

other is used on the tees. Despite the fact that greens are not excessively large, the total dependence upon Toro's was due to shortages of staff.

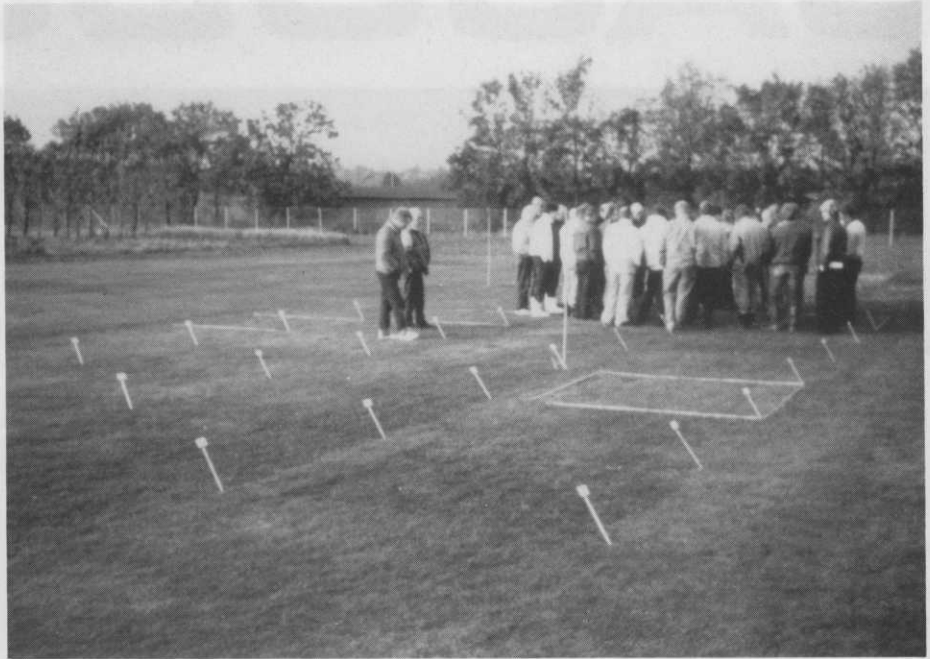
Once a green or tee has been cut, no switching is done. Many of the tees I came across, not only at Ljunghusen but throughout Sweden, were largely uneven and narrow, with very little room for moving a tee box laterally. One or two courses has resorted to the use of artificial tees.

## sponsorship

It would appear that almost anything on the golf course can be sponsored - from the greenkeeper's pick-up to the holes on the course. Stig Persson drives a Subaru pick-up which is literally covered from bumper to bumper with sponsors' emblems. School children are sent to the club twice a year for a fortnight at a time to gain practical experience. They can choose for themselves which area of industry they prefer - anything from banking to greenkeeping.

## conference

The Swedish Greenkeepers Conference took place at Hollsiken during the week I was in Sweden and was held at an army camp which had been leased out for the duration. There was an international flavour to the conference, and Gordon Whitteven from Toronto in Canada gave a speech on his personal mistakes over 25 years! This covered everything from mishaps with weedkillers, to greens which had to be reconstructed after being used just once, to the inevitable caddie-car in a bunker. Weibulls, the seed company who have given us *Poa pretensis* 'Sydspport', *Agrostis tenuis* 'Boral' and *Agrostis stolonifera* 'Emerald' gave us a tour of their headquarters.



## peninsular

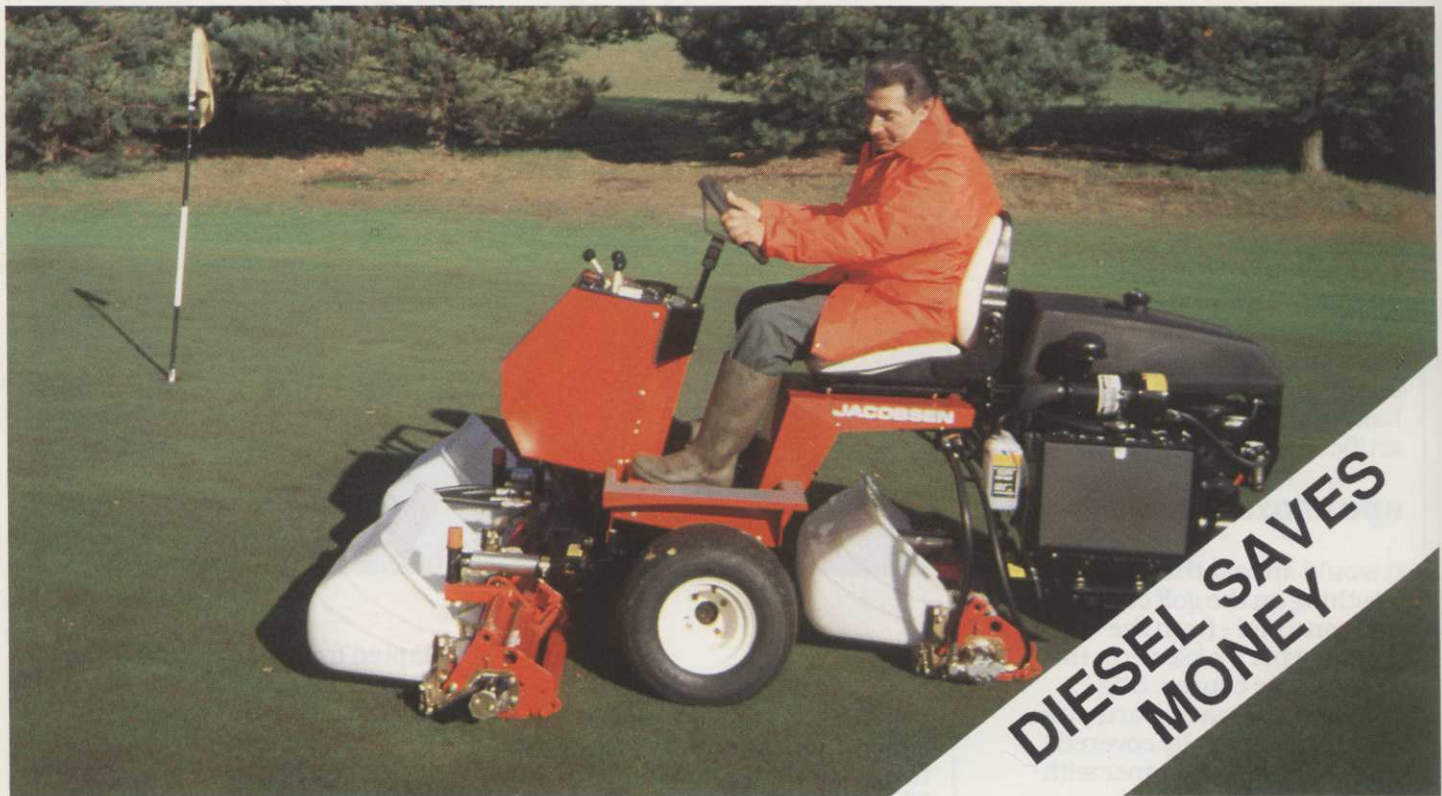
After the conference I was invited to visit Molle Golf Klubb, which is situated in the Kullaberg National Park on the outskirts of the town of Molle. The golf course is situated at the end of a peninsular, which is also the home of Europe's most powerful lighthouse. There are many deciduous trees on the course, the majority of which are beech '*Fagus sylvatica*'. The course is under the control of the national park and any work undertaken requires their authorisation. Consequently, there are very few grassed tees - the majority are artificial. There are only three bunkers on the whole course, and one was the result of a tree falling down in front of the second green - the hole it made wasn't filled in! The greenkeepers' shed is extremely cramped and somewhat reminiscent of an antique shop, with two tractors dating back to the 1950's! The environmentalists will not allow the club to expand the sheds. Molle was far removed from what I had seen at Ljunghusen. The greenkeeper there was proud of the fact that his greens were switched daily. The switch, incidentally, was

adapted from an old fishing rod, and it was hard work to move it across the grass.

## expansion

Sweden is Europe's second largest golfing nation after Britain, and is currently experiencing a period of expansion. Throughout the country there are many new courses being built or being extended into 18 or 27 hole complexes. Many of these clubs are expanding their range of facilities by building country clubs, with shooting and fishing offered as an alternative to golf. This period of growth is being fuelled by large amounts of money being injected into the industry through sponsorship, etc. This is keeping the price of a game of golf extremely low compared to Britain - approximately half in real terms. Many greenkeepers have an agricultural background and an attempt is being made by the SGA to improve their system of education, but there are no specific courses being offered for greenkeeping training. Perhaps this is a measure of how far they have to go - hopefully they will succeed.

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IT WAS only fair to allow Neil Thomas a full year in his post before subjecting him to some of the questions that seem to be asked fairly frequently at meetings of greenkeepers. Each month in this magazine Neil provides us with a valuable update on affairs, but I wanted to ask for his views on some wider issues.

First, though, I suggested that he was not very well known to members and he had to agree. "The point was brought home to me at the Open when I had gone out with a game to see how the bunker-raking was working. We got to the 3rd hole and the member actually doing the job turned round and asked me which section I belonged to! However, it is early days yet."

Neil is a Welshman from Penarth who studied at University College, Cardiff - part of the University of Wales, and graduated with a BA Honours degree in History. That led directly into an administrative career in Local Government and eventually to becoming Chief Administrative Officer in the Social Services Department in West Glamorgan based in Swansea. It was a career that embraced the complete range of Local Government administration with a final responsibility for a staff of 130, but left him with a hankering for a more personal and creative involvement in his job. Neil is married, with a wife and three young children who have settled well in Yorkshire.

### INCREASING SUCCESS

Apart from the fact that Bingley is not exactly the ideal base for a job that involves a good deal of travelling, the only available office facilities are inadequate. That is no fault of the STRI, whose increasing success is already putting a strain on the accommodation in the new building for their own staff. Picture, if you will, the Executive Director squeezed into a small office and surrounded by packing cases holding ties, blazers, umbrellas etc - in fact the entire clothing stocks for BIGGA.

His secretary/personal assistant is located at a desk in the

STRI typing pool. It is a measure of the shortage of space that the computer, ordered in March to develop new systems as well as to take care of routine clerical work, is still sitting in the factory.

The first task was to set up a headquarters with centralised administration for the whole Association and apart from the logistic difficulties I have mentioned, this is well under way. A new constitution was produced splitting the 24 sections into five regions. This regional structure, with separate administrators for each region, is beginning to work well and should provide the essential link with the members in their sections. It is at local level that adjustment to the new system seems to be slower. In creating any new organisation, some milk will be spilt and some noses put out of joint. Time has to be allowed for the dust to settle. It is clear that there is still a need in some sections for volunteers to work even harder than in the past if the whole organisation is to succeed.

### A MISERABLE LIFE

Members at the grass-roots (very apt!) are in too many cases living a fairly miserable life, badly paid and at the mercy of unsatisfactory golf club administrative arrangements. It is perfectly natural for them to judge BIGGA by immediate relief for them, but that is most probably unfair. If they are to enjoy the benefits of an enhanced professional status the foundations must be well laid. In addition, the new membership package as it has unfolded over the past six months contains some valuable items in fields such as insurance and employment protection. One difficulty is that greenkeepers put differing priorities on the items they think their Association should be providing. Some see education as

# FACE TO FACE

**Eddie Park  
talks to  
Neil Thomas  
Executive  
Director  
of  
BIGGA**

a first priority, but others are more interested in their opportunities for summer golf tournaments. All must find a place.

I am impressed that Neil, starting from scratch just one year ago, has taken all the

*Below: Eddie Park*



problems on board and he readily expressed his view on a variety of topics. It is obviously of prime importance that a greenkeeping association establishes good working relationships with other interested parties - the "customers", for instance - in this case the golfers in their hundreds of independent golf clubs.

Supremely important people mainly because THEY ought to be the chief source of funding for the development of adequate greenkeeping training; something they have yet to realise!

### NEW BROCHURE

Contacts are developing between an increasing number of secretaries and BIGGA and the leaflet "18 ways to help your greenkeeper" ought to be in every clubhouse together with the new Association brochure which will be published shortly. It may well be useful to try to establish contact with the Chairman of Green Committees and probably greenkeepers themselves could do much in this direction. I remarked that the old local vice-presidents of the old Associations (usually retired chairmen) formed a valuable link with their clubs, but they have largely disappeared from the new set-up.

The Association needs all the help available, but the Associate Membership category has not appealed to those more interested in their local section.

The golfing unions, both national and county, really ought to be representing golfers and collecting their contributions, which would benefit the state of their golf courses. But contacts seem to

# FACE TO FACE

## "The new levy on club members will test the willingness of clubs and the golfing unions to make a positive contribution"

have been few in number and not particularly helpful. Neil remarked ruefully: "The new levy on club members will test the willingness of clubs and the golfing unions to make a positive contribution to greenkeeper education."

Although many people think that a levy of 2p per club member is totally inadequate and that at least 50p, and preferably £1, would be more appropriate, it is clear, half way through the financial year, that collecting the levy for the Greenkeeper Training Committee is going to be a difficult task. This in turn will delay receipt of the R & A's "matching contribution".

The contribution of the R & A in getting BIGGA started has been invaluable (and very gratefully received), but it should not be seen as a permanent solution. Incidentally, relationships with the R & A are cordial as was evident at the Open and Neil himself represents BIGGA, by invitation, on the Greenkeeping Panel which discusses financial aid. "This, at least, allows the Association's message to be put over to the R & A and it must be acknowledged that that body has, in return, been very supportive."

Leaving the customers, how about contacts with the trade? These have been spasmodic, but there has been an increasing impetus of late. "A feeling of overall disappointment that the trade seems to have little empathy with the greenkeeper who provides much of their business. On the credit side, we now have six companies who



Neil Thomas

have begun to develop a positive, ongoing relationship with the Association - but there are many more who should be involved".

In fact, it is the more traditional firms, who might have been expected to welcome an involvement in better greenkeeper education and training, who are hanging back. Perhaps they too find it difficult to adjust to a national organisation, instead of giving prizes to section golf competitions. There are opportunities here to be grasped, but it is a subject requiring great care.

### CONFERENCES

Education is a big subject and on this front much is already happening. Two educational conferences are already being arranged at Ayr and Cambridge. A three-day Educational Seminar Programme will run alongside the inaugural European Turf Management Exhibition in Harrogate next January. Additionally, the Foundation Module on the Safe Use of

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# FACE TO FACE

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Pesticides will also be available for delegates. This is the first occasion on which such a programme has been run for greenkeepers in this country and it has already created much interest.

The chief discussions concern new courses which go beyond the basic City & Guilds into the realms of management. One college is proposing a two year full time HND course in greenkeeping, but the earliest possible starting date is 1991, as the proposals need to be validated and approved through the national education structure. The course would take in school-leavers with good A-levels and after two years of theory send them out to learn the practical side. I can imagine a few old-timers having doubts about that, but nowadays that is the pattern for most practical jobs with any pretensions to a professional status.

Neil did not dismiss, either, my own belief that greenkeepers might well copy other professions in looking hard at ways of helping themselves in the educational field. After all, the medical profession has a profusion of local "study groups" operating in a variety of different fields. Most BIGGA sections hold monthly winter lectures (all too often to listen to salesmen) which could, at a minimal cost, be reconstructed into Study Groups dealing with systematic basic theory - both for themselves and for their Green Committees. Ways must be found of reducing the inflexibility of college education.

Related to education is the question of an Association magazine and Neil is beginning to appreciate the difficulty of persuading many greenkeepers to put pen to paper. Not because they can't, but because they appreciate the problems that can be created with their employers. That is a factor common to most walks of life. Neil remarked with understanding: "The biggest single problem with the membership is to get them to think in a way contrary to tradition - which is to have a quick look over the shoulder beforehand". It is a chicken and egg situation because things will not change until proper professional status is achieved and one could be forgiven for imagining that the constitution of the average golf club had been

designed to thwart that objective. In the meantime there are some hard things to be said by someone!

## DISAPPOINTING

The attitude of the media is reckoned to be "disappointing and disinterested". The executive Director has communicated with all four major golf magazines, but received a negative response as they are all totally orientated to the professional tour. A briefing before the Open did little to improve the television coverage relating to greenkeeping on Television. "They still referred to marshals and stewards raking the bunkers and clearing water from the greens". Neil sees improving media response as a medium-term objective which will demand considerable lobbying.

We had covered a wide spread of topics and it was time to let Neil get on with his work "hard, but stimulating" he said. He reckons that his average working week is 65-70 hours! Members of the Board of Management and Regional and Section administrators are all making large contributions and perhaps the message to members should be something like that of President Kennedy at his inauguration.

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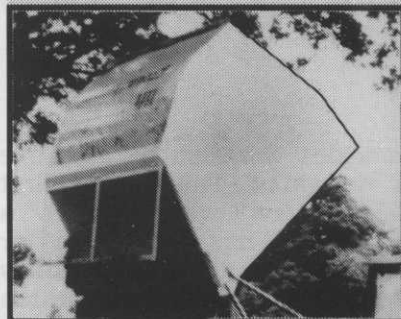
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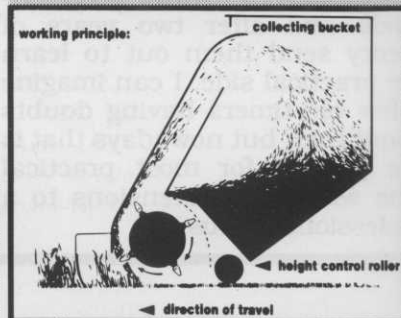
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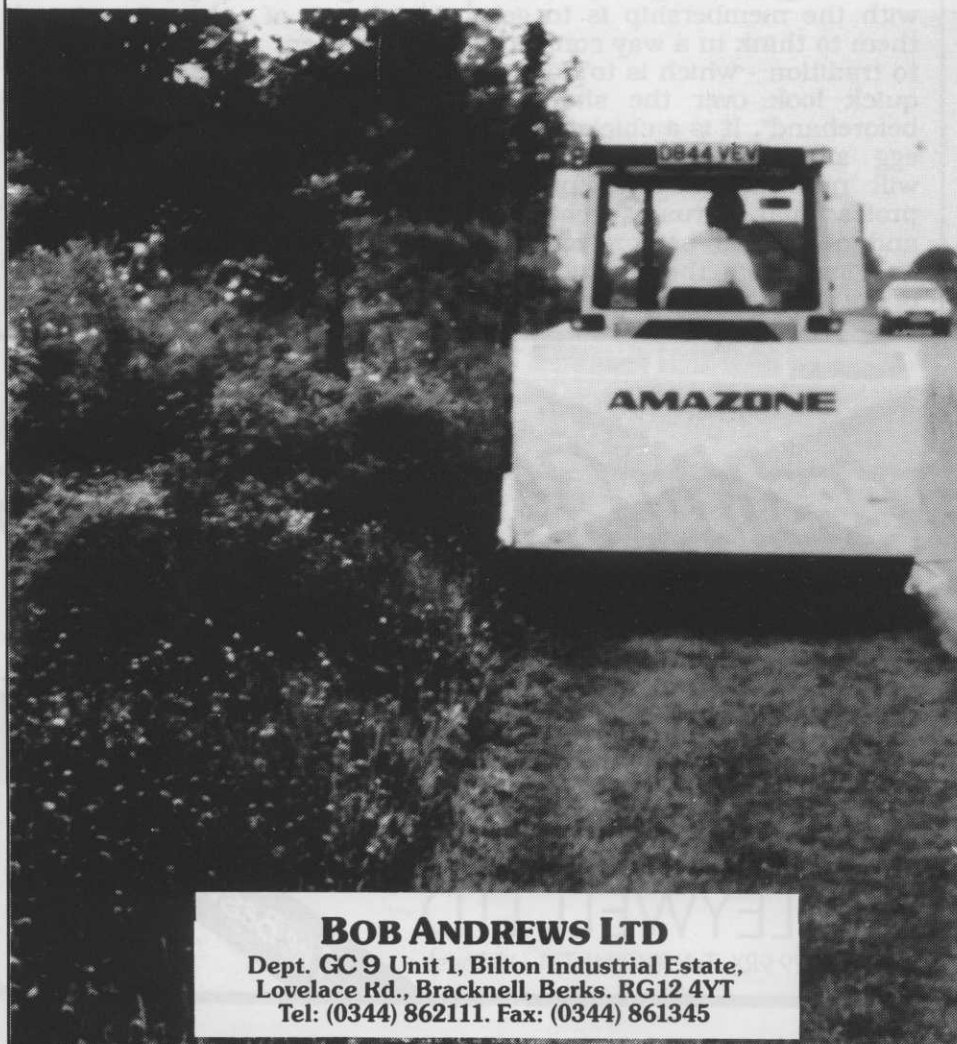


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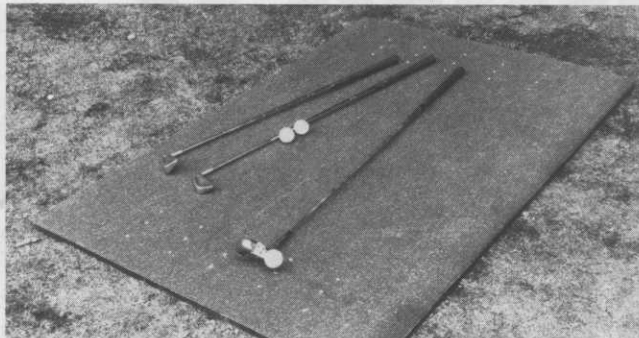
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## New partners 'delighted'

CHESHIRE based Toro Distributor, Turf Irrigation Services has assumed all irrigation sales marketing and service responsibilities previously handled by Golf Landscapes Limited of Brentwood.

This move established Turf Irrigation Services as the largest Toro Area Distributor in the UK. By absorbing the former Golf Landscapes sales territory covering London, S.E. counties and East Anglia, TIS now represents Toro Irrigation products in England from the South Midlands northwards. They are also responsible for Scotland and Wales.

Commenting on this important change, Bob and Peter Dunning, founder directors of Golf Landscapes said "We are very happy with this new arrangement - the growth in both landscape and golf course construction contracts has been so dramatic during the past five years that we need to concentrate our experts and energies in those markets.

"We will continue to provide irrigation system installation and maintenance services but we shall be working hand-in-hand with TIS, whose presence in our area will ensure that Toro customers will be given an even better sales advisory and after-sales service.."

Speaking on behalf of Turf Irrigation Services, Robin Hume, director, said "I have known and worked with both Bob and Peter Dunning for many years. We were all involved in the recent Penina (Portugal) Golf Course contract and as a result of this close contact, I identified the advantages of pooling our resources and business interests in consolidating our efforts in the UK turf irrigation market."

Both the Dunning brothers and Robin Hume stress that this



new arrangement offers increased benefits to the end user. "Between us, we shall have more experienced people out in the field providing regular customer contact, a much larger stock of spares to draw upon and, of course, a much more flexible and mobile installation and service team line-up."

Delighted with the way both companies have come together, Peter Roberts, General Manager, Toro Irrigation Limited commented: "This is the opportunity I have been

*Above: Bob Dunning, Robin Hume, Peter Dunning and Graeme Francis.*

waiting for to help all of us consolidate our UK market penetration, especially in the development of golf course irrigation". Bob, Peter and Robin are dedicated professionals in the sports turf business, between them, they will provide the 'tools' to take us into the nineties and maximise Toro service to the end user - our fast growing numbers of customers!"

UPON reaching the age of 65, Ransomes much travelled grass machinery technical representative, Bill Palmer, retires after giving 42 years valuable service to the company. He is well known to Ransomes UK dealers and many of the company's overseas distributors for his extensive knowledge of grass machinery and also for his dry and quick wit, which he put to good effect when taking service training courses.

Bill Palmer joined Ransomes after war service with the Royal Navy as a Leading Radar Operator. He served on an anti-aircraft cruiser and minesweeper prior to being attached to an 8th Army Long Range Desert Group, the equivalent of today's SAS, during the North Africa Campaign. Upon his safe return to Egypt, Bill Palmer vowed he

would never volunteer for anything again!

Among his many tasks was to help UK dealers and overseas distributors to solve technical problems and to train their service engineers. The latter became increasingly important as greater use was made of hydraulics as well as electric and electronic controls in Ransomes grass machinery.

During the past six years he made yearly visits to Israel and, like anybody going there for the first time, he was surprised to see such well maintained grass areas under irrigation, particularly in the Kibutzine.

During his retirement, while not admitting it, because he plays golf purely for the fun of it, Bill Palmer would be secretly pleased to see a drop in his handicap on the board at Rushmere Golf Club in Ipswich.

## Royal venue for grass machinery show

ROYAL ASCOT'S stable complex was once again the venue for Andrews Professional Grass Machinery Show. In beautiful surroundings, and with an abundance of grass on which to demonstrate the large variety of equipment they handle, Andrews entertained some four hundred people over two days.

Many suppliers contributed to the day with demonstration teams, and prospective customers were able to use the machinery for themselves. Ransomes, Hayters and Kubota had many large machines working throughout the day, amply demonstrating how easily large areas could be cut. Bob Andrews Ltd had their latest Scarifier, The Turf Doctor, on show for the first time and Allen Power Equipment were demonstrating their new Safeway Mowing System. Sisis and Twose were showing their turf conditioning

equipment and Saxon their large range of trailers. Stihl, apart from chainsaws and stone cutters, displayed their range of professional brushcutters and the new Dynajet High Pressure water cleaner was very much in evidence, quickly cleaning the machinery in use as well as cars and the patio area.

Charles Chance, Andrews' sales manager, expressed his delight with support he received both from suppliers and visitors and hoped that next year's show would be even bigger.

Andrews of Sunningdale cover the area of Surrey, Berkshire, a large part of Hampshire and most of London and any professional user seeking advice or equipment should contact Charles Chance at Robert H. Andrews Limited, the Garden Centre, London Road, Sunningdale, Berks SL5 0JJ. Telephone Ascot (0990) 27651

## A statement by Keith McKee, Turf and Amenity Adviser, Fisons Horticulture.

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Statements of IBDU percentage in fine turf fertilizers, whilst a valuable step towards fair trades description, must not in themselves be taken as a product endorsement. For example, fifty percent of not very much released over several weeks does not contribute any discernible improvement to a playing surface.

A hypothetical example of 8:0:0 formulation with 50% as IBDU, for instance, is definitely inadequate - providing only four units of slow release nitrogen over the long release period.

Our trials and experience show that at a standard application of 35g fertilizer per square yard, at least 10 units of IBDU are required in the product formulation to achieve truly extended turf growth and colour response. We have also found that the fraction needs to be complemented with an equal proportion of more rapidly released nitrogen to start the process close to the time of application.

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step-by-step instructions and complete, easy-to-follow diagrams.

BRIAN HURTLEY, previously director of marketing, has been appointed vice-president and director, Kubota UK Ltd.

John Woodward, previously national sales manager, (construction machinery) has been appointed to the main board as construction machinery sales director.