

Refund of Fees Scheme

Remember, that in addition to the BIGGA Scholarships, supported by Ransomes/Jacobsen, BIGGA members may apply for an 80% refund of education and training fees up to a maximum of £250. Members must have paid for the course ie. not golf clubs and refunds are paid on completion of the course. For full details and an application form contact Sami at BIGGA House.

Greenkeeper Training Committee Health and Safety Wall Chart

The GTC has sent copies of their Health and Safety Wall Chart to all Golf Clubs in the UK and Ireland. The Wall Charts, which were sent to Golf Club Secretaries, have been designed for Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers to record the training of their staff and when they become competent in operating machinery and other equipment on the golf course. The Wall Charts were sent to Golf Club Secretaries to raise their awareness and that of the employer to the importance of staff training and the recording of competence.

Each pack contains a wall chart, pens and coloured dots plus guidance on how the chart should be used. Any Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper who has not received a copy of the Wall Chart should contact their Club Secretary. If the Secretary cannot help then contact the GTC on 01347 838640.

Watch out for the introduction of individual records of training and competence which will complement the GTC Wall Chart. They will be issued by BIGGA in early 2003.

BIGGA Education and Training Scholarships supported by Ransomes/Jacobsen

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JACOBSEN** LTD

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Thanks to generous support from Ransomes/Jacobsen, BIGGA has been able to award its first Higher Education Scholarships.

Designed to help greenkeeper members of BIGGA move into higher education, scholarships are awarded for those studying for the award of S/NVQ Level 4, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelors Degree and Masters Degree. Scholarships are available to those members starting their course in 2002.

Scholarships awarded so far are:

Master of Science in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University.
Peter Jones, Allan Blizzard, Ian Somerville and Barry Dore.
Higher National Certificate at Elmwood College, Lee Bridge and Laurence McCrory, and at Pencoed College, Peter Lacey.
NVQ Level 4 at Reaseheath College, Darryl Smethurst.

The amount of scholarship depends on the course being followed and on individual circumstances but, so far, a total of £7200 has been awarded.

Future editions of Greenkeeper International will look at the progress being made by each scholar.



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

Thanks for the Backing

Now that my recent wrongful redundancy case has almost come to an end, I would just like to thank Peter Boyd for his backing throughout the last 20 months, which was a great help to me. If I can be of any assistance to you or any other member regarding this type of situation do not hesitate to contact me.

Derek Green
Inverurie, Aberdeenshire

Great Idea in Theory

After recently reading a couple of articles, one by Richard Windows of the STRI in September's edition of Greenkeeper International, and the other by Gordon Child, in September's edition of the GTC's On Course, I feel I must take issue with the subject matter.

Both articles were championing the benefits of early aeration work, such as vertidrainage, hollow coring, overseeding, top dressing etc, suggesting that this work could take place for a couple of weeks in August as opposed to October. Great idea in theory, but how are small golf clubs with a small staff, tight budget and a lack of machinery supposed to achieve this?

At my club there is a greenstaff of four and if we attempted this type of maintenance programme in August it would be all hands to the pump. Does the grass stop growing and divot holes fill in by themselves during these two weeks, or however long it takes? As for Mr Child's suggestion that we make more use of the long daylight hours, a tight overtime budget

and a lack of finance to hire in extra staff wouldn't allow this. It is a big enough problem trying to get finance for decent wages, modern machinery, and renovation and construction projects, unless your club has a membership in excess of 800, which ours doesn't.

I noticed that Mr Windows writing about minimal disruption to the playing surface and of higher temperatures and intense sunlight aiding a quick recovery. There could be a drought shortly after the completion of the work and if, like our club, you don't have an irrigation system, you would be in real bother.

Also, what about the golfers? Golfers in this part of the country don't want their season disrupted in August and extended into October. Having discussed this subject with our members they made it clear they don't want disruption to the playing surface in August and, being a keen golfer myself, I agree with them. I have always carried out deep aeration work in early October and we have never had a problem with it as we have always had successful results.

Disregarding the wishes of members - your employers - is a risky game as it is they who pay the wages. Then again, maybe this isn't a proactive enough attitude for some people, but that's another story.

As I mentioned earlier, it's a great idea in theory, but Gordon Child doesn't speak on behalf of all Greenkeepers/Course Managers. He speaks on behalf of the ones employed by wealthy golf clubs, where staffing and financial resources are not a problem. He certainly doesn't speak on behalf of me.

Sidney Mercer
Head Greenkeeper, Skelmorlie GC, Ayrshire

Membership UPDATE

Rachael Palmer, from BIGGA's membership department would like to welcome 50 new members to the Association and introduces two new benefits.

BIGGA welcomes...

Scottish Region

Alan Anderson, North
Ryan Beck, East
Paul Britt, Central
James Cowper, North
Fraser Crichton, North
Andrew Cruickshanks, Central
Finlay Forbes, Central
John Jardine, Central
Stuart Smith, Central
Scott Winton, Central

Northern Region

Mark Ashelby, N West
Christopher Benton, N West
Mark Crossley, N West
Gareth Houston, N West
Peter Philipson, N Wales
John Scurfield, N East
David Stoyles, Northern

Midland Region

Wayne Bown, Midland
Daniel Crofts, E of England
Anthony Goodlad, BB&O
Ted Green, E Midland
Kevin Lewis, M Anglia
Christopher Murphy, M Anglia
Michael Parsons, Midland
Martin Pitt, Midland
Ian Roberts, E of England
Clive Robinson, BB&O

South East Region

Jay Clark, Essex
Andrew Cracknell, Essex
Jamie French, Essex
Stuart Griffiths, Surrey
Andrew McCreadie, Essex

S West/S Wales Region

Grant Burnell, S Wales
Dominic Carter, S Coast
Mathew Clements, S West
Jeff Hooper, S Wales
Timothy Needham, S West
Luke Powley, S Coast
Luke Rippon, Devon & Cornwall
Andrew Saunders, S West
Neil Sellick, S West
Josh Webber, Devon & Cornwall

Student Member

Oliver Webster, N West

Corporate Members

Richard Bannon, Essex
Jim Brown, Sussex
Stewart Clayton, Northern
John Wilson, Devon & Cornwall
Kevin Wise, E Midland

Associate Members

Graham Parker, Essex
Jonathan Knowles, E Midland

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

20-21st November 2002
South West and Wales
Regional Seminar,
Cannington College

27th November 2002
Midlands Regional Seminar,
Hinckley Golf Club

We are always looking at ways to improve your membership package and this month we have negotiated two new benefits which I hope you agree add to the value of your membership.

SilverKnight Rescue is a fully inclusive vehicle breakdown and assistance package which boasts an extensive range of breakdown cover including punctures and running out of fuel. SilverKnight Repair is a unique home breakdown and assistance package that provides a complete quality repair service. We have negotiated on your behalf a special rate of £49.50 for each package, however if both packages are purchased at the same time then they will only cost you £89.00 which is a further saving of £10.00.

Both of these packages are bought to you in association with General Legal Protection who have provided further details below.

General Legal
FREEPHONE 0800 068 1893
SilverKnight RESCUE
Breakdown & Vehicle Assistance

The Breakdown and Vehicle Assistance package that gives you the service you have always wanted – without fuss or additional expense for that extra cover.

Motoring is expensive enough already without paying over the odds for breakdown assistance. Whether you drive to your local shops or you regularly drive long distances, you want the peace of mind that comes with all inclusive breakdown cover, along with the knowledge that, thanks to BIGGA, it hasn't cost you an arm and a leg.

We cover you for home rescue as well as trips abroad. You just pay one price – a fully inclusive breakdown and assistance package which offers incredible value.

One call and we're there! Our customers are covered for the following benefits:

- Roadside assistance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year anywhere in the UK.
- Recovery to a garage, your home or your original destination
- Home rescue if you breakdown at home
- Cover extends to Europe subject to validation
- Passengers and luggage included
- Puncture and running out of fuel also covered
- SilverKnight Rescue will also provide up to £100 overnight accommodation for the driver and passengers in the event that they cannot get home

Great value, great service – every time!

A SPECIALLY NEGOTIATED RATE OF
£49.50
OR £89.00 FOR BOTH VEHICLE AND HOME BREAKDOWN
Non-members £79.50 for each breakdown package

The promise of
SilverKnight RESCUE

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Non-members £79.50 for each breakdown package

It was a bitterly cold, wet weekday morning when Mr Bob Clarke of Swindon, Wiltshire, experienced problems with his car. He was on his way to work when the engine began to continually cut out. Bob hoped it was just cold morning jitters but when he tried to leave for a meeting one hour later, his engine wouldn't start.

After a quick call to SilverKnight Rescue, a mechanic arrived at his work 30 minutes later. He managed to fix the problem at the scene of the breakdown and showed Bob what to do if the problem ever happened again.

'I'm always impressed' said Bob, 'This is the second time I've had to call for breakdown assistance and on both occasions they managed to fix my car instead of taking it away.' He continued, 'I would not hesitate in recommending SilverKnight Rescue as I am confident they would be as delighted as I am.'

SilverKnight rescued Mr Clarke – let it rescue you!



FREEPHONE 0800 068 1893

SilverKnight REPAIR
Home Breakdown & Assistance

The only Home Breakdown and Assistance package that offers you a complete quality repair service under one roof! Just one telephone number for all your repair problems - and one policy to cover all your important appliances and utilities.

Your home is your castle! What's more, many hours of time and effort go into making your castle a home - so let SilverKnight protect it for you where your normal household insurance does not!

Here's what you would be covered for:

The cost of repairs, up to £200, on the following appliances in your home:

- Washing machine, tumble dryer and dishwasher
- Cooker (gas, electric & solid fuel are all covered)

- Fridge and freezer
- Fridge and freezer contents up to £50
- Televisions, videos and HI-FI systems

Your home will also be covered for the cost of repairs, up to £200, on the breakdown of:

- Internal and external plumbing & drainage system
- Central heating system including the boiler
- Electricity supply system
- Security system (locks, windows, doors & lost keys all covered)

SilverKnight Repair covers all your important utilities and those appliances that make it a home. You pay just one price for a fully inclusive breakdown and assistance package. For this you get 24 hours a day access to our professionally qualified, specialist SilverKnight Repairers, who will come out to your home and carry out those essential repairs, completely free of charge!

A SPECIALLY NEGOTIATED RATE OF
£49.50
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NOVEMBER'S 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 Clock/calculator/calendar and alarm. Our congratulations go to November's winner, Carl Crocher, of Orsett Golf Club.

SilverKnight Repair covers all your important utilities and appliances. You pay just one price for a fully inclusive breakdown and assistance package. For this you get 24 hours a day access to our professionally qualified, specialist SilverKnight Repairers, who will come out to your home and carry out those essential repairs, completely free of charge!

A SPECIALLY NEGOTIATED RATE
OF £49.50
OR £89.00 FOR BOTH VEHICLE AND HOME BREAKDOWN
Non-members £79.50 for each breakdown package

On 28th August, Mrs Shona McKay of Westhill, Aberdeen, found herself in the middle of a domestic dilemma when she heard ominous rumblings from within her washer dryer and she noticed a pool of water leaking from beneath it. Suspecting that there might be problems with her drum, she immediately contacted SilverKnight Repair.

'It's a nightmare when your washer breaks,' explained Shona, 'especially when you have a family, unfortunately washing is a necessary part of my everyday routine!'

After explaining that Mrs McKay worked during the day, an appointment was arranged for an agreeable time for the repairer to come out and fix the problem. The repairer assessed the fault, establishing that several new parts were required including a condenser kit and door seals. Shona continued, 'I was relieved when the engineer said it was easily reparable and within no time at all, my washer was ready for use and as good as new!'

SilverKnight rescued Mrs McKay - let it rescue you!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY OF THESE BENEFITS PLEASE CALL 0800 068 1893

People

How well do you know the people who work for the Association?

In this new series we give you a chance to learn a little more about a member of BIGGA's Headquarters staff



Cheryl Broomhead

Position:
Advertising Sales Executive.

What does your role involve?
Selling of advertising space in Greenkeeper International and the BIGGA Golf Directory. Also involved in other promotional/sponsorship activities.

How long have you worked for the Association?
Nearly four and half years.

Where were you born and brought up?
Sherburn-in-Elmet, West Yorkshire and brought up in various places in Yorkshire - my parents moved around a bit!

Where did you work before you joined BIGGA?

I had a year out travelling in Australia and Hong Kong before joining BIGGA. Prior to this, I managed the family business which was an art and craft gallery in North Yorkshire.

What are your hobbies?
Tennis, running, gym classes, a bit of golf now and again, cinema, cooking and eating. Now I've bought a house I'm trying to be a DIY Queen - decorating, sanding wooden floors etc.

What is your favourite food?
Vegetarian dishes, seafood, Mexican and Italian.

What is your favourite film?
I don't have 'one' favourite, just a few:- The Green Mile, Moulin Rouge, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Liar Liar, Castaway.

What was the last book you read?
I can't remember - been too busy to read on a regular basis. However, my best read is The Beach by Alex Garland.

Who is your all time hero?
My Dad.

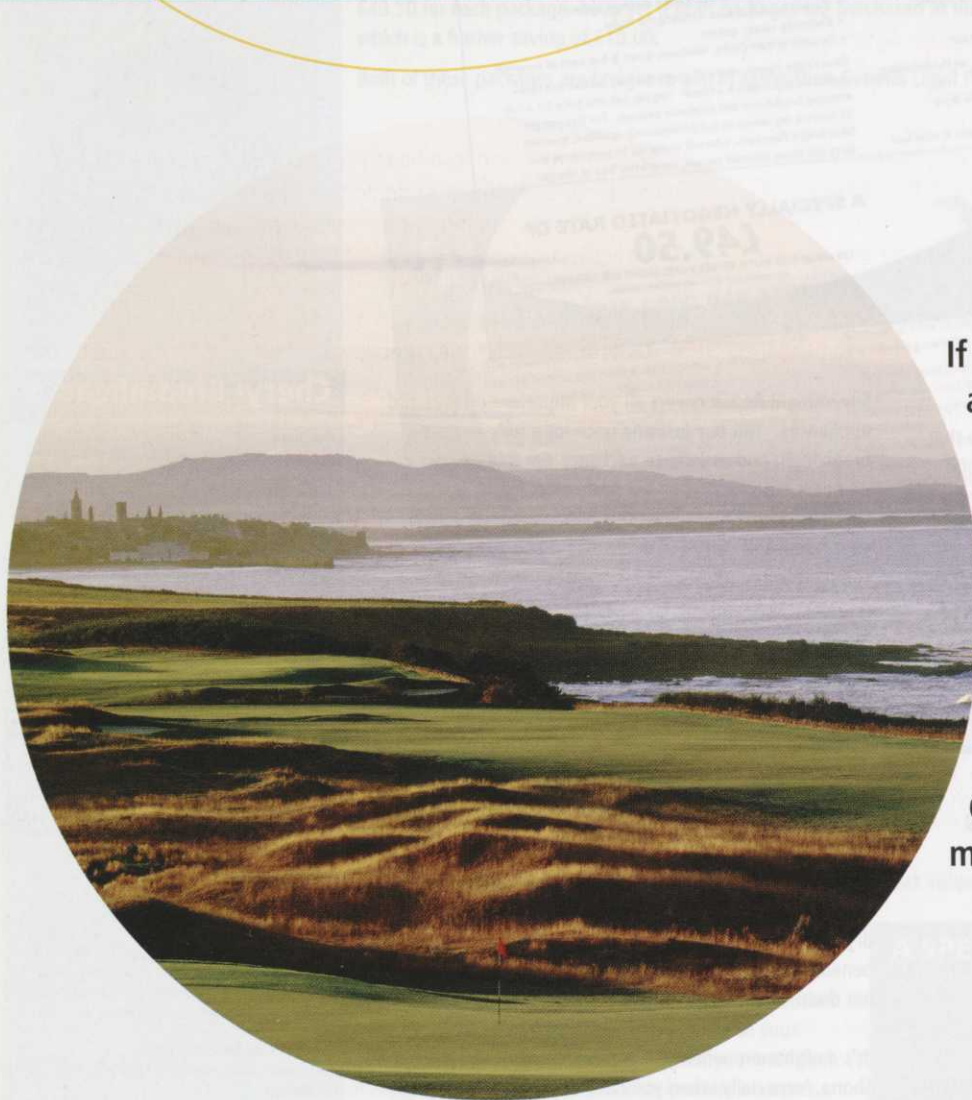
What was the best event you've ever attended?
My mum and dad's Silver wedding party - it was brilliant. So was the Prince concert I attended in 1987.

What is your claim to fame?
(None not acceptable)
Sharing a hotel lift with Chris Rea - I didn't realise who it was until we walked into the hotel foyer where he was suddenly surrounded by eager fans requesting autographs. I also remember working out in a gym in Cairns - I had done some ab crunches stepped up off the mat to do some stretches only to realise Sean Penn had been toning his abs on the mat next to me! Apparently he had been filming in Port Douglas.

Course Feature

BAY WATCH

Scott MacCallum met up with Neil Ballingall, Course Superintendent at the magnificent new St Andrews Bay development.



If you haven't yet heard much about St Andrews Bay. I can promise you that before very much longer you will.

It's not much of a prediction. A 36 hole golf complex, with 209 room five star hotel, with views overlooking the Home of Golf, is unlikely to remain much of a secret for long.

Part of a stable of resorts owned by Dr Don Panoz, who made his fortune by, among other things, developing the nicotine patch, St Andrews Bay sits well in a portfolio which also includes the Chateau Elan Resort, in Georgia, home of the Gene Sarazen-designed Legends Course.

Each of the two St Andrews Bay courses has a famous golfing name attached. The Torrance Course opened last October and the Devlin Course, opened just this August, and the two designers Ryder Cup Captain, Sam, and Australian Senior Tour player, Bruce, can be might proud of what they have achieved. In each case they worked in conjunction with the respected Denis Griffiths Associates, of Georgia. The responsibility of designing any course associated with St Andrews is enormous but everyone involved has risen to the challenge.

The person with the responsibility of managing the two courses is local man, Neil Ballingall, who took up the post of Golf Course Superintendent in May of last year, when the majority of the

Torrance Course had been grown-in and the closing stages of the Devlin was still being constructed by Southern Golf.

"When I arrive I had three or four months to build my own team from scratch. I was given a budget and although I did bring some guys in from clubs round about I mainly took from Southern Golf, as the guys had built the courses and knew the construction back to front. I also took from Elmwood College, with whom I worked very closely," said Neil, as we chatted in his superb, albeit temporary, base in a farm complex on the edge of the development. A state-of-the-art maintenance complex is one of the next projects.

The two courses sit high above the sea, between 80 and 120 feet above the coast bed, on a marine plateau about two miles out of St Andrews, on the Crail road. On first glance they appear to be typical examples of Scottish links but appearances can be deceptive and St Andrews Bay is very much a fusion of Scottish golfing heritage and high tech American-style grasses and maintenance regimes.



Neil (centre) with Fraiser Wright and Paul Britt



The team

"This was particularly apparent in the grow-in which was far more aggressive than the Links maintenance I'd done before. Where I'd maybe use an 8-0-0 once a year they were using a 16-16-16 every ten days just to get the grass establishment," explained Neil, whose family home is in nearby Lower Largo.

The greens are built to USGA Guidelines with traditional Bents and Fescues - Barcrown, Helena, Bargreen and Centre - but the tees and fairways are primarily rye grass.

"The decision was made because of the hardiness because we are on quite an exposed site. Also we are a conference hotel and want to cater for every golfer not just the low handicapper so we wanted a sward where the ball would sit up," said Neil.

"The new Dwarf rytes can be cut to the same height or lower than fescue."

The Devlin Course also boasts a strain of Dwarf Rye that has been named after the St Andrews Bay parent company.

"Elan Grass is coming out for general release this year and is in the new STRI listings. It was developed at Limograin's research base in France. This sits alongside the Merci and Belview which is used on the tees and fairways.

Rather than go to one company for their seed requirements the decision was taken to go with what was considered the best for each area of the golf course regardless of which seed house would be involved.

"We went to Brian Robinson, of Grass Science, and rather than stick with one supplier he selected the cultivars from different seed houses and put our grasses together for us. I suppose in doing so we went against the grain," joked Neil.



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Course Feature



Neil has 25 staff to maintain the two courses and the hotel grounds but knows that what would be considered a large number is the minimum requirement for such a high maintenance site.

"The pros and cons of rye grass are exactly the same - you have to cut it more often but we also have to use probably 75% more fertiliser and water on rye than on fescue and bent. It is very different to what I've been used to," explained Neil, who has traditional links such as Muirfield, where he was Assistant Course Manager, and Lossiemouth, where he was Course Manager, on his CV.

"With rye grass you do need more and bigger machinery and, added to that, we have a considerable area of land to look after - 520 acres which includes the Hotel grounds as well."

Neil uses predominately Toro kit with backing from Hendersons of Haddington and Lely UK and is delighted that it copes well with the demanding conditions it operates under. The full range from pedestrian greensmowers, to fairway mowers and aerators cost the club almost £650,000.

"We're still very much in the process of finding out what's best for the courses and what's the best amounts of everything. We've already changed our fertiliser regime from quick release to slow release and back to quick release again while we've also tried liquids.

"We are the first golf course to put rye grass on a site like this and we have to find everything out. We don't want to pollute the environment and we don't want to waste money," he said.

Another local man, Fraser Wright, is the Head Greenkeeper on the Torrance Course and Neil's Deputy, while Head man on the Devlin Course is Paul Britt, who came over from Chateau Elan to work at St Andrews Bay.

"We joke that Paul is now well on his way to thinking like a Scottish greenkeeper."

Neil is aware that there are some people who might feel that a St Andrews course should be maintained in the style of traditional St Andrews golf courses and stresses that there is room for both methods.

"We're not a traditional links as such. We have got the traditional links look but the definition of a links golf course is the link between the sea and arable land and here the two courses are built primarily on clay having been potato, broccoli and sugar beet fields before becoming golf courses. We're not on the link between the two so by definition we're not a links.

In the main Neil is left to manage the golf course as he sees fit and has been gratified that his spending requirements have been met in full, despite the fact that Foot and Mouth; September 11th; the threat of impending war, not to mention the World Cup has meant, like the rest of the world visitor numbers being down on expectations. However, there is one request which comes from Dr Panoz that he is expected to carry out.

"We have to maintain the golf courses with stripes and make them green. That's our remit from the States. The other golf courses in their portfolio are traditional American designs and Dr Panoz wants all of his courses maintained dark green with stripes," explained Neil.

Asked what the aspirations are for St Andrews Bay, Neil is quite candid.

"Primarily we want to make money and we want people to come and play the golf courses and that's why we have tees which means that the courses can be played from anything from just over 5,000 yards to over 7,000 yards on both courses.

"But we want to be recognised as having some of the best golf courses not only in St Andrews, but in Scotland, Britain and the world as well. Dr Panoz says that's what he wants from his golf courses and that's what we've got to deliver."



A close look at the two courses endorses Neil's boasts about his team. The quality of the workmanship is second to none and the attention to detail absolute. That extends to the gardening squad who, last year, planted 30,000 trees

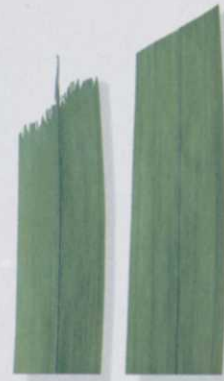
Neil is aware of the responsibility of being a new development in the Home of Golf and his comments on the matter are very pragmatic and sensible.

"We're not in the market to go against the Old Course. No-one in their right mind would compete for business with the Old Course while, on the other hand, we are not in the business of competing against Kingsbarns, which is four miles round the coast from us. Feel that we can work hand-in-hand with Kingsbarns with Kingsbarns visitors staying in our hotel and our visitors playing Kingsbarns as well," explained Neil.

He is also aware of the difference in managing a golf club and a golf resort and he says that he has learned a lot from listening to the likes of George Brown at Turnberry and Jimmy Kidd, at Gleneagles.



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Course Feature



"If the hotel says it's got 150 golfers each paying £45 who want to play but I know the course is three inches thick in ice, what are you going to do? You've got no choice and it is just a case of using greenkeeping skills to repair any damage."

Asked if he feels pride in managing two golf courses in the Home of Golf, Neil is quick to put a bit of distance between St Andrews Bay and the St Andrews Links.

"I feel pride in the job I do at St Andrews Bay. I wouldn't like to say that I've got pride because it is St Andrews because that really belongs to the links themselves, and the accolade of being a Superintendent at St Andrews belongs to the guys who work on the links.

"I do feel very privileged to be Superintendent at St Andrews Bay and firmly believe it will soon be known the world over."

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- 4 X GROUNDMASTER 3000D CONTOUR - SEMI AND ROUGH
- 8 X 1000 TRAILERS
- 8 X WORKMAN 2100
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- 1 X TOPDRESSER 1800
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- 1 X EXPRESS DUAL 3000
- 1 X ANGLEMASTER BOTTOM BLADE GRINDER
- 1 X BLADERITE 1500



In the firing line



'In the firing line' first appeared in the October issue of 'Golf Club Management' magazine. Neil Thomas reports...

The game of golf has many facets and employs many professionals, not withstanding the professionals to be found within the ranks of the Tour or the PGA. Not least among them, and arguably the most important, is the course manager or head greenkeeper. He or she provides the playing surface upon which the golfer, be it club member or professional, plays to the best of his or her ability.

As such he has to be highly skilled and in this day and age a well-educated individual, environmentally aware, able to interpret and implement current legislation as well as meet the most exacting demands from club members whose expectations are fuelled by TV golf, often portrayed as the 'Augusta Syndrome'.

Yet it is a proven fact that these key individuals generally enjoy very little employment security and are often sacked on the whim of a club captain or chairman of green. Not all greenkeepers are blameless and cases must be examined on merit, but there is undoubtedly an alarming trend within many golf clubs to react to situations which are not of the greenkeeper's making and often of a temporary nature. Golf clubs often demand ideal playing conditions with little regard to the resources necessary or indeed to our temperate climate. A bad round of golf by a club official can often lead to unwarranted recriminations in the light of the alleged condition of the course.

It never ceases to amaze that professionals from all walks of life take up positions on golf club committees and then proceed to run wild when confronted with problems on the golf course. They then take decisions clearly contrary to working practices within their own professions. The perceived culprit is the course manager or head greenkeeper and, irrespective of employment law, dismissal can quickly follow. Surprise, surprise, the individual takes legal advice and golf clubs often face meeting large compensation sums.

Derek Green, a former course manager at a club in Aberdeenshire, was made redundant by a chairman of green who announced on his arrival that he would dictate policy while Derek would manage the team. "He even told me that he saw no need for qualified greenkeepers to be working on the course," said Derek.

Derek was initially asked to take a 17.5 per cent pay cut, then five months after the arrival of the new chairman of green, he was made redundant.

He took the club to an industrial tribunal and as it was demonstrated that there had been no attempt to restructure other areas of the golf club and that Derek's redundancy had not resulted in a reduction of the wage bill, he was awarded £18,000 in compensation.

"When I was there the three man greenkeeping team had a combined 37 years of experience. This was replaced by a team with seven years of experience, but for the same overall wage bill," revealed Derek.

"I'd like to see the role of the chairman of green properly defined by the governing bodies of the game. The ideal is someone who works well with the greenkeeping team and acts as a link between them and the club membership, but you can also get some who just try to take over. That can't be right."

Derek's tale is not unusual. In recent months greenkeepers have been awarded sums of £19,000, £15,000 and £13,000 all of which have to be funded by the golf club member in one way or another. For example, one golf club member was surprised to discover 50 new lady members being welcomed into the club just a short time after a substantial compensation pay out had been made to one greenkeeper.

"Despite a greater awareness of employment rights and the obligations of employers, we are still seeing an increasing number of disputes being referred to our legal advisors and ultimately to employment tribunals. Clearly, there is a very large number of golf clubs who fail to either act in accordance with good employment practice or are simply unaware of it. Either way the cost implications to these organisations can be huge," said Debbie Emmerson, of General Legal Protection.

In the final analysis it is a no-win situation. The golf club normally loses a skilled head worker who in turn is out of a job and may be lost to the profession, while the club – and at members' clubs the vast majority of regular members have been no part of the decision to remove the greenkeeper – is likely to be faced with not inconsequential costs including recruiting a successor.

Many golf club members, including those on committees, simply do not understand or appreciate the world of the greenkeeper, who ultimately is the custodian of the club's most important asset, its golf course.

Today, greenkeeping is a skilled occupation, often stressful and demanding high standards of technical expertise. It is incumbent on a golf club to provide resources for its course commensurate with its expectations of playing standards. It is also essential that green committees work with and heed advice given by its expert on the golf course, rather than listen to committee members whose knowledge is invariably limited and whose time in office likely short-lived. It is in a club's best interests to ensure a harmonious working relationship between its green committee and its greenkeeping staff.

Standards demanded today and the resulting pressures will soon identify the inadequate manager and the club can act accordingly in line with employment legislation. The vast majority of course managers and head greenkeepers are hard-working, conscientious, trained and skilled individuals devoted to their profession and seeking career fulfilment. As such they deserve much better than dismissal on inadequate grounds and without cognisance of employment law.

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA) provides the opportunity for club officials to improve their understanding of some of the intricacies of greenkeeping while enabling them to give more informed consideration to the allocation of proper resources to the golf course. There has to be a better way forward and BIGGA is intent on working with its members and their employers to promote understanding and a joint approach to meeting golfers' demands for increasingly high standards of golf course preparation and maintenance.

The Long Road to Success...

TORO
STUDENT
GREENKEEPER
of the year
AWARD

Scott MacCallum meets the 2002 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year, Murray Long

The greenkeeping career of one young Buckinghamshire school leaver started in a manner that you would not necessarily find in any Career Handbook. He arrived at the nine hole course on his first day knowing that the only other member of staff, the Head Greenkeeper, was away for the week and he was on his own. He had been briefed that his first task was to cut the greens so out he went with the hand mower and began work. It started to rain, and then it rained some more. Before long it was absolutely pouring but the young novice kept going.

"I thought I'd better stick with the job and get it finished as I thought it would be terrible to come in on my first day just because of a bit of rain, but the Bar Steward came out and dragged me back inside. I was absolutely drenched," recalled Murray Long, Head Greenkeeper at Coombe Hill Golf Club, and the 2002 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year.

What it does illustrate, as well as perhaps an example of how not best to induct a new member of staff, is the determination of Murray to succeed, no matter the circumstances, as well as his rare enthusiasm for the job.

Despite the rather damp introduction, Murray has nothing but fond memories of that first job, at Chesham & Ley Hill GC and the Head Greenkeeper, Geoff Puddefat.

"I was there for six months and it was a great experience. Everything was hands on and it was a great way to learn all the basics of the job.

"I recall Geoff telling me to reverse the tractor and trailer into the shed but to remember to move the roll bar down as it was too high for the shed. I only made that mistake once ... The shed rocked," said Murray, smiling at the memory.

Some 17 years on from that Murray is the Head Greenkeeper at one of the country's best and most respected golf clubs and is delighted to don the mantle Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year.

"I really, really wanted to win it. I was so pleased to come up here and meet all the other finalists. It was obvious they were all quality greenkeepers so I knew I would have to buckle down and try really hard to win. I'm pleased because I know that I gave my best and if my best hadn't been good enough I would have wished good luck to the person who did because the standard was so high they would have deserved it," said Murray, as he spoke the morning after the win and not with the woolly head normally associated with the winner after a long night of celebrating but in the glow of an early morning workout in the gym.

One new element, introduced for the 2002 final was a course report which the finalists had to produce on the front nine of the Aldwark Manor course, which they didn't get a chance to see before they arrived the day before the final.

"I really enjoyed the report and put an awful lot of preparation work into it. I did as much as I could before I got here, thinking about the format. I wanted to go into as much detail as I could and still be able to type it up."

Already being at Head Greenkeeper at a respected club, Murray felt additional pressure being up against fellow finalists who generally were

Deputies or Assistants.

"When my College Lecturer, Keith Harrison, of Merrist Wood, spoke to me about it and asked if I wanted to be put forward, at first I said, I wasn't sure as I was in charge of a course and didn't think it was right but he said I'd completed the NVQ course and done so to a high standard so was just as entitled to enter as anyone else.

"But I did feel under more pressure because of it. I had to produce the best and, in my mind at least, I had to be better, by a degree or so, to justify winning.

"I wanted to prove that I had the ability as a Head Greenkeeper but also that I had the ability to show what I've achieved and got out of the course."

It is another example of the desire Murray has displayed throughout his career.

After his initial six month spell at Chesham & Ley Hill he moved to an 18 hole course, Ellesborough, near Aylesbury, which coincidentally sits below a hill called Coombe Hill. Who says there is no such thing as fate?

"Seve Schmitz was the Course Manager initially and he was great to work for. He was very progressive, using computers before they were commonplace in the industry, and knew the job very well," said Murray, of the man who went on to move to Germany and become a Master Greenkeeper. "He gave me a good grounding and it was disappointing when he left to go to Germany as I'd caught his enthusiasm from him."

After Seve moved on Murray worked under David Childs and his Deputy, David Goodchild, who is now the Head Greenkeeper there, and he acknowledges what he learned from them as well.

It was at this stage where he recognised a career path and set himself a target.

"I wanted to be a Head by the time I was 25. It might have been ambitious at that time but I felt you had to have these things to aim for," he admitted.

With that long term goal in mind he made his next career change moving to Berkhamsted Golf Club.

"It is a very good golf course under Gerald Bruce, who is a good golfer and a very nice guy. It was another good experience and I learn how to work with different soils."

If you have the feeling by now that Murray had a blinkered approach to his career which wouldn't be swayed by anything think again as his next move wasn't exactly initiated by purely professional reasoning, but it did result in him arriving at his current club.

