

Letters

Send your letters to the editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL

Attitudes must change

On a recent visit to Lancashire I played some great golf courses, all of which were in very good condition. I was warmly welcomed at Hoylake, Hillside, Formby and Ormskirk, a courtesy afforded me through my BIGGA membership card.

On visiting the Southport and Ainsdale Golf Club I was refused courtesy, but on speaking with the secretary I learned that this facility is granted to visiting golf club secretaries and professionals. I appreciate that golf clubs have differing policies and are not obliged to grant courtesy, but surely if a club adopts such a policy how then can it discriminate between the three associations.

Whilst I accept their decision, I am unable to comprehend their reasons. Much knowledge can be gained by playing other courses and talking with the green staff, particularly when visiting outside of one's immediate area. This practice is of course one that is adopted by many club secretaries in order that they may enhance their own knowledge and experience. The impression I gained was that greenkeepers, in the eyes of some club administrators, are still regarded as second class citizens.

One can only hope, as time goes by, that the draconian attitudes still prevalent in some clubs will eventually change and that all personnel involved in the successful organisation of a golf club will be respected and treated equally.

BRIAN K TURNER

Head Greenkeeper, Worplesdon Golf Club,
Woking, Surrey

BIGGA in Europe

As course manager of the Vereniging Golfclub in the Netherlands I was pleased to learn in Neil Thomas's AGM report of the interest shown in achieving greater co-operation with associations in Europe, indeed in many instances I have tried to promote BIGGA in Holland. Further, I have no wish to take away anything from my Dutch colleagues, who in the last few years have formed their own association which is growing very vibrantly and successfully, and I would take this opportunity to wish them all the best for the future.

Nevertheless, as a Scotsman working for nearly six years in Holland, I feel somewhat left out of BIGGA because I cannot relate to an individual section/region, i.e. Scotland, England, Ireland or Wales. Understanding that BIGGA stands for the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, and knowing that in the Netherlands alone there must be a dozen or so fellow greenkeepers who may feel of a similar disposition, I wonder if there are any future plans for a European section of BIGGA? I would personally be glad to be part

of such a section and if necessary I would get directly involved. If interest from Dutch members was not strong enough, I am sure there could be justification for combining members from Holland, Germany, Belgium etc. I therefore would be interested to see what kind of response our members here on the continent might give, either by writing to BIGGA headquarters, or to me at the club address below.

COLIN FAIRLEY

Course Manager, Vereniging Golfclub,
Almeerderhout, Watersnipweg 19-21, 1341 AA
Almere, Holland

• *Executive director, Neil Thomas welcomed Colin's letter, lately having been active in following up on the successful European Forum held during last January's BTME. He commented, 'The Association is very much aware of the problems experienced by our international members and is planning a second European Forum at the 1994 BTME. We are extremely anxious to make positive progress in establishing a sense of 'belonging' for our European members. I am currently seeking contributors for the forthcoming forum and would urge our members in Europe both to attend and also, should they feel inclined, make a short contribution to the proceedings. Anyone willing to speak at the forum should contact me without delay, as the BTME seminar programme will be finalised shortly. The seeds have been sown during 1993 for BIGGA's development in Europe - there must now be a concerted effort to meet the aspirations of those of our members at the forefront of greenkeeping in Europe'. - editor*

Working Down Under

The May article 'Future of the Fescue' was most interesting to me, an Englishman working and studying in Western Australia. I plan to return home to Kent in 1994.

I work at Cottesloe Golf Club, a prestigious course in Western Australia, and I am also studying a course in Turf Management. As part of this course I am preparing a report and will subsequently talk on the varying aspects of cool season grasses.

In the UK, cool grasses are obviously used throughout the industry, whereas here in W.A. their use is limited to some occasional overseeding of fairways during the winter, usually with creeping red fescue. However, all the greens in W.A. are seeded with pure creeping bent, mostly of the Pennncross variety, though new constructions are now tending toward the use of variety 1019. We also have problems with *Poa annua*, mostly in older greens, so naturally I have an understanding of how this can affect playing surfaces.

Returning to the article, my understanding is that even if one is fortunate enough to have ideal construction methods and a sympathetic management team (one that allows for limitations in play to provide full establishment and

training of the fescue), there is still nothing to confirm the elimination of *Poa annua* from the greens. However, the most desirable qualities of fescue are its ability to withstand and recover from drought and its tolerance to heavy wear. This undoubtedly requires further testing and investigation in order to find out more of the management practices necessary to encourage its growth, and how well it stands up against the *Poa annua* invasion.

I would be most interested to learn more regarding fescue or its alternatives, also I have an interest in fescue/bent mixes for greens and wonder how these work, especially as bents have a high fertility requirement and fescues have a low fertility requirement, also I am curious to learn which varieties (of each) are generally used?

Finally, I really enjoy Greenkeeper International and find it most informative. If I can be of help to anyone regarding greenkeeping practices in Western Australia, please don't hesitate to contact me.

LEE SAYERS

Unit 14, 7 Merope Close, Rockingham 6168,
Western Australia

• *A highly respected agronomist commented on Mr Sayers' letter thus: "I don't think we need more research testing or investigation into the management practices necessary to encourage fescues. With bent/fescue mixtures, often the fescue acts as a nurse until the Agrostis takes over - but which one dominates depends on the soil and management, and maybe if both are less than ideal Poa takes over". No doubt there are others, seed breeders perhaps, who will be tempted to offer Mr Sayers the information he seeks - editor.*

Praise for team

Through the letters page may I express thanks to my team at Carden Park for their tremendous efforts in seeing the Carden Academy open ahead of schedule. The level of skill and commitment they have shown, particularly for young men, is heartening in these times and certainly augers well for the future of greenkeeping.

The conditions in which they have worked have been more than arduous and it is to their eternal credit that they have achieved such results.

The team comprises Rob Bryant, Justin Cheung, Peter Gabriel, Ian McDougall, Dave Wates, Chris Bryan, John Lightfoot, Chris Halton, Tony Wellings, Len Sproston, Andrew Woodcock and Jamie Poole. To a man, they fully deserve the recognition they have earned. Hopefully they will draw deep on the experience and I am most grateful for their help and support.

ANDY CAMPBELL

Course Manager, Carden Park, Chester,
Cheshire

Follow the Code

May I air my views on the interesting points raised in Kerran Daley's July article concerning worm control? Although I confess to being too young to remember the nightmare scene described, that of greenkeepers with handkerchiefs wrapped around their mouths walking through billowing clouds of lead arsenate, I can however describe the scene of a golf course built on heavy soil supporting more than its fair share of worms, i.e. playing surfaces which are the result of years of hard work being ruined almost overnight, of maintenance operations interrupted, golfers frustrated, and in some cases winter rules having to be introduced to allow the cleaning of golf balls on fairways – all of this can be very disheartening.

Perhaps if lead arsenate could have been researched and refined into a product that would have permitted its use today, with the help of a strict code of practice of course, or even perhaps with the issuing of a special licence to handle it, surely the ability to use such a product once in eight years, rather than applying today's products three or four times in one year, must have clear advantages.

Like Kerran, I agree that accidents can happen, but surely the more pesticide applications one now needs to make increases the risk of accidents. I also agree that protecting the environment is important and can only hope that the new chemicals marketed today (as a substitute for lead arsenate) do not in time show them to be a greater environmental problem, as they are having to be used more frequently and in far greater quantities.

The decision to kill worms in the soil is not one to be taken lightly, for the contribution they make to the soil structure is undisputed, but when a point is reached when a pesticide is needed, I for one would prefer a total control, one hit solution. This would then allow the greenkeeper time to choose the correct conditions for a safe application, rather than frequent applications at a time of the year when applying pesticide can be a major headache. The main point Kerran raised – and the point on which I would like to finish – is that careless greenkeepers abusing pesticides can give any product a bad reputation. Therefore, it is up to us all to follow the Pesticide Code of Practice, and if you haven't got a licence then it's about time you did!

GORDON J IRVINE

Course Manager, Mill Ride Golf Club, North Ascot, Berkshire

Travers has a point

May I, the greenkeeper and professional of some 30 years at Leek Golf Club, offer further observations on the article "Greens Must Not Be Spared." To begin, I must agree with Mike

Travers on a number of points. Over the Christmas holidays we must accommodate at least 200 players each day if the weather permits. I am at the club at 7am each morning, getting everybody lined up and collecting green fees from members guests so that we can be away at first light! What a great time we have, with mince pies, sausage rolls and various malt whiskies to sample.

In the winter period we cut three separate holes on each of the eighteen, one on the green proper, one on the surround and one on the temporary green. The surrounds are very large, which encourages trolley-pullers to keep away from greens and surrounds, and in addition we push tee positions forward so that regular summer landing zones are rested.

The course closes itself if the weather is foul, additionally we ban trolleys when the ground is white over with frost or when frost is rising from the ground surface. When such conditions arise the flag is moved from the main or surround hole to the temporary green.

Finally, BIGGA and other greenkeepers associations alike, with education available to their members, are certainly moving the right way – forward! On the other hand, the poor PGA member cannot say the same and for his large subscription (in the Midlands it has risen by 40% in the last three years) the average PGA member gets very little from his organisation. Bear in mind, a few years ago most jobs were pro/greenkeeper run and remember that us old lads still have a great deal to offer. I myself am still young at heart, still learning, and still working 12-14 hours every day, seven days a week.

PETER STUBBS

Leek GC, Staffs (member of PGA, BIGGA and IoG)

Most important tool

Having been in greenkeeping for 15 years I've often mused over what is the most important piece of equipment in our profession. I'm sure there have often been discussions on this very subject. There are one or two that spring instantly to mind, e.g. could it be the amazing three-wheel truck that seems to carry out all those jobs required on the course, stopping short only of making sandwiches and coffee, or maybe the latest triplex that does 0-60 in under six seconds and cuts 18 greens inside the hour, with specially designer groomer things that control thatch build-up? I think not!

In my opinion, the most valuable tool for greenkeepers is the Sony Walkman. It is solely responsible for keeping me in the profession to this day and I am deeply indebted to the person who invented it.

I'm sure most of us have been in the situation when, as a gibbering wreck of an apprentice, we've waited to be told our duties for the day and hoped for a nice, cosy job – after all, it

is freezing outside with a chill factor of minus 12°, surely the boss will take this into account? Wrong!

Unfortunately, it is your turn to slit greens on the compact without a cab. The only thing that prevents you from being carted off to the 'funny farm' is your personal stereo. However, there are some important factors to consider before using the stereo, most important being your COSHH assessment, i.e. some forms of music have proved harmful to health and environment, and wavebands such as 'Take That, and 'East Seventeen' have been given a hazardous 'irritant' classification and for the sake of sanity must at all times be avoided.

Important guide-lines for purchase are: 100 watts per channel (to drown the sound of the diesel engine); mini headphones (can be hidden under woolly hats to fool golfers); an endless supply of batteries.

In January 1988 my worst nightmare came true. Working at Romsey GC I had six greens left to slit when my batteries died. Without spares and sans music, getting through the afternoon proved to be a real character-building experience, one I have no wish to repeat. As a precaution I now use re-chargables, with a back-up set always at the ready.

Let's hear it for the Sony Walkman, which should be awarded the Most Important Tool for Greenkeepers' Award 1993...

LINDSAY ANDERSON

Course Manager, Badgemore Park GC, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon

Mowrah memories

I have the clearest memory of using mowrah meal in the early sixties to control worms in fine turf. It was an unpleasant operation to carry out and caused much irritation to the operator as the material was very much like powdered pepper!

Talking to Jim Arthur and some greenkeepers earlier this year about early pesticide usage, we talked about who made mowrah meal, when it stopped being used and why. We were not sure of the facts so I asked the Pesticides Safety Directorate for some background information. To my amazement, the reply stated: "I have been unable to find any record of MAFF approved products containing mowrah meal!"

I would be very interested to hear from more 'mature' greenkeepers if they have any information or memories of using this product. Perhaps there may also be clubs that have kept old records of purchase orders going back 30 years, which would identify the manufacturer? Can anybody remember the correct application rate? I seem to recall that it was 6-8 oz. per square yard. We should not let our history to fade so quickly!

JON ALLBUTT

24 Sunningvale Ave., Biggin Hill, Kent