

# LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I am writing to you as a mother of two greenkeeper sons, and thought it would be interesting for you to hear a woman's point of view on what I have learnt over many years of listening to and being very interested in the young greenkeeper in England.

My two sons have been greenkeeping since leaving school one being 27 years and the other 29 years old. The eldest being at the same private club is on what I call a pittance of a wage.

He knows all aspects of greenkeeping having been to college for two years, and is reliable, efficient and trustworthy, conscientious and takes pride in the golf course, but for "a poor wage packet"!

Couldn't something be done

to enforce clubs to pay the correct wage, a livable wage to these young men. I honestly feel sorry for all young English greenkeepers.

Now to my second son who had worked at his private club for eight years and on the same low wages.

Enough was enough for him, he was wanting to get married which was quite impossible on his low wage, so he applied for a job in West Germany as an Assistant and was successful.

As soon as he arrived at the club, the German people couldn't do enough for him.

They respected, praised him and his wages are treble to what he got here.

He worked hard, so much so that after two and a half years he is now the Course Manager. He has his ups and

downs like everyone else in his position but he expects that for the good wages he is earning, and let's face it, that is why he left England.

He has many English greenkeeper friends out there and not one would come back home. But can you tell me why should our good young English greenkeepers (and they are who matter) have to go abroad to earn a proper wage.

From what I hear there will be more working abroad than here if the wages in England are not revised.

Having one of my sons living abroad is heartbreaking for me, but there is no comparisons in the two greenkeeping countries and I know my son prefers the respect and equality in Germany.

They certainly know a good

thing when they see it and take the chance. I could write a book about it all, but feel better for writing this letter to you.

So let's keep English Greenkeeping in England and give the young ones a fair deal with wages, they earn every penny they get.

Kindest regards,  
S. GOLDTHORPE

*Editor's note: Thank you for that marvellous letter Mrs Goldthorpe. You merely echo my views on the subject of low wages and the skill drain to the Continent they are causing.*

*I wonder how much longer it will be allowed to continue before clubs open their eyes to the economic necessity of paying a fair day's wage to our skilled greenkeeping staff.*

*Rest assured Greenkeeping Management will be hammering this message home until wage levels rise. The alternative is too worrying to contemplate.*

Dear Sir,

THERE have been many comments made in recent years about the decline of golf greens, and the lack of quality head greenkeepers in this country.

Most of these remarks have come from people involved in golf at a high level be it R & A officials, tournament pros, golf writers, and above all many well known agronomists. In this letter I would like to put the viewpoint of one modern course manager and state the two main reasons why, in my opinion, our profession is the recipient of such adverse comments.

Firstly, I would like to say that golf clubs in this country place huge budget restrictions on the course maintenance side of their affairs. This means many important tasks cannot get done because the money is not available.

The wages are so poor that all our good greenkeepers are moving abroad, where their skills are amply rewarded. What a sad indication of attitudes in this country towards greenkeeping.

If many course managers in this country were given reasonable maintenance budgets and sound levels of capital investment they would be able to give members higher standards of course presentation. If golf clubs fail to invest money in their courses then they should expect to see a decline in their conditions.

I feel the second and most important reason that many adverse comments are being made is our own obsession with ridding our urban parkland courses of Poa Annua.

Greenkeepers today are being trained into producing Fescue-bent turf, and quite

rightly so. However, I believe that the ecology of each individual golf course dictates what will grow there and what will die. In many situations around the country, greenkeepers have been trying to rid their courses of Poa Annua in the belief they are doing the right thing.

This has had disastrous effects on playing surfaces at many courses as traditional links type management policies are being adopted to parkland urban courses where Poa Annua is the native grass. Over recent years greenkeepers have started to believe that if they have Poa Annua greens they are no good at their job, that is rubbish.

In my opinion we have become obsessed with grass species instead of managing putting surfaces. We have been misinformed by certain agronomists that "one type management policies" can be applied to every soil type.

I myself am a keen believer in traditional methods of greenkeeping but in many situations they just don't work. There is no shame in having Poa Annua greens, today's course manager should not expect his members to putt on bare earth as he carries out links type management on Poa Annua on a parkland course.

Yours faithfully  
Terry Huntley  
Course Manager  
Ashford Manor G.C.

• Got something to say? Write to the editor with your views on any subject relevant to greenkeeping and we will be glad to publish them.

Dear Sir,

THANK you for your letter of April 2 and I apologise for the delay in acknowledging.

We are a relatively small "village club" - 9 holes, 150 gents members, 65 ladies members, and 45 juniors.

We have one Greenkeeper who has been with us for almost 16 years, who is very hard working and does a good job.

A few of us give periodical "small jobs" to help out. Our Greenkeeper has no formal qualifications - but practical experience, and is good on maintenance of our limited equipment.

We hope to start an appren-

tice next year with a view to also attending Elmwood College, Cupar, Fife on possibly block release, or as can be arranged.

Could you please advise me of the following:

i Qualifications/conditions for Membership of your respective grades.

ii Subscription/Fees for respective grades. Any other information required or available on these points.

Yours sincerely  
S.H. Davidson  
Greens Convenor  
Killin Golf Club

• Editor's note: Thank you for your letter Mr Davidson. The necessary information is on its way to you.

Dear Sir,

I am currently employed at the Royal Pahang Golf Club in the Malaysian state of Pahang as a greenkeeper for the last 2½ years. I am also a holder of the GCSAA class B certificate and also furthering my continued education units in golf course management.

My other experience also include the following whilst I was a trainee at Royal Kedah Golf Club with an American firm. Below are the duties entrusted to me:

- Formation of new greens/surrounds/tees and bunkers.
- Installation of sprinklers system (Rotary pop up).
- Maintenance of golf course.
- Labour co-ordination on site.
- Hydroseeding and sod planting.
- Equipment purchase and recommendation and
- Installation of sub-soil drainage.

It is my sincere deep intention to participate in a work and study programme with a distinguished club for a year and hereby extend my humble request and application for your kind consideration.

I am also prepared to avail myself at your distinguished club for any interview at your convenience.

Thanking you in advance for your highest consideration and in the meanwhile I remain your humble servant.

Yours sincerely,  
Palani Manickam  
Royal Pahang Golf Club  
Golf Road 25700  
Pahang Darul Makmur  
West Malaysia