South Coast

As I sit and write these notes I am distracted by my television, and the sight of a statue of Saddam Hussein in central Baghdad being pulled down as American troops liberate the Iraqis. It is a very sobering vision and brings life very much back into perspective! My original opening was about the great difficulties that the weather is blessing us with once more. We are once more under drought conditions and with the temperature reaching 18 degrees our members are wondering why they are not playing on greens with summer characteristics. Well if your course is similar to ours then you will be struggling to get any sort of growth! But as I said, we should put things into perspective.

Life in the Section is quiet at the moment. I have two pieces of news to pass on to you.

Firstly we say a very fond farewell to a quite remarkable lady. Our Regional Administrator, Paula Humphries, is retiring at the end of April to enjoy life with her husband, Mike. I have had the privilege of knowing Paula for a number of years and she has worked relentlessly on behalf of the South West and South Wales Region, which our Section falls within. During that time Paula has not been in the best of health but has never let her complaint about it once. We all wish Paula a long and happy retirement with Mike and she has assured me that she would like to attend some of our golf days so she can keep in touch.

Thank you Paula!

We also say farewell to Kevan Glass, of Brokenhurst Manor Golf Club, as he ventures across the border and takes on fresh challenges at Loch Lomond Golf Club. It’s a big move for Kevan and I know it is a challenge he is relishing and one he will rise to. Good luck Kevan and keep in touch.

As I said before, its been a quiet month and I have promised Scott that after my version of War and Peace last month I would keep it short and sweet this month. Please contact me if you have any news you wish to include.

Until next month
Alex McCombie
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A Positive Advertisement
The article "Looking After Your Sand" by Alistair Beggs which featured in the April edition of Greenkeeper International highlighted some common sense guidelines to bunker maintenance. However, the statement "if you do have problems with the construction and/or form of your hazards or they do not drain sufficiently then the first step must be to contact a golf course architect..." needs addressing. This statement clearly implies that greenkeepers are unable to undertake any kind of bunker reshaping or drainage improvements without the help of an architect: this is obviously not a reflection of reality.

While I accept that there is a place for golf course architects in the appropriate circumstance, the work we have undertaken at Highgate in recent years is, I feel, a positive advertisement for in-house renovations. I am happy to extend an open invitation to Mr Beggs, or indeed any greenkeeper, architect, consultant, etc, to come and cast a critical eye over the improvements we have made at this course.

I would be interested to know whether Mr Beggs would feel that "the first step" we should have made would have been to contact a golf course architect.

Richard Andrews, Highgate Golf Club

Thanks to Ransomes Jacobsen
I am thrilled to hear that I have been awarded a Ransomes Jacobsen Higher Education Scholarship. I am looking forward to investing it in the realisation of my dream: to be educated at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland, which will result in an MSc grade in golf course architecture.

Thank you so much!
As a matter of course I will keep you informed on any progress and all relevant ins and outs.
Thank you once more for your generosity.
Gees van Nieuwenhuizer, The Netherlands

No Apology Needed
Joe Findlay has no need to apologise for his long-winded essay in your latest issue. After 30 years learning how to produce greens as good as those at Portrush, it would be a shame if he felt he could not use our magazine as a vehicle to pass on what he has learned to "youngsters" like me.

As I’ve mentioned before, it has been a tough learning experience for me to make the transition from parkland to links greenkeeping with only an open mind, some helpful and enthusiastic staff, an understanding boss and Jim Arthur’s rantings to help me out, so any snippets of information people like Joe or "Chairman George" can send my way will always be gratefully received.

It is reassuring to note the similarities between the programmes Joe and I currently favour (although his is obviously more intensive as he has more to deal with, and a bigger budget to utilise), as we are both dealing with exactly the same weather and working with exactly the same sand (Portrush is only about 30 miles from Islay).

Anyone who feels they have anything to offer that can help their fellow greenkeepers should do what Joe has done and pass their ideas on - we cannot expect Scott to do ALL the work now, can we?

Simon Freeman, Head Greenkeeper, Machrie GC, Islay

Editor’s Note: Like Simon, I would be delighted to hear from any greenkeeper who wishes to do an informative article along the lines of Joe’s.

Thanks to All
I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone I have been fortunate to have been involved with in my four years in the trade. To Drew Harkness and everybody at Sherriffs; everyone at John Deere, and all the UK dealers that I have met. The guys at Wiedemann UK and all the companies I have dealt with.

Finally, a big thank you to all the customers who I have had the pleasure in dealing with. I will miss you all. Thanks a million.

Willie Ness

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May 2001; Foot and Mouth Disease Special Report; Maintenance Facility report; Bunker Sand; ATVs; Rain Bird Profiler; Fineturf Genetics; BTME2002 countdown; Electric-powered machines

June 2001; Stoke Park Club profile; Stuart Cagie MG; Tractors; Leaf Spot Disease; Take All Patch; Construction

July 2001; Royal Lytham profile; Tires Mowers; Fertilisers; Green Grasses; John Deere profile; Sandy McDivot; College Listings

August 2001; Ansatson Survey; Machine GC profile; Rough Mowers; Saltes Preview; Dr Alan Gange - environmental research; Hayter Profile; Ponds; Open Championship review; Toro Student of the Year profile;

September 2001; Ryder Cup preview; Chafar Grubs; Drainage; BIGGA National Championship preview; Sandy McDivot; Machinery Maintenance; Soil Analysis; Wild Flowers

October 2001; Major Award for Walter Woods; Royal Porthcawl GC; Portstewart GC; Irrigation; Soil Biodiversity; Leaf collection systems; Scots turf preview; Saltex review

November 2001; BIGGA National Championship review; Environment Competition winner; Spraying; Toro Awards Preview; Cutting regimes; Dyke GC

December 2001; Toro Award Winners; Southern Gailes GC; BTME preview; Specialty equipment; Thatch removal

January 2002; Walton Heath profile; Greenkeeping in Denmark; Moving materials; A first for Andy Campbell; New products

February 2002; Harrogate 2002 Review; Drainage; Castlerock GC; Tires; Recycling; Turf flux profile; Barn Owl special report

March 2002; Donnington Valley profile; Utility vehicles; Essay competition winner; Irrigation; Seeds; Sandy McDivot

April 2002; Heyrose GC profile; Bernhard’s Scholarship; De-stress your greens; COMH assessments; Rootzones and topdressing; Maintenance facilities; Essay competition

May 2002; BIGGA Report; Nematodes; Caldy GC profile; Multi-tasking machinery; Bunker Sand; Essay competition; Fijian GC profile; BIGGA Minimum qualification

June 2002; Finding Fungi; Greetham Valley GC profile; Tyres; Caliba GC profile; Lakes and Ponds; Pea Anna - Jim Arthur

July 2002; Open preview; Turf; Steve Bates; Emissions; Grinding; Rotary Mowers; BTME preview; Sandy McDivot

August 2002; BIGGA Golf Day; Open review; Talking Heads - Education & training; Trees; Dr Kate Entwistle; Pwllheilo GC; Weather; Compact Tractors; Saltes preview

September 2002; National Championship Preview; Irrigation: Non Grassy Cutters; Hawkstone Park; Careers in Greenkeeping

October 2002; Saltes Review; Golden and Silver Key Supporters; Environment Awards; Health & Safety; Sustainable Use of Pesticides

November 2002; Toro Student of the Year; National Championship; Drainage; St Andrews’s Bay; Autumn Problems

December 2002; BTME & Clubhouse Preview; RBA Golf Course committee; Dr Kate Entwistle; Pennard GC

January 2003; Beedles Lake Profile; Talking Heads - Chemical Application; Rebuilding Golf Greens; Constructive Advice

February 2003; BTME/Clubhouse Review; Royal Liverpool Profile; Irrigation; Nematodes

March 2003; The Berkshire Profile; Meliodogyne; Overseeding Golf Greens; Talking Heads - Health & Safety

April 2003; Oakmeen Park GC; Spraying; Golf Course Security; Bernhards Delegation; Ransomes Jacobsen Profile

Chairman
As I see it...

Patience is the Game

What goes around comes around. Having endured some of the wettest weather any of us can remember over the past couple of years, we are in the middle of the driest and warmest March/April people up here in Scotland can remember. Temperatures are what we would hope for in the height of the summer, while at the moment rain seems like a distant memory.

People will accuse us of never being happy and always having something to gripe about but we all know that while excessively wet weather is not what we look for, neither is what we have at the moment.

In the daytime short shirt sleeves are the order of the day which is very pleasant but night time frosts are still keeping soil temperatures down. In fact, we are so dry here at Turnberry that we have had grass fires on our course and there have been several fires on roadside areas. Now you might expect grass fires in the height of a good summer but certainly not at this time of year.

It is ironic that this year it was Augusta National which had to put up with torrential rain, which made the course unplayable for the start of The Masters, while we are having to water our cupped up winter turfing just to keep it alive. Who would have believed that?

The extended mild spell has meant that we have had so much play throughout the winter months, which has been followed by almost 4,000 rounds of golf on the Ailsa course during the month of March alone. This has led to some walkways becoming so dry and worn that they are breaking up already and we are having to turn our attention to them much earlier than we would normally have to.

Our second course, the new Kintyre, has also been very busy, with almost 3,000 rounds of golf in the month of March alone.

Talking of Augusta National. Yes, here we are in that time of year when committees expect our courses to be in better shape than they are! Unfortunately many of them do not realise that despite the recent sunshine, as I write, it is still only the middle of April and with the ever increasing amount of winter play on semi dormant golf courses and the crazy demand for fast greens, courses have to pay the penalty with UNDESIRABLE grasses or, in some cases, little grass at all on their greens.

But the saddest thing of all is that the resultant problems are invariably blamed on the poor greenkeeper. What is more alarming is that many good, hard working greenkeepers are facing dismissal for carrying out these ill advised practices that are imposed upon them. BIGGA offers as much support as is possible in these situations with the panel of experienced greenkeepers available to offer advice and mediation on greenkeeping and agronomic issues.

The opinion of a respected greenkeeper from outwith the club itself.

The month of May will soon be upon us and most of our courses will be in better shape. Nothing every changes.

Patience is the game.

George Brown
Chairman
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