

I WAS driving to work across Cheshire on the morning of the 16th October 1987 and the car radio was switched on. There was a pause in the music and a voice announced that if you lived in the South of England you should stay at home.

I thought to myself "What nonsense is this, we don't have severe weather in October, you only get such announcements in February".

It's all past history and the hurricane winds of over 100mph had indeed flattened much of the South East of England.

So what lessons can be learned from such a catastrophe and what can be done to reduce the likelihood of it all happening again?

Well, basically, you have got to be philosophical about such natural disasters. They are Acts of God. If a similar hurricane should occur again next October, say in the North of England, it is likely to have an identical effect. Unfortunately the high winds couldn't have chosen a worse time to attack. A very wet summer meant most trees were less firmly anchored than normal. Combine this with the fact that the trees were in full leaf, when they have maximum wind resistance, and you have a recipe for potential trouble.

You could, as a golf course manager, take some consolation from the fact that even places such as Kew Gardens suffered just as badly as the worst hit golf course. It's no reflection on your lack of tree expertise if you lost a lot of your tree cover.

How should you tackle the after-math of the storm? Reading this several months after the event you might be inclined to think that you have done all that is necessary, but let's see...

The first thing to do is to remove any trees, or parts of trees, which are dangerous. The safety of anyone using your golf course has to be a paramount priority. If there is dangerous work to do, call in a specialist contractor.

Once you are reasonably happy that all the immediately dangerous trees have been cleared or made safe you need

"OCTOBER 16th and all that!"



to take stock of what's left. If there are trees blown over, but lying safe, you can probably leave these for a while before you deal with them.

Just bear in mind that several million trees have, in the space of one day, become unexpectedly available to the timber trade. The trade is not geared up to handle this windfall timber and, as a result, there is a buyers market. If trees are blown down, but lying so that they are not dangerous, it could pay you to wait a while until you can get a realistic price for your timber.

Here are some useful tips to help you organise a timber harvesting programme for your fallen trees.

Trees such as, birch, poplar, pine, lime, sycamore, beech and ash will start to decay first. They need getting rid of fairly quickly, preferably within the next 12 months.

Spruce, larch, oak, sweet chestnut and yew can remain in good condition for up to five years. So these species can be left to the last to remove.

Timber merchants can make the most use of large pieces of timber. If you want to cut up fallen trees try to save big pieces. Straight lengths of over 12 feet and two feet in diameter will, if they are in good condition, fetch the best prices.

Other timber in smaller pieces could be sold as logs for firewood or to DIY enthusiasts for wood-turning. Cherry, robinia, laburnum, ash, beech, walnut and yew are excellent for wood-turning or carving.

If you are unable to leave fallen sound timber in situ and you can't remove large pieces to sell to timber merchants, don't simply burn it on site. There are several portable machines available for hire that can convert fallen timber into planks. Rather than take the timber to the machine you take the machine to the tree. These machines are ideal for places where access is difficult for heavy timber hauling vehicles.

Portable sawmills are now widely used on rural estates and in country parks to convert timber into fence posts, stiles, signs and general purpose planking.

Once you have cleared up the initial mess and organised a programme for dealing with the rest of the obviously damaged trees you need to take stock of all the remaining trees on the golf course.



by Tony Gentil



You must check all the large trees first. Look very carefully round the cartwheel area of their root systems for signs of upheaval of the ground.

All large trees that show evidence of drastic movement in their root system will have to be removed. They might seem quite safe at the moment but once they come into leaf they will blow over very easily.

A damaged root system can't always be detected by visible signs of heave. But sometimes you can feel it. If you stand under a tree that has a loose root system you will feel your-

self rising and falling as the tree sways in a strong breeze.

Even if everything seems OK don't become complacent. The full effects of the hurricane will only come to light over a period of several years. Watch your trees carefully as they come into leaf. If the crowns seem thinner than usual and the leaves smaller, it could be that the trees were damaged below ground.

Make sure that before you fell any standing trees, even if you are convinced that they are unsafe, you have the right to do so. Trees covered by tree

preservation orders or those standing in conservation areas cannot be felled without first obtaining permission from the local planning authority.

Although, as I have said, you can't do anything to stop a hurricane, you can take steps to reduce its impact on the tree cover of your golf course. The majority of trees that succumbed to the might of the wind on October 16th were elderly. Where trees are represented by all age groups the effect of a disaster is likely to be less.

Don't assume that by replacing all the lost trees next year you have solved your tree problem. If all the replacements are the same age you will simply be storing up a repeat performance for future generations.

Ideally, a tree replanting programme needs to replace existing losses in the first year and then add a few more each year.

You should be able to get assistance with tree planting schemes from bodies such as the Forestry Commission. Check with them before you finalise your replanting programme.

B.I.G.G.A.

S.WEST & S.WALES REGIONAL SEMINER AT SOMERSET COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE CANNINGTON 9th MARCH 1988

PROGRAMME

9.45 - 10.00 am
10.00 - 10.15 am
10.15 am
10.30 - 11.15 am

11.15 - 12.00 am

12.30 - 1.30 pm
1.30 - 2.15 pm

2.15 - 3.00 pm

3.00 - 3.30 pm
3.45 pm

Registration
Coffee & Biscuits
Introduction by Paul Worster
Mr. N. H. Rigden N.D.H. Cert Ed. will present a paper on GREENKEEPER TRAINING
Mr. Bob Corns of the N.C.C. will present a paper on NATURE CONSERVATION ON GOLF COURSES.
Lunch
Mr. J. Perris B.Sc. of the S.T.R.I. will present a paper on TURF MANAGEMENT.
Mr. T. Gray P.G.A. European Tour Director will present a paper on TOURNAMENT GOLF COURSES.
Question Time.
Close.

Fees for the seminar as follows -
B.I.G.G.A. members £12.00 each
Non members £15.00 each

Please send your fee with name and address, not later than 1st March '88 to
Gordon Child,
Regional Administrator,
Archways,
Churston Rd.
Churston Ferrers,
S. Devon. TQ5 0HU.
NB. Cheques should be made payable to "BIGGA SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH WALES REGION"

BIGGA N-W SEMINAR

ANOTHER Seminar is to take place at Mere GC. Cheshire, on March 17th 1988.

A wide selection of speakers have been arranged to wet your appetites, although a few have yet to be confirmed. Those who have confirmed are as follows:- Mr. J. Kidd Golf Estates Manager at Gleneagles Hotels, Mr. Neil Thomas BIGGA Executive Director based at Bingley, Mr. Brian Pierson Golf Course constructor, working on most of the Open Championship courses and Mr. Michael Coffey, Managing Director of *the Golf Course* magazine.

You will be able to put your questions and theories straight to some of the top people in the greenkeeping profession.

I can assume that this years seminar will be as good if not better than last years. Full details and price will be available on application to: **Mark Lewis, North-West Secretary, 35 Haddon Drive, Pensby, Wirral, Merseyside.**