

**W**ith the agreement of the greenkeeper I arranged to meet his staff individually. As a small team it is important that we know each other. Prior to the meeting the secretary had allowed me to look at their personnel files, so I knew a little about their skills and length of service. However for the benefit of us all as a group it was important that they could put a face to the new name and that I knew each of them individually. But more than that I needed to know about them as people, their family details, pastimes and hobbies as well as how they saw their job, their working relationships with each other and their aspirations for the future.

Like most interviews it is important to set the scene before a discussion becomes productive. After we had introduced ourselves I gave a brief explanation for the meeting, advised that I would be taking notes which would be treated as confidential and which they could see if they wished. I went on to explain that I needed to record their thoughts and ideas for me to understand who was doing what on the course before I could make a contribution to their cause.

Each meeting went well, they spoke freely, particularly at the end when I gave them a chance to ask me questions. The meetings were a good investment for future working relationships for we now nod to each other on the course and what is most pleasing, they speak with interest when we discuss course matters.

As a result of these meetings I knew the green staff and had a vague idea of their regular maintenance work commitments together with current course developments, also I had seen their machinery workshop and mess room. Even after such a short time I felt sure that I could use some of my long learned skills to make a contribution to their activity, together with the greenkeeper I identified several worthwhile projects.

On a lighter note we identified the more outspoken club members who masquerade as amateur greenkeepers. I pointed out that I was honour bound to read their sometimes extensive recommendations and listen to their advice which often included a good dose of 'Weed and Feed'. However I reminded the greenkeeper of the club rule that no member other than the captain and myself should give order to members of the green staff. While members may wish to pass the time of day and ask about his family or the course, he should not feel pressurised to change course practices to match the aspirations of individual members: We agreed that if this happened he should remind the member that a greenkeeper uses his skill to interpret the general policies of the committee. Therefore a member should direct his suggestion to a committee member or write to the secretary, who would be required to take such a letter to the management committee. Without realising it we had just made our first decision in what was to be a list of Duties and Responsibilities.

### Duties and responsibilities

Prior to accepting the job of chairman of green my thoughts had been directed to the duties and responsibilities of the job. Nothing was written down. It seemed that in common with most clubs you picked it up as you went along. While we should never condone an inflexible bureaucracy, I always find that the discipline of an agreed set of rules is necessary if each team member is to make a full contribution to the team effort. Otherwise a laissez-faire attitude pervades the group with members doing what they think is required rather than what is actually required. While this arrangement may be acceptable for a short time, practice has proved that most workers need to know the parameters of both their



Those outspoken club members who masquerade as amateur greenkeepers

short and long term responsibilities.

In an ideal world each worker would have a Job Description which included every aspect of his employment. Most firms are loath to issue these as they may be considered restrictive. Employers tend to fear that if the description is less than complete they may be forced to negotiate additional pay for existing duties. However many of the more enlightened companies have within their Personnel Departments, Job Descriptions which they use as an aid during job selection interviews.

Bearing that in mind, most general managers recognise the need for both managerial and supervisory staff to be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities. To this end they produce a printed list which may be quite specific in some of the 'must attain' sections such as output targets and budgets and rather vague in the 'should be aware of sections where a general knowledge of a subject is considered sufficient.

Quite early on in our working relationship the greenkeeper discussed this problem with me. He confirmed that there were no written rules for either of us to work to. He went on to point out that he could be more positive in his decisions if he was sure that he was operating within the rules of the management committee. I agreed to help and decided to extend the rules to cover the chairman of green. Within a few weeks I had drafted an outline for both of us.

As they were being written it became obvious that we both had responsibilities under the same heading. We agreed that generally my job was to interpret the policies of the management committee and that his job was to ensure that those interpretations were completed in the most effective manner. By the end of the year and after many refinements we each had a list of Duties and Responsibilities that we were both quite happy with. The headings included:

- Committees .....Policies and their interpretation
  - Major Fixtures.....Their identification together with any special course requirements
  - Club competitions .....Course requirements
  - Condition of the Course .....General and specific
  - Course work .....Use of safe working methods, development of good working practices
  - Work recording ....Recording of work done on the course
  - Plant and equipment .....Registers, Maintenance and security
  - Golf course legislation .....Present and proposed
  - Personnel records.....Ensure they are up to date and correct
  - Finance.....Set and control of budgets
- Next month: work recording.

# THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GREEN

## Part 2 Meeting the staff