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# Golf course management

## - a green committee view -

by John Harris  
Green Committee Chairman  
at Hankley Common Golf Club

HANKLEY COMMON Golf Club over the last few years has seen firm, all the round greens; (a vast improvement on the wet thatch ridden greens that greeted the arrival of Kevin Munt in April 1984) a heather conservation programme; a tree management programme; and a visible improvement in the skills of staff and the equipment with which they are provided to carry out their work.

These changes have been brought about through the foundation of a clear management philosophy which created the environment to allow greenstaff to make rapid progress since 1984, first under Kevin Munt and since April 1986 under the dedicated and skilled custody of Ian McMillan, supported by his highly motivated and well trained team.

The extent to which greenstaff can carry out their profession to the benefit of golfers is limited largely by the management environment they are working within. This article attempts to look at a management strategy for golf clubs and examines the implementation of this in the context of Hankley Common Golf Club. It will not provide all of the answers but my intention is to stimulate thought and discussion on a subject that has been largely neglected by the golfing press - a press that has historically concentrated a high percentage of its content on greenkeeping, greenkeeper training and trade information

**Role of management.**

The role of management in relation to greenkeeping in the golf club can be analysed under the following headings:

- Setting objectives
- Planning
- Budgeting
- Communicating
- Motivating
- Controlling

### Objectives.

The setting of objectives can be viewed as producing a 'mission statement' that clarifies simply a club's policy in relation to the upkeep and development of the golf course. The mission statement will vary from golf club to golf club and indeed may vary during the lifetime of a golf club. At Hankley our mission statement relating to the golf course is:

*"To present the golf course in the best possible condition for members all the year round; to preserve the heathland nature of the course for future generations; and to do this within an agreed budget plan".*

The objective that is set for each golf club may vary according to the type of course or club management philosophy i.e. heathland, parkland, downland, or links - members owned, business owned, public or whatever. The important point is to have an objective that is easily understood by management, staff and members alike.

### Planning.

Planning can be defined as *"the setting of achievable goals and deciding the means by which these will be achieved"*.

Plans fall into two categories:-  
1) Long term or strategic plans  
2) Short term or tactical plans

Good planning should always start at the higher level plan, be long term and flexible. This plan can be viewed as the strategic plan. At Hankley Common this is a five year rolling plan, i.e. as the fifth year becomes the fourth year a new fifth year is added.

Examples of long term plans are:-

- The five year plan
- Machinery replacement programme
- Conservation programme
- Tree management

Lower level or 'tactical' plans should support the strategic plan.

Examples of tactical plans are:-

- The winter programme
- Replacement of the greensheds
- Construction of a new practice ground
- An upgrade to the irrigation system
- Building a new green

### Budgeting.

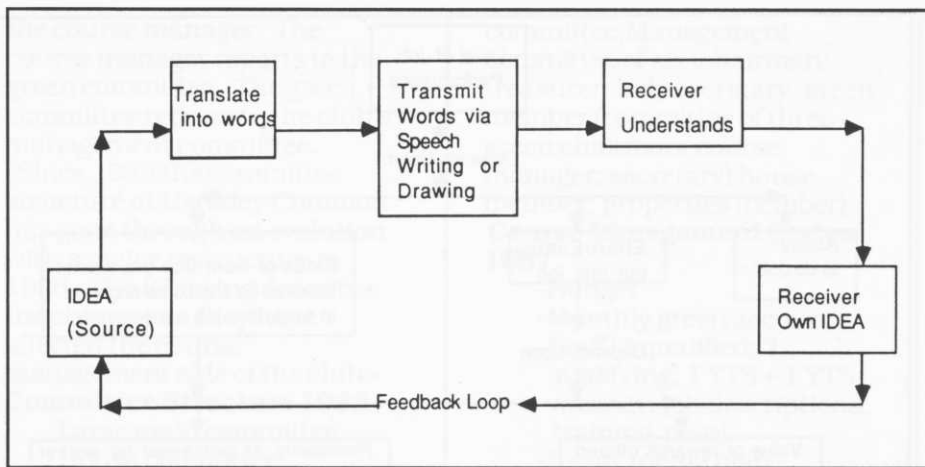
A budget can be defined as:-  
*"A statement in financial terms of what is planned and of what is expected to happen. In golf club terms it should reflect the summation of all the tactical plans plus the normal programme of course preparation and maintenance."*

A budget is normally divided into a revenue budget and a capital budget (i.e. machinery, new buildings, etc).

Budgeting requires careful record keeping. If this has not been done in the past, the preparation of the first budget is somewhat difficult. A budget should be phased - that is broken down on a monthly basis in order that expenditure can be monitored against it. In my experience the time spent on producing a good budget is well worthwhile. A well written budget acts as a major selling document to the



John Harris



**Figure 1**

treasurer and the rest of the committee, particularly when it is necessary to persuade them to allocate funds for golf course development and upkeep in preference to other golf club projects.

I would recommend budgets to be prepared under the following format:-  
 Revenue (phased on a monthly basis): Phasing enables the club to plan its cash flow in and out of the club's funds.

Capital: This should reflect the programme for machinery upgrade and replacement and should also be phased.

Notes of explanation: These are a very important aspect when communicating the justification for expenditure.

Comparison to previous year's performance: This is an extremely important aspect of the budget. It always provides a persuasive argument if you have performed within the previous year's budget and it is even better if you are able to demonstrate that you have kept within budget for a number of years.

Examples of revenue budget headings are:-

- Salaries & wages
- Training & education
- Publications/manuals
- Subscriptions
- Tax & insurance
- Clothing
- Materials  
(Top dressings, soil & sand; bunker sand; turf; path scalplings; grass seed; fertilisers; chemicals; fungicides)
- Fuel; (petrol; diesel; oil).

- Watering system
- Sundries
- Plant repair & maintenance
- Hire of equipment

A phased revenue budget allows a monthly account to be produced showing the expenditure against each item of the budget. Corrective action can then be taken if any overspends occur. Underspends will be detected before the end of the year and in this case you may well be able to convince your committee to permit expenditure on an unbudgeted but worthwhile item.

**Communicating.**

Communicating is the most difficult of the functions to review because this article is using the very function to define itself.

Communicating can be defined as:- *"The transfer of ideas so that they may be understood by others. Good communicating occurs when a useful or appropriate idea is transferred efficiently. Bad communication has many causes, but simplified it entails the non-arrival of a message or the arrival of a distorted message".*

This is illustrated by the analogy of the message "Send us re-inforcements we are going to advance" which gets translated into "Lend us three and fourpence we are going to the dance".

I cannot overstress the importance of good communications within the golf club. In my experience poor communications are generally at the root of most complaints, controversy,

politics and staff relation problems.

Golfers become more reasonable individuals when they understand when and why you need to put several tonnes of topdressing on their greens at least once and sometimes twice a month; and when and why you insist upon putting 14" deep holes through their beloved putting surfaces. Do not forget societies either - they are likely to spend a much happier day at your course if they are made aware of any major greenkeeping activity in advance of their visit.

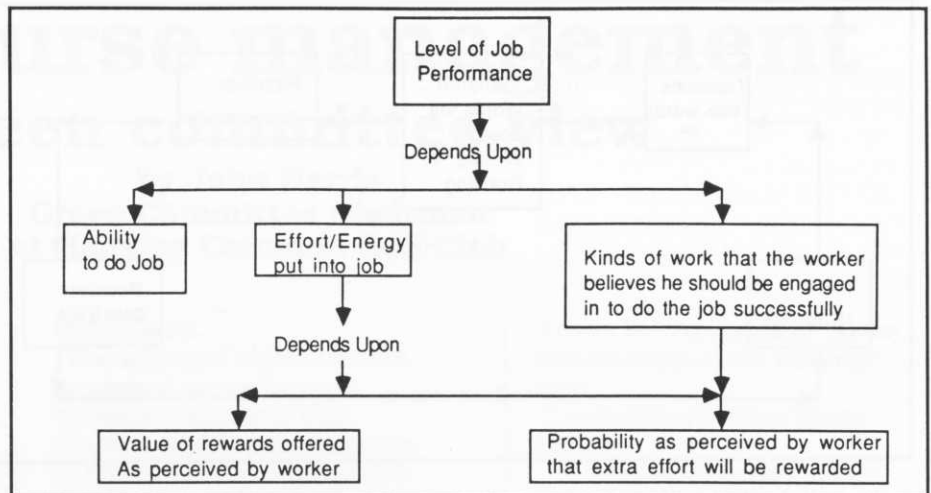
At Hankley Common we have a policy of open government and we communicate by publishing information to both the membership and the staff.

The methods used are:-

- An annual course status report
- Minutes of green committee meetings
- The winter programme
- Special notices
- Reports on special topics
- Chairman of green & course manager (available to members)

Another important aspect of good communications is that it provides a very important feedback. In management terms this is described as the feedback loop. This provides the means to verify that communications have been fully understood and to obtain the point of view of others on a given topic. You will soon know whether or not you are developing your golf course to meet the membership's or owner's aspirations. Figure 1 illustrates the feedback loop principle. This

**Figure 2**



This principle is practically employed when you attend a seminar and take part at the end of the day in the question and answer session with the panel of speakers.

**Motivating.**

Motivating is important because:-

Staff must be induced to stay within your employ. Labour turnover and absenteeism can be costly and dysfunctional if allowed to get out of control, but attendance is not enough.

Staff must do their appointed jobs in a dependable fashion. If our greenstaff are to function well as a team, we need to rely on a continuous and fairly stable pattern of relationships over time.

Staff must be innovative and exhibit spontaneous activity. That is, to act on their own initiative and carry out tasks beyond those that are laid down for them to do.

Motivation is important if you expect a consistently high level of job performance.

Figure 2 attempts to describe the various aspects of job performance. In the first place the worker must have the ability to do the job and secondly he must have a clear understanding of the job (job description) or the task that he is being asked to perform (good communication). The effort and energy put into a job will depend upon the rewards for doing the job as perceived by the worker and the probability as perceived by the worker that extra effort will be rewarded. In other words, effort and energy put into a job will depend upon motivation. Rewards should not only be viewed as financial. Financial rewards tend to have a short term motivational effect. Overall job satisfaction is what we should be aiming for.

There are many other motivational factors such as:-

- Training
- Promotion prospects
- Grading structure
- Good staff communication
- Sense of involvement
- Praise
- Discipline
- Appraisal
- Company car
- Pension
- And many others

The methods used to motivate the staff at Hankley Common include:-

**Information:** We publish the same information to them that is published to the members. Downward communication is as important as upward and outward communication.

**Involvement:** The course manager has access to the clubhouse and members. Staff with a handicap play in monthly medals Stablefords and non-boarded competitions. Informal contact between the staff and committee members is actively encouraged and pursued.

**Training:** The course manager is encouraged to develop his subordinates by on-the-job training. Subordinates themselves are encouraged to participate in training their subordinates. Appropriate external courses and seminars are identified. Apprentices attend Sparsholt College, Winchester and their expenses and course fees are paid for by the club. Our YTS trainees attend Merrist Wood College, near Guildford.

**Praise:** When staff have done a particularly good job, we tell them and tell anyone else who will listen.

**Remuneration Policy:** Annual pay awards are paid on fixed percentage plus merit percentage. Apprentices are reviewed six monthly. There is an annual Christmas bonus which is based on individual performance, attendance records and timekeeping during the year.

**Grading Structure:** We have a grading structure of course manager, assistant course manager, senior greenkeeper, greenkeeper, apprentice greenkeeper and trainee greenkeeper

**Discipline:** This in itself is a motivator when administered fairly. When you are not satisfied with performance do not let it fester - take urgent appropriate action. The person being disciplined and his colleagues respect a firm but fair style of management.

**BIGGA Membership :** All staff are encouraged to join BIGGA and their subscriptions are paid for by the club.

**Appraisal:** In the coming year consideration will given to introducing a formal appraisal scheme linked to the annual pay review.

**Controlling.**

Controlling can be defined as:- "The essential process of seeing that what is planned to happen actually happens". At Hankley Common day to day control is carried out by

the course manager. The course manager reports to the green committee. The green committee reports to the club's management committee.

Since 1983 the committee structure at Hankley Common has gone through an evolution with a major restructure in 1986. The following describes the changes as they have affected the course management side of the club:-

**Committee Structure 1983**

- Large main committee
- House committee
- Finance committee
- Large green committee (with no continuity)
- Irregular meetings
- No greenstaff representation
- No budget
- No plans
- Four un-qualified staff
- Annual visit from agronomist
- No planned machinery replacement
- No Health & Safety procedures

**Committee Structure 1987**

Two tier committee structure: Captain's

committee; Management committee of six (chairman; treasurer; lady secretary; green member (committee of three - green chairman; course manager; secretary) house member; properties member).

**Course Management Status 1987**

- Budget
- Monthly green account
- Staff (3 qualified; 2 qualifying; 1 YTS + 1 YTS vacancy; job descriptions; training plan).
- 5 year rolling plan
- STRI subscription
- Published machinery replacement / upgrade programme
- Published winter programme
- Published monthly green minutes
- Conservation programme
- Planning approval for greenhouses & workshop
- Planning approval for new staff facilities
- Health & Safety procedures
- Annual status report to members

To conclude, I would like to

return to the main theme of management. Managing is getting things done, with and through people. The function can be categorised as a series of roles.

Relating roles to superiors; peers; subordinates.  
 Information roles - clarifying goals; informing; planning.  
 Decision roles - allocating resources; resolving conflicts.  
 Just as it is possible to categorise the roles that a manager plays it is also possible to identify his skills.  
 Human - interpersonal skills.  
 Technical - decision making skills; knowledge skills;  
 Conceptual - planning skills; visionary skills.

Management is *not* a gift - it is a skill and a science.

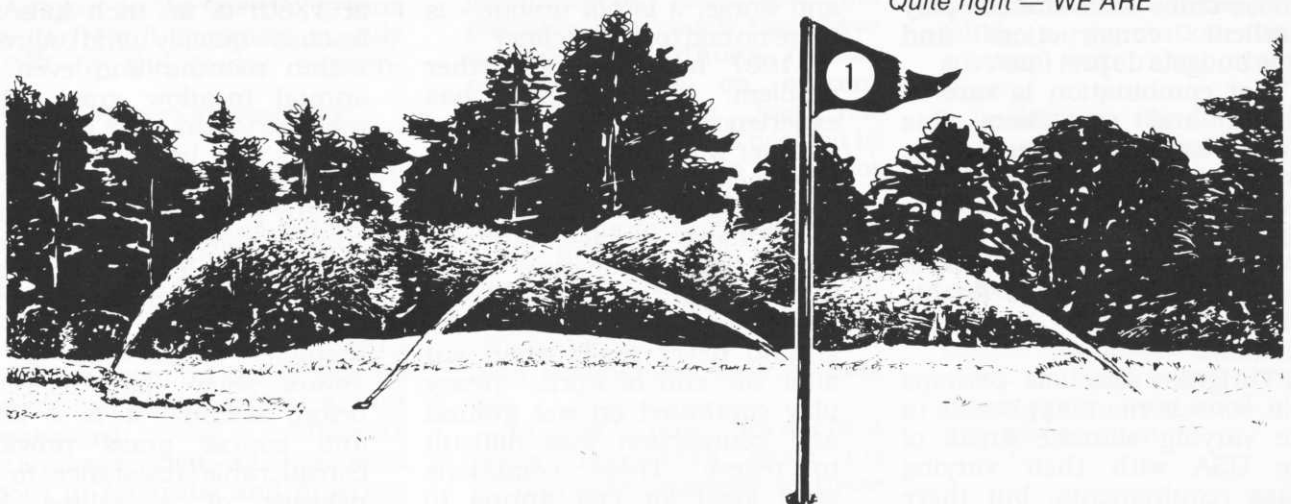
When BIGGA puts together proposals for greenkeeper education and training, I would suggest that management training will need careful consideration.

*You do not create a manager by changing his job title from head greenkeeper to course manager.*

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# THE QUICK...

1987 was a year that many greenkeepers will remember.

Having said that, it is also true that most years seem to be exceptional at the time, but when we do all the sums at the end of the year we find that the inches of rain, feet of snow or degrees of frost etc. come very close to average.

Last year was not so very far out of line in most areas of Britain; the exceptional thing is the way these factors combined with the present state of so many courses to push them nearer to total disaster. Nature always repays her debts and extremes average out, but it is worth noting that it is these same extremes (drought, heavy rainfall, cold, heat, etc.) that put stress on the grasses. It is this stress, when combined with a weakened sward, that causes problems so much greater than twenty years ago.

An excellent article on this theme by James F. Moore in the July/August 1987 issue of the *USGA Green Section Record* is entitled "Management on the Edge". The author speaks of the difference for course superintendents between those who run their courses on the edge of success - and those who run them on the edge of failure, "Those clubs with limited play excellent construction and large budgets do just fine".

That combination is rare in Britain and over here this year's weather has been savage for those working, sometimes without realising it, near the edge of failure.

Moore picks out four groups of factors which have led to this unhappy and insecure situation.

1) Turfgrass selection - perhaps that sounds more applicable to the varying climatic areas of the USA with their varying grass requirements, but there is equally a lesson for those in this country who have unconsciously "selected" *Poa Annua* through mistaken manage-

ment methods and find it's incapable of meeting the demands of intensive winter play.

- 2) Chemical usage.
- 3) Fertility practices
- 4) Player demands.

Space does not permit me to enlarge on all these issues, but the downward trend of player demands in terms of reality, or to be more correct, unreality must be stressed.

Past demands for green and "receptive" surfaces have led to dangerous levels of *Poa Annua* infestation. The difficulties in managing this situation have only too often been met with chemical answers. For example the use of fungicide twice a month is not uncommon in the winter months. For those who have gone further downhill to thatch this must have been a desperate year. I have seen golfers attempting to putt across greens so soft the triplex left deep ruts.

Some stories sound just too unlikely to be true and I don't like to have my leg pulled. So I just had to check when I heard of a club which had issued instructions that every shot must be played from small pieces of matting which players were to carry round the course with them. It was true and worse, it is not unique - is there no end to this decline?

1987 has seen a further problem. Most of Britain has experienced a combination of weather which has exposed just how near the edge "modern" greenkeeping is running. Rain a bit above average, but well spread through the year. Lower than normal temperatures and less sunshine meant the ground never really dried out after the end of April. Heavy play continued on wet ground and compaction was difficult to relieve. These conditions were ideal for *Poa Annua* to increase and dense *Poa*, however frequently mown, is a rough grass giving a slower surface.

The media and talkative professional golfers, equally uninformed, have gone overboard about speed of greens and have shown us once again what damage they can do. Every golfer has absorbed pictures of balls sliding across greens like glass. The fact that these have frequently come from U.S. courses with budgets in six figures or with play limited to a few months in the year has not been appreciated. "We must have it on our course" has been the cry and committees have jumped to obey.

It all looked very simple - "just tell them to put the mowers down a bit". No mention of which grasses are to be grown and what effect this drastic treatment might produce.

A vogue has grown up for regular use of the Stimpmeter. This simple device does provide a much needed objective method of measuring

## PACE

the speed of greens and it is an improvement on relying solely on the golfer's subjective perception, but a shower of rain can vary readings by two feet or more. Unfortunately it has been seen by the non-technical as the sole method of management. Simply take a reading and cut accordingly - never mind if that results in unacceptable defoliation. Prolonged periods of mowing at 1/8th of an inch kills fine fescues quickly and *Agrostis* within months and even the annual meadow grass which replaces them dies eventually. Greens may be quick, but they may also be dead.

Many greenkeepers have now seen slides taken with magnifying lens of different grasses in the cut state and this has provided further food for thought. Close-ups of *Poa annua* show that, especially before seeding, it is a fleshy and course grass providing considerable resistance to the passage of a rolling ball. Individual stems and leaves stick up in a haphazard fashion. Similar magnifications of *Agrostis Tenuis* and

especially of *Festuca Rubra* show a much smoother and more consistent surface. No wonder putts on *Poa* so frequently just miss where those on greens composed of the finer grasses roll in. *Poa* may look all right to the naked eye, but not in closeup.

Almost daily inspection and frequent photographs have disclosed that even sensible management this year did not prevent an increase in the *Poa annua* content. In fact just three days into a wet spell new green shoots could be seen invading any less dense patches of bent or fescue. At precisely the same time the greens became much slower. They were not being encouraged by fertiliser or added artificial water and with the cooler weather in the autumn rapidly disappeared. A few warm days in December and up they popped again. In general, though, it was noticeable that this invasive competition had thinned out the bent and fescue.

I suspect that, even without this photographic proof, most people will feel that 1987 was a year in which they went backwards in the never ending battle against *Poa annua*. I know that many course managers feel sore that interference by committees demanding faster greens has led to further losses to the enemy.

A report on the speed of greens in *'turf Craft Australia'* in July 1987 by the course superin-

### **SPEED REPORT**

tendent of Royal Melbourne, Peter Williams, seems to have received wide circulation in this country. Even if we don't know Australia, we must be inclined to doubt the statement that the original Sutton's Mixture sown on the greens 60 years ago remains. Nor are we reassured by William's statement "that he has seen both in Australia and America, excellent putting surfaces consisting of a predominance of *Poa annua* and in fact if maintained and prepared cor-

# ...AND THE DEAD

rectly for tournament or club golf, present a surface equally as good and fast as that of bent greens".

So claims that the greens at Royal Melbourne are cut for tournaments at 1.8mm (about 1/14th of an inch) and more regularly at 2.5mm (about 1/11th of an inch) lead to a sense of disbelief or at least the certainty that fine grasses would not survive such treatment here. It does seem significant that on one day of the Australian Open the players refused to continue their round. The venue? - Royal Melbourne.

In fact, it might be better to make the greens a bit faster at these difficult times by rolling with a weighted hand machine, not forgetting to relieve any resulting compaction by intensified aeration. A more recent article in the *Green Section Record* by Larry Gilhooly makes a further point "Moss invasion is becoming more common as memberships ask for green speeds that are simply not attainable on a regular basis".

The biggest disaster of all, though, was perhaps the disappearance of what I would call "the voice of Experience and Authority". Many greenkeepers have told me privately how much they have missed Jim Arthur's regular pronouncements on current problems. Jim has not disappeared, but has decided to help only those who are a) not too far from Budleigh Salterton and more importantly b) have proved that they will carry out his advice. I will not presume to assess his reasons other than to say that a lesser man would have done so long ago.

In 1987, only Jim's client clubs have been given his authoritative answers to these current problems, an unwelcome shock for those who have not realised the value of an expert second opinion

when pressure is exerted by a customer or employer.

This might be a good time for all those engaged in golf course maintenance to rethink their attitude to agronomists and advisers. Forty years as a general practitioner in a profession does at least qualify me to express strong general views. I built up my own panel of consultants to whom I could refer my difficult patients for the support and comfort of a second opinion. I certainly did not feel that my status was threatened.

Yet some greenkeepers seem to

### **SECOND OPINION**

resent their clubs calling for a second opinion even if the result is to strengthen their hand. In all professions I suppose there will be someone who is so clever they don't need help, but for most of us it is great to have a shoulder to lean on. It is a curious fact that in all professions it is the good practitioner who benefits most from a good adviser.

It goes without saying that I am only referring to qualified and experienced advisers with no commercial attachments.

Experience teaches us all that the best weapon in an argument is a few grey hairs and therefore it takes time to build a reputation as an adviser with the necessary clout".

Looking to the future I am encouraged to feel that the STRI increasingly speaks with authority and I hope that they will add to that a more complete service and fruitful research into the darker corners which still exist in golf course maintenance. In years such as 1987 - and they will come again - we need all the help we can muster.

**BY  
EDDIE PARK**

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.

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#### PROGRAMME

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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.**

ON the night of 16th October last year the worst storm in living memory hit the south-east of England - leaving the countryside devastated, with a reported 15 million trees down.

If the reported losses are correct, it would be fair to say that a good percentage of what has taken out that night could at best be described as scrub timber. Many of the better quality hardwoods lost were long past maturity and had begun to rot away at their centres.

No matter the value, that one night of wind is still affecting the lives of many greenkeepers. Courses have had to be cleared and many dangerous trees made safe. The time devoted to wood clearing has affected the day-to-day presentation of courses and planned winter programmes have been forgotten.

The cost of clearing timber is very real and in many cases this will determine how long the clear-up will take. Many clubs will be levying their members to finance the clear-up. Many are hopeful of realising something from the sale of timber to help with the cost, but with so much timber available, the price obtainable hardly pays for getting it off the site.

To be of any value, some types of trees should be cleared as soon as possible as there is a very real danger of invasion by pests - making the wood only fit for burning. Clubs should take professional advice if in doubt.



Every experience brings a harvest and the real beneficiaries of the hurricane are the saw millers and pulp mills. The manufacturers and retailers of chainsaws could not keep up with the demand. Many retailers were completely sold out the day after the storm. There are not enough professional woodcutters available and this influences the cost as well. I recently heard of someone being asked £500 to remove a medium sized Acacia tree from their garden!

On the day before the hurricane, I had arranged for six of the staff here at Sunningdale to attend a course on the safe handling and care of saws, through Peter Bridgeman Associates. I was obviously unaware at that time

that the skills learned were going to prove invaluable over the next few weeks.

Since the storm there have been reports of hundreds of accidents involving inexperienced users of chainsaws. And accidents will happen even with experienced users.

I was surprised to find that at many clubs no provision has been made for basic instruction on the safe handling and care of saws. We are responsible under the 1974 Health and Safety Act, to ensure that staff are given this essential instruction. There is a requirement for certain protective clothing and equipment safety helmets, eye protectors, ear defenders, gloves with protective guarding on the back of the left hand, leg protectors, safety boots and non-sag outer clothing. Another essential piece of on-sit equipment is a first-aid kit, including large wound dressings and hand cleaning materials. It is an added advantage if one member of the team has had some first aid training.

A good training course ensures that everyone becomes familiar with the saw and how to use it safely. It is also a long term economy to see that everyone knows how to



**by Jack McMillan,  
Head Greenkeeper at  
Sunningdale Golf Club  
in Surrey.**