

GOLF

GREENKEEPING

and Course Maintenance

The Official Magazine of the
British Golf Greenkeepers'
Association

Founded 1912

The Association is affiliated to the
English and Welsh Golf Unions

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Printed by: W. Kristall Ltd, Clayton Wood Close,
West Park, Leeds LS16 6QE

Golf Greenkeeping and Course
Maintenance is published by:
Wharfedale Publications
Limited
P.O. Box 12,
Wetherby,
West Yorkshire LS22 4SR
Telephone: (0937) 63181

Published ten times per year.
Copies for non-members are
available on subscription
postage paid from January
1987, £12.00 a year. Overseas
surface and air mail rates on
application to the publishers.

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Next Month

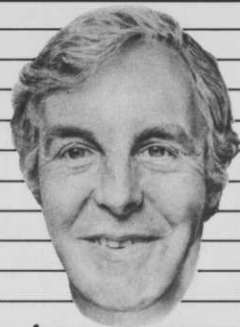
Review of Southport Show

**Maintaining Ponds and
Water Courses**

Seminar Reports

B.I.G.G.A. News Update

Greenside Comment...



John Lelean

A Levy / Grant Scheme for Greenkeeper Training

For many years this magazine has continuously campaigned for a radical improvement in the facilities for Greenkeeper Training and makes no apology for returning to this theme once again.

It is not only the organisation that needs changing, but the attitudes of the employers, in the main the Committees, who control the private clubs in the United Kingdom. As we have said many times before, the commercial golf clubs, that is proprietorial courses and hotel complexes, do recognise the need to maintain high standards requires highly trained staff. It is the members club, anxious to keep subscriptions at a rate equal to, or below the level of inflation, who view the training of staff as an unnecessary expense.

Peter Alliss, a former President of the BGGGA and a champion for a better deal for greenkeepers, recently suggested subscriptions to golf clubs were far too low. As expected, this produced an irate letter to Golf World from a reader who said this would turn the clock back to the beginning of the century when golf was a game that encouraged exclusivity. He went on to suggest a membership fee of £10.00 a week would be beyond the means of most members.

He might well be right if the income of the majority of members was within the salary range paid to greenkeepers, which a recent survey showed averaged £7,000 a year for the south of the country and under £4,500 for the northern areas.

At last month's excellent Mere Seminar, two of the more enlightened executives in golf, the R&A Secretary, Michael Bonallack and Commander Bill McCrea, the Secretary of Walton Heath, returned to the theme of greenkeeper training and put their weight behind a completely new attitude to the development of golf course staff.

Bill McCrea said training of his staff was budgetted within the amounts set aside for wages, but he put such importance on employee development this figure in future would be split and the club would have a specific training budget.

He went on to say the only way forward was to have a training levy on all golf clubs, so the cost of greenkeeper development could be shared. This would finance highly competent individuals, at all levels, ready to move into promotion positions, not necessarily with their own club.

There is nothing new in this idea. The Industrial Training Act of 1964 empowered Government to set up industrial training boards to cover every industry in the country. Although an agricultural Training Board was formed and farmers paid a training levy and were given grant aid out of the fund for training staff, nothing has ever been done for greenkeepers.

It would not be too difficult for the Golf Unions to instigate such a scheme. They already levy all golf clubs around £1.00 per member to finance inter county matches and other matters of self indulgence that rarely benefit the average golfer. This money, in the main, goes to a handful of very low handicap players, representing less than 1% of total club membership.

Pressure on the Unions will have to come from the R&A who admittedly have no direct control on the way Unions run their affairs, but no one will persuade us, they don't have a hell of a lot of influence.

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