

Flying Divots

An appreciation of what is not always appreciated

■ The Health & Safety Executive have disclosed plans to allow magistrates to dramatically increase maximum penalties for breaches in safety rules. The tenfold increase, from £2,000 to £20,000 per offence gives a clear signal to magistrates that offences should be dealt with firmly. Unlimited penalties are still available to the HSE in the Crown Court and such prosecutions have increased four times in the last three years. In addition, the HSE plan to increase the number of inspectors and will have the largest field force since 1982 by the end of 1991. Average fines under the Health & Safety at Work Act have doubled since 1988 to £877, the new increase coming as the result of extensive lobbying.

Perils of pesticide poisoning

■ A report on a Lancaster University study gives some cause for alarm to those within our industry regarding pesticide poisoning. According to their findings, cases of pesticide poisoning by those affected by organophosphate pesticides, eg: those often used to control insects, weeds or fungi, could be much higher than suspected for one simple reason – 'Victims have had no success in reporting to the official agencies, with many victims just too ill to report to a baffling system'. Calling the system 'a failure', the study highlights the need to be adequately protected, totally aware of substances used, strictly adhere to the instructions issued for use, and keep immaculate records of ALL chemicals used. Ignorance of these basics can seriously damage your health. Above all, DEMAND protection at all times. It is your right.

Wonders into tragedies

■ Over the fax today came a snippet too good to miss, originating from the pen of Peter McMaugh, Director of the Turfgrass Institute in Sydney, Australia: "Golf has almost become two distinct sports, one a spectator sport and the other a participant sport. The spectacle – the circus – the amphitheatre – the combatants – the commentators – trying to make it unique, all geared towards the spectacle of golf rather than the participant and all because of the advertising dollar, resting on TV ratings.

"And yet golf, of all sports, is both the ultimate in individualistic isolation and the most intense of competitions. All too often we are prepared to spend countless dollars on the few for TV and neglect the many enjoying the game in the fresh air.

"Budgets of \$16-20 million are not uncommon for new courses in Australia. 'Good' has become synonymous with outlandish or spectacular in the journalists' vocabulary. Commentators rush to pour adulation on companies who are technical miscreants – if not charlatans. Today's wonders become tomorrow's tragedies.

"The golf world seems to be full of spivs of two kinds – first the pro inspired by arrogance and second the technocrat inspired by ignorance – but both of whom can create masterpieces out of nothing in five minutes, one costing a fortune and the other saving it, and both leaving work behind in repairs for the next 20 years.

"I'll finish with the comment one designer made recently:

'Our main concern is to give the client the golf course he deserves'.

"I'll leave you to think about that."

A job for Moaner

■ An advert placed by Tees Valley Tourism for a £150 a month 'part time moaner or professional complainer' drew a response that astonished the county tourist board for Cleveland. The job – visiting hotels, guest houses and restaurants – was one of making life as difficult as possible for management. Someone should have told TVT that a humble postcard on almost any golf club notice board would have brought instant response... from the hordes of part-timers who enjoy directing their complaints and moans at the poor greenkeeper.

Golden divot for Alex

■ How good it was to see Seve Ballesteros back in winning form at the PGA Championship at Wentworth, and to see the Burma Road in such sparkling condition. My 'golden' divot goes to Alex Hay, a stout supporter of the greenkeeping cause, for heaping praise over the TV waves on course manager Chris Kennedy, and in bringing to the attention of countless millions the plight of all greenkeepers over the past two seasons. Whilst Alex gains the coveted 'gold', Peter Alliss loses Brownie points by daring to suggest that the West Course could use some re-bunkering and that he would love the job! The ghost of Harry Colt must be writhing at his audacity.

Old journals wanted

■ Now a plea for your help. Over the years I've attempted to build up a library of golf and golf greenkeeping techniques. The STRI Journals are invaluable sources of reference and I am looking for copies from all eras. I've some from the thirties, (first published 1930) practically nothing from the forties, ditto fifties. Market prices gladly paid and all issues considered. Call 0323 891291 or drop a line. Show me that advertising works!

Seve shows his mettle

■ Seve's renaissance continues apace with yet another great win – two in one week no less – at Woburn in The British Masters. Earning the equivalent of a greenkeeper's weekly pay over the past five outings each time he hit the ball – about £215 a shot – he also merits a 'golden' divot for kindly words spoken on Neil Whitaker's preparation of the Duke's course. This was no generous winner's lip service either, but well deserved in his describing the course as 'one of the best in Britain'.

Couplets of wisdom

■ Groundsman, greenkeeper... who are they
Without them both you'd rarely play
On grounds and pitches well prepared
From knowledge most would wish they shared
Too hard, too soft, too fast, too slow
But would you like to have a go?
Like Hell you would, so on your bike
You wouldn't know just when to spike
To scarify, to slit or trim
So leave the job all up to him
And when you're sitting round the table
Only speak if you are able
To do the job as he can do
You wouldn't really have a clue...
– submitted by Tony Howard, Maxwell Hart Ltd.

Divots

by Badleigh-Dunne

