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# BIGGA UPDATE

AT the recent Board meeting, there was a general discussion on both the location and format of our national events and it was agreed that I outline the overall situation to members. The initial programme has been drawn up over two years, 1988 and 1989 with the intention of reviewing the situation from 1990 onwards. National events need long-term planning and it was decided, given the timespan available, that the first national event should be held during September 1988. It was agreed

that this would take the form of a National Tournament/International Conference to be held during the period 26th 30th September in Scotland. For 1989 the Tournament and Conference will be held separately and the situation will be reviewed in terms of plans for 1990 and thereafter. The other national event will be the European Turf Management Exhibition to be held in Harrogate during the period 18th - 20th January, 1989 during the same period in subsequent years with a view to continuity and expansion as well as having regard to the facilities available.

Given that the Exhibition will remain in Harrogate, it is the intention of the Board that the other events be distributed on an equitable basis around the Regions. With this in mind, the National Conference in 1989 will be held in Cambridge. It is intended that the National Tournament be held at BIGGA Headquarters in August 1989, following which a decision will need to be taken on whether it remains there for future years or moves around the Regions.

Although the South West and South Wales region will host the final of the Iseki Regional Tournament in August this year at St. Pierre, Chepstow, the Board appreciates the need for 1990 events to be allocated to the southern part of the country and thereafter it is envisaged that there will be a rotation of events on a Regional basis. I trust that this clarifies the overall situation for members.

## National Tournament International Conference

I have held a further meeting with the Scottish Regional Subcommittee and the folder for the week will be available in the near future with all relevant information.

A recent inspection of the facilities in Ayrshire confirms the view that this really is an excellent location for the event and the article by John Campbell in this issue sets out the attractions of the course at Ayr Belleisle and the area in general. One point to emphasise is the range of facilities

>>

## the Golf Course

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**Front cover:** 12th green Ayr Belleisle golf course  
with the Belleisle Hotel in the background, venue for  
the BIGGA National Tournament in September.

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available to families. The Sundrum Castle Holiday Park, with its varied choice of caravans and general facilities including an indoor swimming pool and large theatre, is particularly attractive for families. Just two minutes up the road from Ayr Belleisle one finds Butlins with plenty to keep the children occupied. The scene is set for a successful week - not least in terms of the Conference where our speakers will reflect an International flavour. Your early registration with the Scottish Regional Office would be appreciated.

**National Conference,  
Cambridge**

This will be held during the

period 4th-6th April 1989 at Queen's College Cambridge. Details will appear in *the Golf Course* as they become available. The number of delegates will be restricted and places can be secured by forwarding a deposit of £15.00 per person to Headquarters Office.

**Employment agency scheme**

Registration forms have been distributed to those greenkeepers who expressed an interest in the scheme as detailed in the membership package for this year. Any outstanding forms should be returned as soon as possible. Additional forms have been distributed to Section Secretaries together with

details and any interested greenkeeper should contact his Section Secretary. Golf clubs are showing considerable enthusiasm for the scheme, which it is hoped to implement within the next few weeks. The date of commencement will be determined by the response of members in terms of submitting registration forms - so if you wish to register for the Scheme, please do it today. Finally - a reminder - if you are interested in attending the GCSAA Conference and Show in Anaheim on 6th - 13th February 1989 - please let me know forthwith.

**Nell Thomas  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

# A day in the life of a greenkeeper's wife

HAVE you a greenkeeping husband who is dedicated to his job? Comes and goes at odd hours? Worries himself sick if a blade of grass is out of place, and more often than not comes home soaked to the skin? Well, I have!

If you have arranged a day out together - forget it. There are sheep on the course; or seagulls are having an "I'm a pneumatic drill" competition in the middle of the pond that has suddenly appeared on the 8th and that is the wrong kind of birdie.

Well girls, over the years I have discovered that - weather permitting, of course - if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!

There was one occasion when, having a lad on holiday and a man in hospital, that inevitable urgent job cropped up. The weather is just right for it and there is a staff shortage. Having offered my services, I was recruited as a greenkeeper for the day. I sallied forth

**"If you can't  
beat 'em, join  
'em!"**

armed with wellies and a hat, and an eye on that nice green machine which seems to do everything. Of course, as I am so green myself, I couldn't at this early stage in my career be trusted with the tractor and trailer. However, I did get the Cushman (plenty of room for my flask of coffee) and I thoroughly enjoyed driving it. I never realised how cold it can be riding around on those machines, and I was very glad to have some gloves in my pocket. I followed the tractor around, loading top soil, shovelling it out again and generally supervising a most successful day. Which reminds me, I don't think I ever got paid! Still, it was a labour of love and much more interesting than doing the housework. Being too exhausted to cook the evening meal, another treat was in store.

I do have my uses, especially on dry summer evenings when the watering system has gone on the blink and panic stations ensue. I've gone past the stage of dancing up and down to the Rain God and now sit with a good book moving the hose pipe every twenty minutes. We have some marvellous views across

the bay and there is lots of wildlife to watch. Poking about in odd areas can be a problem though. You see an inviting little nook to explore, only to find that some idiot has put a load of grass cuttings to ferment, and you end up knee-deep in the most evil stinking slush imaginable. Back to the hose pipe!

I do not play golf myself, and in any case one in the family is enough. My husband has been known to say that courses for ladies should be built in the desert. If all golf professionals were like Omar Shariff, I would be inclined to agree with him!

I think us wives must have quite a few tales to tell between us. In fact, it might be a good idea to have a 'Ladies Page' in this magazine, just to keep us in the swing of things.

Mind you, now that my other half has become a Regional Administrator I suppose the demands for my services, especially my two-fingered typing prowess, will be on the increase. The mind boggles!

by

**Marion Child**

# FACE TO FACE

"DURING my first six weeks at St. Pierre in early 1986 I recall the courses being frozen so hard it was impossible to change any of the holes on the greens. It wasn't long before I came to realise that the job in hand was much more challenging than any of my previous appointments.

Managing two full-size golf courses - the Old and the New - to the standard capable of withstanding the normal pounding from some 800 members and the thousands of visitors attracted to the picturesque St. Pierre complex is very much a full time job. My job is made far easier thanks to the support, and hard work, of my greenstaff. Without the support of a dedicated crew, no course manager would survive.

Following an absence of three years, 1986 saw St. Pierre's famous Old Course once again chosen to stage a major European professional tournament - the new and exciting Epsom Grand Prix of Europe matchplay event.

The sponsors, of course, expected the Old Course to be in top condition in time for the tournament. Not a tall order normally, but there were a couple of serious problems to contend with during my first winter at St. Pierre. The greens were predominantly annual meadow grass (*Poa Annua*), and had apparently been fertilized quite late in the year. They were riddled with large fusarium scars.

*Poa Annua* is very prone to fusarium. That's not to say that the more desirable Bent grasses (*Agrostis*), which are the indigenous grasses of this area, are not affected by fusarium,

## David Jones, Course Manager at St Pierre

but *Poa* is far more readily attacked. So, when you have the situation where meadow grass is fertilized late in the year, you will always get Fusarium.

The second problem was that there was more of a thatch layer in the greens than I would have liked. If you have a putting surface that is soft under foot and imprints, then a smooth putting surface cannot be easily maintained - a point worth thinking about when members request extra irrigation to help stop balls on greens.

### TEMPTED

If I had been the sort of course manager to press the panic button then, perhaps I might have been tempted to 'tart up' the greens for the Epsom with heavy applications of fertilizer. But my belief is that consistently good putting surfaces are only achieved by sound, long term management. I could not apply long term management from February to May so I decided to aim to

achieve the smoothest putting surfaces possible in the time that was available with the application of as many light top dressings as we could get on to the greens prior to the tournament.

St. Pierre was typical of many courses in the UK that had been over fed and over watered. Since the early 70's when automatic irrigation was installed in many courses, it has become too easy for greenkeepers to apply water and fertilizer.

As soon as greens started looking a little pale, on went the NPK and water to soak it in. Then the greenkeeper could sit back and take the praise from the members.

Many greens up and down the country were fed like this four or five times a year, and so it went on, until greens got in the sorry state that many are still in.

I had spent some difficult years at my last course implementing a management policy I believed in. I was not about to take any shortcuts at St. Pierre just

**Below:**

**TOURNAMENT PREPARATION**



## Golf & Country Club

because I had a big tournament on my hands. There are twelve months in the year and it is my job to ensure that the courses in my charge are in tip-top condition for as many of those months as possible - not for merely one or two special weeks.

I think it is fair to say that some greenkeepers over fed greens in the firm belief that no harm was being done, not taking into consideration the fact that if more leaf is being produced than nature can break down, "thatch" build-up is inevitable.

### CAREFUL

Nowadays, greenkeepers are much more careful with the use of water and fertilizers. This situation can be attributed to the endeavours of J H Arthur who, through his straight talking to both greenkeepers and greens committees alike, has made people stop and think about what they are doing. Jim Arthur is a man I have a great respect for, not only as a friend but as the country's leading agronomist.

Having got my first Epsom Grand Prix over without any severe criticism about course condition, we embarked upon the uphill struggle to improve the all year round playability of the two courses. I knew this would take years rather than months to achieve, and that brickbats and not bouquets would be heading my way for quite a while.

I have the pleasure of working with Jim Arthur at St. Pierre. I had studied previous reports written by Jim, who is our agronomist, to determine which of his recommendations were in need of being more closely followed.



**Above:**  
**TENTED VILLIAGE SITE**

I decided to increase aeration on the fairways in the autumn, and on both tees and greens throughout the year.

We aim for a target of 60 passes per year on the greens, and as often as weather permits on the fairways. Aeration definitely does the trick, and the puddles and ponding which previously resulted after heavy rainfall do not now occur. You can't aerate too often on fairways or greens. As long as the aeration slits do not open up during dry weather, the more aeration the better.

Obviously, deep aeration gives the benefit of getting water through the soil. It is also necessary to allow air into any thatch you may have, because if you don't get air into it, it's not going to break down.

### CONTROLLED

Controlled feeding of the greens with a mixture of sulphate of ammonia, hoof and horn and sulphate of iron, twice a year is part of the programme; coupled with light top dressings of a mixture comprising of four parts sand and one part Fen soil applied every six weeks in the growing season. A spray mix of sulphate of iron in water is used to maintain a reasonable colour without creating a lush growth of grass. This also helps with resistance to fungal disease.

In following this policy we do find that the Poa Annua

contracts the disease Anthracnose quite badly in the early autumn. This often looks very worrying, and one does suffer a certain amount of "stick", but areas of Poa that are removed by Anthracnose are soon re-colonized with Agrostis, and so the process goes on. It is important to continue top dressing during this time to try and maintain putting surfaces, and keep your head down! I can assure you, it is well worth bringing about the change in grass species.

Some time ago I was asked if I was trying to introduce a new grass species. Was it perhaps the hard wearing American Pencross grass, I was asked. No, I said, I am not introducing pencross, or any other new grass. What will happen is that gradually, very gradually, the indigenous Agrostis grass will re-colonize itself because the

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now accepted methods to rid the greens of Poa will slowly take effect.

As for Pencross, my personal opinion is that it looks quite nice from a distance, but I am not yet convinced that it likes our climate. I have not had any experience of managing Pencross greens, but from those I have seen at courses such as The Belfry, I am not convinced that they have managed to retain such a high percentage of Pencross in their sward. In fact, the last time I played at The Belfry, it was evident that the greens were becoming predominantly Poa, with only small colonies of Pencross remaining.

The only greens that I have seen which looked as if they had taken well with Pencross, are the ones at St. Mellion in Cornwall. They were pleasant colour, with an even surface cover, but I found them slower to put on in comparison with St. Pierre.

Whether Pencross will stand the closeness of mowing and verticutting required to give it some pace, coupled with our climate, I have yet to be convinced.

## GRAND PRIX

The first week of May 1988, sees the Epson Grand Prix being staged here at St. Pierre for the third successive year. Last year we had comments about greens being slow. This year, with less Poa in the greens, we expect them to be quicker, in fact, as quick as they can be for the time of year.

**"As for Pencross... it looks quite nice from a distance, but I am not quite convinced it likes our climate."**

Obviously the sponsors are well satisfied with the present state of the Old Course. However, it is planned to make the course more difficult by introducing a few new tees to lengthen the course. Alterations to three greens are also planned, which will no doubt make certain of St. Pierre's place as a major tournament venue.

I do feel, however, that early May is sometimes pushing nature somewhat for such a major tournament in this country; but all you can do is your best!

## ATMOSPHERE

Since being employed by Country Club Hotels, who own a number of other similar complexes in Britain, I have no desire to return to a club run solely by its members. I enjoy the atmosphere of working for, and being made to feel part of, the team' of a large, and successful, golf/hotel leisure company.

Although I am responsible to Mr. Geoffrey Glynn-Jones, the director of golf for Country Club Hotels, I am left to manage my own courses, as long as I do not exceed the agreed budget.

As we look on our courses as being the main reason that people visit St. Pierre, we have the sense to ensure that, whatever monies are required to maintain our high standards are made available. Having now worked in a strictly commercial area, I would find it most difficult to go back to a working atmosphere where one has to follow the instructions of a committee, who know little or nothing about golf course management.

I have played golf since I was six years of age, and still enjoy the

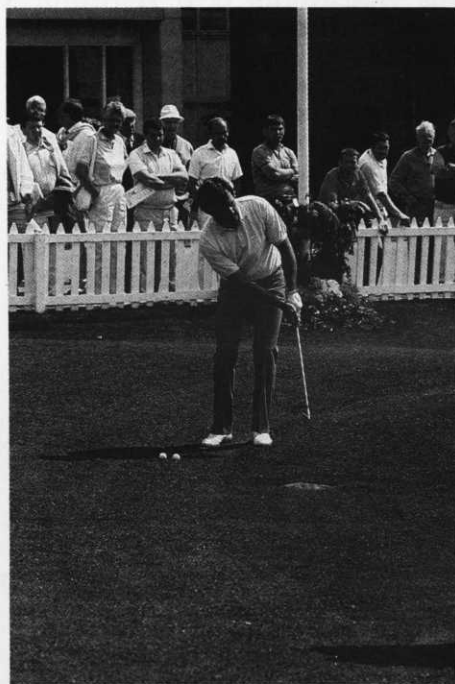
game. I am always keen to extend my knowledge of course management by attending seminars and conferences.

## RESPONSIBLE

I was partly responsible for the setting up of the EIGGA - English and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, which has since opted to amalgamate with two other associations to become BIGGA - British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association. I am no longer involved, or play an active part in Association matters, as two golf courses and a major tournament take up all my time."

**Below:**

**SEVE BALLESTEROS, A SEVERE CRITIC OF THE GREENS IN 1987**



**A follow-up article by David Jones on his experiences with the Epson Grand Prix in 1988 will appear in a future issue.**

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# BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL GOLF GREENKEEPERS ASSOCIATION



## 1988 GREENKEEPER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

(NB. Not to be completed by 1987 Members)

To be returned to: The Executive Director, BIGGA, Sports Turf Research Institute,  
BINGLEY, West Yorkshire. BD16 1AU.

FULL NAME ..... HOME ADDRESS .....

TELEPHONE .....

DATE OF BIRTH .....

POSTCODE .....

NAME OF EMPLOYER ADDRESS .....

.....

.....

.....

PRESENT POST ..... DATE OF APPOINTMENT .....

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

.....

I wish to be affiliated to the ..... Section (see below).

I HEREBY APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL GOLF GREENKEEPERS ASSOCIATION AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION.

SIGNED ..... DATE .....

Subscriptions are NOT to be sent with this form but will be invoiced separately.

Fees payable will be: (i) Full Member £25.00

(ii) 18 years of age and under £12.50

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: Berks/Bucks/Oxon.

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