

The Editor's REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The past twelve months for the turf grass industry has not been without its fair share of news for magazine publishers to offer stimulating tit-bits to interest their readers.

Perhaps one of the major stories of the year, despite the fact it affected only a small proportion of greenkeepers was the announcement by the St. Andrews Links Committee that it had withdrawn the playing privileges to greenkeepers over the St. Andrews Courses, a concession which had been in existence for about 150 years.

Later it transpired the Committee, very conscious of the pressure on the courses by visitors from all over the world, had decided to bar *all* non-fee paying golfers the majority of whom were members of the PGA.

Let us hope the St. Andrews Links Committee will review their decision and allow genuine greenkeepers an opportunity to play a round over the links. It has been a privilege, which to our knowledge, has not been abused.

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The main event of the year must be the successful efforts by the R&A to bring together the three Greenkeeper Associations. The PGA proposals in 1985 which would have brought greenkeepers into the ranks of the professionals, but in a subsidiary role, was the stimulation that was needed for someone to act. Greenkeepers are a proud and independent body of men, but because of the nature of their job they lacked the negotiating and organising abilities to solve what was essentially personality differences within the separate Associations.

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Then there was the saga of the lost golf balls 'stolen' from the ponds at the Belfry. Local magistrates refused to hear the case and sent four young Birmingham men to the Crown Court, where after a three day trial they were convicted by a jury of stealing 448 golf balls, by diving into the lakes near the ninth and eighteenth greens in frogman's suits. The golf balls were eventually returned to the Belfry Hotel management who sold them for charity.

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Nothing unites a family closer than an outside threat to one of the members. This was certainly the case after an industrial tribunal in Dundee had confirmed that the sacking of the Head Greenkeeper at Carnoustie was 'fair' after hearing evidence that he had applied phosphate fertiliser to the fairways against the advice of a consultant agronomist and by so doing had encouraged the growth of annual meadow grass.

Greenkeeping and course maintenance policies are now the subject of considerable debate, with differing view points taking into consideration available labour and equipment, finance, playing pressures and what the members want or *what is regarded as good for them*.

Unfortunately, most greenkeepers are subjected to directions from people in authority who have little scientific or practical knowledge and are put in the invidious position of either ignoring the orders in the interests of the playability of the course, or do as directed and suffer the complaints when the problems arise. There is a name for it - Catch 22!

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Introduced this year was the first phase of the new Pesticide Legislation. This journal and others have attempted to emphasise just how far reaching are the laws governing the application of agrochemicals in European countries. So far this enabling legislation is not biting deeply into the major practices of UK greenkeepers, but in the future it will. Be prepared. Advise Green Committees of the need to set aside finance for brick built storage, proper washing facilities and training for those responsible for applying turf grass chemicals.

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In July this year the Sports Turf Research Institute opened its new offices at Bingley St. Ives. In recent years the finance for research has come from football and racing with little from golf. This is now changing and the importance of scientific trials, particularly into improved drainage and sand based surfaces has been recognised.

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The introduction of diesel powered greens mowers by both Ransomes and Jacobsen created considerable interest and obvious comparison between the two machines. Ransomes, in Guy

Catchpole's final month before retiring, also launched several new turf machines including an optional three or four wheel turf maintenance truck, in what would seem to be direct competition with Cushman and Sisis.

Morrison's, the New Zealand manufacturer and Jacobsen based near Chicago, split after less than a year together in their King's Lynn depot. Since then Morrison's have been bought out by a competitor.

Iseki also left the Lely home at Huntingdon and set up on their own at nearby St. Neots with John Hawkins as Managing Director and Colin Gregory in charge of sales. Toro machinery with Graham Dale overseeing the sales stayed in the Lely camp.

A management buy out by a team led by Trevor Martin took Vitax away from the Steeley organisation. Launched in 1939 the Vitax business has endured a succession of take-overs, forming a small part of other business interests. Now the business has turned the full circle to be independent once again.

The retirement of Derek Phillips, the Chairman of Rigby Taylor Ltd led to a complete management shake-out after Bernard Hedley took over the top job. Within weeks, their Sales Director Richard Lawrence had departed, only to emerge as the new Managing Director of Trident.

1987 PREDICTIONS

'Old Moore Lelan' gazing into the crystal ball, sees an American company with a UK base making a major move into the amenity turf market. With agriculture in a mess through over production they could well see sports turf as a growth area. And don't be surprised to see a take-over bid for a well-known British firm to achieve it.

Watch the compact tractor market. Others could be emerging as major competitors to those who have already established a firm foothold.

And finally It will be a cold damp winter with deep snow in places. Spring growth will be non-existent, the Summer confined to ten days in October and the greenkeeper blamed for the missed putts of 1987!

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