumed. We have painted just about everything that doesn’t move. There is disinfectant in the club car park and we all go through the procedures on entering the course and leaving it.”
The livestock epidemic is set to cost the tourist industry £5 billion in overseas earnings - a total of £12.5bn of the cost to British agriculture range up to £1.6bn. Tourism employs 1.85m people and agriculture employs 440,000 - a total of 6.3% of the workforce.

Foot-and-mouth could cost UK £7.6 billion

The livestock epidemic is set to cost the tourist industry £5 billion in overseas earnings and £1bn in lost fares to British carriers - estimates of the cost to British agriculture range up to £1.6bn. Tourism employs 1.85m people and agriculture employs 440,000 - a total of 6.3% of the workforce.

At Torrington, a 9-hole course with 400 members, Tony Gough is also on common land, but in contrast to Royal North Devon there are no sheep or cattle on the course, but that has not stopped him and the decision of the 16 strong committee of Torrington Conservators. They banned golf and closed the whole of the 400 acres of Torrington Common.

"Our members, dejected by the loss of play on their own club, are going elsewhere in Devon. A party went to Oakhampton, which is much nearer the heart of the epidemic." At Oakhampton the Club Secretary, Clive Yeovil, said that MAF were quite happy with their precautions. All cars go through a vehicle dip and the golfers disinfect shoes and hands before teeing off at the 1st and again after playing the 18th. At only one place does the course abut farmland and no-one can retrieve a ball from the field or the hedge. They have also offered a temporary membership facility to the members of Tavistock and Yelverton who are both closed.

A Cumbrian farmer suspected foot and mouth disease when he started early morning milking and reported it to MAF within two hours. A vet arrived later in the day and confirmed an outbreak. Two days later incineration material arrived, followed by Portable loos and formaldehyde the following day, accompanied by a health and safety official who stated that the cow couldn't begin milking because there were no toilet facilities for the workers. Portable loos arrived at 6am, too late for the cow to begin. The infected herd was eventually culled five days after the infection was first reported.

It is these two clubs in the Dartmoor National Park who have suffered most. Within three days of the first reported case in Devon, the park closed and that also included the golf course, where sheep and ponies graze freely.

Shawn Dukes, Head Greenkeeper at Tavistock, is permitted to carry out essential maintenance, cutting the grass and maintaining the three nine holes recently constructed. He runs the course with only two assistants, but the club has said there is no question at present of laying off anyone. They are fortunate to have a strong social membership to keep the club staff in business, but the only golf being played is on an enclosed putting and chipping green.

At Yelverton, seven miles south of Tavistock, Steve Evans said the Dartmoor National Park Authority said it could be August or September before the course can reopen. Again, only essential maintenance is being permitted by MAF, cutting greens and repairing the normal damage caused by the grazing animals, which in effect amounts to about two hours a day.

He has four staff who have all been told their jobs are safe for the time being. However, the loyalty of the golfers will come into question this month, as the subscription renewal is due in May, putting considerable financial pressure on the club if a substantial number decide not to renew their membership.

As a holiday course, loss of casual green fee income, plus a down turn in the bar profit could add up to over £5,000 a month during the spring and summer.

Steve is following the MAF guidelines strictly to the book, washing down all machinery every day and then spraying disinfectant on the equipment and themselves.

What he cannot understand is why MAF have not taken any steps to prevent the sheep and ponies from roaming over the Moor.

"If there is no income coming into the club, how long can the staff expect to be paid a salary?" added Tony. "Our members, deprived of play at their own club, are going elsewhere in Devon. A party went to Oakhampton, which is much nearer the heart of the epidemic."
Above: Tavistock GC greenstaff have to wear protective clothing.

Even then, they can only carry out essential maintenance work.

Tations were taking place to re-open, but that very morning adjacent farmers had opened their gates and let on two separate flocks and allowed them to intermingle.

His reaction was quite predictable. One can only wonder what advice MAFF gave or if they had been consulted.

At Penrith to the north, the course is open for the simple reason the danger of infection has ceased. All the livestock for miles around has been killed, either because they were infected or as part of the culling policy to stop the spread southwards.

Silloth-on-Solway, one of Britain's finest links, is still in play. John Hill, the club Secretary said the Committee were reviewing the situation daily, but only a small part of the course backed on to farmland where there was an outbreak. Access to the course was through the town, with the sea as the major boundary, so there was nothing to be gained by closure.

The majority of the members at Silloth are in the farming community and for them it must be very distressing to see their quality herds transformed overnight to rotting carcases with no foreseeable end to the problem. They are being compensated, but it is working capital that is going into the bank without the means of re-investing back on the land.

With the main area of infection so far confined to the west side of the country from the Borders to Devon, a confusing situation has arisen in Wales where the Welsh Golf Union website reports nine courses closed, mainly in north Wales, though the Vale of Glamorgan Council closed Southenness for five weeks. It reopened in time to stage the prestigious Duncan Putter with an international field after MAFF carried out a 'risk assessment', but said no golfers from infected areas could take part.

Course Manager, Garry Scott, has 500 free roaming sheep on the course and has instigated a fully operational washing down procedure for all machinery, plus the usual disinfected mats and beds of straw.

At Pennard, the Swansea Council closed the course and footpaths for three weeks because there were ponies on the fairways. With the nearest infection over 50 miles away, it was allowed to reopen on March 24 despite farmers putting on sheep and cattle, said club Secretary, Morley Howell, though they are hoping to have them removed.

No doubt as part of the pressure to counter the fear that Britain is in quarantine, the footpath ban at Pennard was lifted on April 10.

From this review of the country, Cumbria has lost the most livestock, Devon suffering the greatest financial setback as far as tourism and golf is concerned. The South West Region also lost its annual Westurf Show as a direct result of the outbreak.

Irrigation systems, lakes and reservoirs, plus servicing, repairs and system extensions a speciality.

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The MF AgTVs are built for the toughest conditions. Available in both two and four wheel drive versions, they have from 20cm to 25cm ground clearance and state-of-the-art suspensions, ensuring the tyres stick to the ground, for the smoothest and safest of rides. With the choice of manual or automatic transmissions, combined rack capacities of up to 135kg and towing capacities up to 477kg, you'll have a machine designed for hard work over the roughest terrain. So when you've got tasks that need more than just any ATV, insist on a tough MF AgTV from your local MF dealer.
The introduction of the utility vehicle as an alternative method of transporting materials, tools, people and powered equipment is investigated by Roland Taylor...

A2B?  
ATV

Transporting materials, tools, people and powered equipment can absorb a lot of time during the day plus in some cases tying up the towing vehicle when it could be used for other jobs. As mowing equipment has increasingly become self-powered the need for the conventional tractor has, and is, gradually diminishing. This has led to the introduction of the utility vehicle as an alternative method of transportation. These have many similar features to ATVs, which are also used on some courses.

In its most rudimentary form the utility vehicle is a carrying platform with its own power source and today this can be petrol, diesel, electric or LPG. From this basic form each manufacturer has added their range of refinements.

Above: Textron's E-Z-GO Workhorse has the ability to transport people, tools and equipment with relative ease around the course.
When considering one of these as a prime mover of materials the first item on the buying checklist should be carrying capacity. Determine your specific requirements throughout the year and add a percentage for the unforeseen. This will provide a realistic figure from which to start looking at the choices available. There seems very little point in investing in a piece of equipment with a large carrying capacity that is not going to be fully utilised. Another point to take into account at this stage is the method of unloading. Does it have a tipping facility and is this manually or hydraulically operated?

Once the weight range has been established it is time to consider the ground pressure specifications of each of the machines that can take the payload you require. As a unit will very likely be travelling over some sensitive grassed areas, the lesser the ground pressure when loaded the better it will be for the turf.

Good traction without damage to the turf is also another factor to be looked at. Some terrain may be uneven or steep so the unit's stability and balance will be important. These vehicles are designed to travel over all types of ground conditions but some do it better than others and with less chance of damage to the surface. There are two and four wheel versions available and a differential lock for more traction is offered on some models. Which to choose will depend on the type of work and the areas on which the vehicle is going to be used. Maneuverability and turning circles are also important aspects to consider. Whilst most units have a four-wheel configuration there are some on the market with three - these maybe the answer if there are a lot of confined areas involved. Power steering is a must on any of these units if only to make life easier for the operator.

Given the undulating surfaces these