

Letters

Send your letters to Greenkeeper International, BIGGA, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Aine, York YO6 2NF or fax them on 0347 838864

Video is great, but...

May I congratulate BIGGA on the production of their first education video, which I think will be of great value to all greenkeepers. However, it should be pointed out that a few points are incorrect.

To begin, the video shows a green being sprayed with a boom sprayer, the operator spraying whilst turning. All spraying should be done in straight lines, in order to avoid over-dosing on the inside of the turning circle and under-dosing on the outside. In fact, if very tight turns are made, the inside of the boom can actually be travelling backwards! I know this can sometimes be difficult because of the shape of greens, but that is the very reason for using walking booms and hand lances.

Secondly, standing still and waving a hand lance over an area whilst using a knapsack sprayer is hardly accurate, making pointless all those calibrations regarding walking speed. For spot treatments with a knapsack the operator should walk over the target holding the lance steadily and at the correct height, as though spraying the whole area, then simply turning the lance on as the target is transgressed.

I was particularly concerned regarding disposal of unwanted spray material, the video showing the drain valve on the sprayer being opened, the chemical 'glugging' out onto the ground. Granted, the point is made that this is a designated area for the disposal of unwanted spray material, but surely anyone in their right mind would rinse out first, including the first washings, so that there is no risk of a large volume of liquid running off into streams and watercourses, which on hard ground could quite possibly happen.

Apart from the above, I feel the video is too long and might be better condensed to thirty minutes. Also the mentioning of one particular product seven times could perhaps be reduced to just once or twice.

Chris Mitchell, Course Manager, Royal Ashdown Forest GC, Forest Row, East Sussex
Jon Allbutt replies:

I agree with the points in Chris's letter. However, this was a technically demanding video to make and Richard Fry did a good job, especially when you consider that he is not a spraying expert. I was in attendance on the first day of filming, but only to sort out protective clothing, calibration etc.

By the way, Chris missed the incorrect pouring of chemicals into the induction hopper, and I'm sure if I watched it again and again I would find more to criticise. Yes, it is too long, but don't ask me which bits to cut out, it is all interesting.

The video sets a high standard and will be invaluable to young greenkeepers, managers, college teachers, instructors and, yes, older greenkeepers too. They will find something to make them think as well.

Students say thanks

I am writing to thank everybody at BIGGA HQ and to say how honoured I am to have been chosen the winner of the Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year competition. It was a great experience.

My employers are delighted with my win. There has been quite a lot of local and national press attention and I have never had so many handshakes - I feel like I have won a gold medal at the Olympics!

The trip to the US starts on January 10. I have been told that the GCSAA trade show in Dallas is one that I won't forget quickly!

Once again, thank you for looking after us all at Aldwark Manor and for a great night out in Harrogate. I am very much looking forward to my trip to America and also keeping in contact with you all.

Bridie Redican, Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year

■ May I take this opportunity to thank staff at BIGGA headquarters and the Aldwark Manor Golf Hotel, plus of course Toro Irrigation, Lely (UK) Ltd and the PGA European Tour, for providing two most excellent days when I competed for the Student Greenkeeper of the Year award. I would also like to thank my fellow student participants, especially for their great friendliness toward me. Though not an award winner myself, I know the accolades went to three most worthy winners, all of whom will serve BIGGA most proudly.

Antony Bindley, Braunstone, Leicester

■ May I begin by thanking you personally for the many splendid articles that have appeared in Greenkeeper International, they are much appreciated.

This has been a tremendous year for me, especially as I have been associated with the PGA European Tour Team. Through the letters column, may I thank Bruce Jamieson and his staff and everyone who made 1993 a year that I will never forget.

I would also ask you to give my thanks to Jimmy Kidd and his staff, who made my stay at Gleneagles such a memorable one.

Paul Brannan, 15 James Nisbet Street, Glasgow

Editor's note: Paul was one of three winners in the Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year award last year. His prize? Attending two PGA Tour events, plus the PGA European Tour conference at Penina, Portugal.

One little word

Reference my article in 'Bones of Contentment' in November, before I am inundated with comments that 3/16 of an inch is perfectly acceptable, I heartily agree. The word 'below' has been omitted in the paragraph toward the end, which should read... "cutting greens below 3/16 of an inch". Although just one small word, this dramatically alters the meaning of the sentence.

Tom McKechnie, Carnoustie Golf Links, Angus, Scotland

'Inspiring' trade show

A recent holiday trip to the USA gave me the opportunity to visit the 1993 Florida Turfgrass Association Annual Conference and Trade Show, held at the Tampa Convention Center. After a short drive from Orlando I arrived in Tampa and soon found the convention center. I was welcomed by the Florida turfgrass officials and after speedily registering I proceeded to the first lecture.

The quality of speakers was first class and I especially enjoyed listening to Dr Bob Carrow, who presented a fine paper on Hydroject vs Solid Tine vs Hollow Tine aeration in fine turf. Following the workshop I was invited to their annual meeting and awards luncheon, this again proving

to be most interesting and informative. The amount of money generated from sections around the State, from which turfgrass research and their Association will certainly benefit, was encouraging. The trade show itself was inspiring and I made many friends in such a brief period. Next year's convention will be held in Fort Lauderdale, 17-21 September, and hopefully I can arrange my holidays accordingly. It was certainly money well spent!

Tony Dunstan, Mill Hill Golf Club, London

Accidents in waiting

I am a greenkeeper currently employed at Costessey Park GC, Norfolk. During convalescence following a heart attack I've visited a number of golf courses, to enjoy some rest and relaxation in beautiful surroundings. However, all is not rosy in this Eastern Paradise and, in some cases, accidents are just waiting to happen. Examples abound:

- a) Operators using machines without ear protection when the noise output far exceeds minimum levels.
- b) Use of equipment that presents a high health risk, whilst less risky equipment (though available) remains idle.
- c) Use of 'new' equipment that does not conform to current regulations.

It may be that Greenkeeper International can draw upon the services of experts at workshops given through BTME to outline the shortcomings and anomalies found. However, many greenkeepers and employers cannot afford the time to attend such workshops and rely upon written word prior to action.

My comments may draw adverse comments from greenkeepers and employers in this area, but I will stand by my claim and issue a challenge to readers to answer these questions honestly; any cheating is only against themselves.

- 1) In carrying out a risk assessment, is it necessary for an employer to record any significant findings?
- 2) Should someone, identified by name, be responsible for health and safety on the course?
- 3) Do you have transport standing by whenever a competent, correctly dressed, individual is using a chain saw, just in case?
- 4) What is commonly regarded as the first level of noise output, and how can one determine if a machine exceeds this in a normal working environment?

Did anyone get all of them right? Does any golf club comply with all these regulations? Should people care? In answering yes to the last question, readers should remember that these are but a small selection from H&S regulations. They affect everyone and are enforceable by law.

Answers:

Q1. Regulation 3 (4) Management of Health and Safety at Work: Where the employer employs five or more employees he shall record the significant findings of the assessment and any group of his employees identified by it as being especially at risk. Are there more than five employees at your location? Have you seen the written findings of the assessment? Which employees at your location are identified as being at risk?

Q2. Regulation 6 (1) Ditto: Every employer shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), appoint one or more competent persons to assist him in undertaking the measures he needs to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed upon him by or under the relevant statutory provisions. Paras (6) and (7) refer to self employed

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persons who have sufficient experience or knowledge to undertake the measures necessary to comply with the provisions. Is this true at your course? If not, who is the necessary competent named individual? Is that individual's name written down in the record?

Q3: Regulation 7 (2) Ditto: Every employer shall, without prejudice – b) enable the persons concerned (if necessary by taking appropriate steps in the absence of guidance or instruction and in the light of their knowledge and the technical means at their disposal) to stop work and immediately proceed to a place of safety in the event of their being exposed to serious, imminent and avoidable danger. The key word is *immediately*. Are your procedures capable of immediate reaction?

Q4: Noise at Work. Noise guide No 1. The first level is set at 85 decibels. Determination of a machine's output can be made by carrying out the following: *do not continue the test for longer than two minutes, as hearing damage may occur if personnel are exposed without adequate protection!*

a) Ensure that the machine is parked safely. b) Only use trained and correctly attired personnel in the test. c) Check the area is clear of any debris or other contagion. d) Start the machine. e) Run at full throttle and with due caution attempt to carry out a conversation with the operator. f) Can you hear what is said using normal voice projection? *Yes* – the machine is operating on or below the noise level. *No* – the machine is operating above the minimum level and ear protection must be provided, training given in its use and operators instructed to wear it.

Raymond Wigley, Costessey Park GC, Norwich

Lost opportunity

It was with increasing dismay that I read the thinly veiled advertisement (article) "Lock It Up". What a lost opportunity to address some important points to ensure yard buildings are constructed in accordance with modern thinking, not to mention the new EC/HSE legislative framework!

Employers reading the article will be tempted to construct 'sheds' in the same old way – as I find so depressingly often on my rounds. May I appeal to all involved in the design and construction of yard buildings to bear in mind two vitally important matters:

1) Where employees are gathered within a building for any length of time eg. workshops, rest areas etc., there must be a safe means of rapidly escaping in the event of an emergency such as a fire. Building such rooms within a 'shed' with security only in mind (no doors or windows) amounts to nothing less than a death trap. The collection of machinery and small tools in the main storage area frequently make it very difficult to get out in a hurry. Very often too the source of a fire will be a hot machine just parked right in front of the most obvious means of escape. Modern design and materials can ensure that the construction of doors and windows will give security as well as safety.

2) Little thought is given to the relationship between pesticides, oil or petrol stores, workshops and rest areas. It is not unusual to find new buildings with such stores right next to areas where employees are working or at rest. Add to this the fact that there are no external exits and you have an accident waiting to happen. There is plenty of guidance available to builders and designers to help them avoid disaster, but I wonder if they ever read them?

Too many mistakes are being made in yard

building design which employees have to live with. It is a pity that Inspectors do not pay more attention to this important aspect of health and safety at work. A few well placed Improvement Notices might go a long way towards getting the message across.

I would appeal to all involved in the provision of yard buildings: make health and safety one of the first things you think about, don't leave it to the end user, the employee, to worry about!

Jon Allbutt, Cherry Tree House,
Sunningvale Rd., Biggin Hill, Kent

Is this a first?

I have a brother, a brother-in-law, a cousin and an uncle, all greenkeepers at various courses, all of whom thoroughly enjoy their work. John Phillips, the uncle of this group, until recently worked at The Broom Hill G&CC in Vancouver Island, Canada. I say until recently, because during June 1993 he suffered a fatal accident, involving a tractor.

Our family were, of course, saddened by the tragedy and by our loss, but it has come to light that we were not alone, for the golf club where he worked thought so much of his work – and of John as a person – that they have re-named their club in memory of him. The new name is The John Phillips Memorial Golf Club. Each September a competition will be played in his honour.

We are all very proud of this and many of our golf-playing family hope to one day visit Vancouver Island to play in the competition with members of the club, an honour indeed.

I wonder, is this a first for greenkeepers?
Andrew Phillips, Glynhir GC, Dyfed

Tree grants available

May I draw to the attention of readers the large grants that are now available from the Forestry Authority for tree planting? These grants are available to all land owners, including golf courses, and are paid out under a Woodland Grant Scheme over a period of ten years. There is also a supplement for planting improved grassland, which is paid out at the time of planting.

We recently prepared a budget for tree planting in 15 different areas on a golf course and over a ten year period the grants will cover the total cost of the tree planting and subsequent maintenance.

Eamonn Wall, Woodland Consultant, Dollar,
Clackmannanshire

Course is right on target

I would like to thank all the staff at BIGGA and all the lecturers for a most interesting and enjoyable week on your Year One Management Course. I found it of great benefit and will be looking forward to coming back for Year Two. If any greenkeeper is thinking of going on the course, I would thoroughly recommend it. Thanks again for a great week.

Perry Smith, Deputy Head Greenkeeper,
Bramley Golf Club

Wrong hills

Your top photo caption (page 19, October issue, featuring Kingsknowe GC), indicates that the Braid Hills are shown in the background. Not so, these are the Pentland Hills.

Allen Wood, Braid Hills GC, Edinburgh

Bidding a fond farewell



My time on Greenkeeper International is finished, to my regret if not to yours. Looking back over the small mountain of issues it has been my pleasure to compile, I grinned at one comment

which appeared in my first editorial, recalling again the pithy words of an unidentified but oh-so-observant wordsmith: "Writing a column is easy," he declared, "All you have to do is sit at your typewriter until small drops of blood appear on your forehead."

Thirty five issues have come and gone, some with more blood-letting than others, and though occasions were legion when "small drops of blood appeared on my forehead" it seemed, more often than not, that blood appeared on my fingertips as well, for the equivalent of something approaching two block-buster novels has been thumped out on the keyboard of my trusty old Apple Macintosh; far more than any trifling 'bloody' column and, in truth, much more fun.

Editorial guess-work is at best an imperfect science. In trying to discover where readers' loyalties may lie, I've found no reliable way of discovering which elements in this magazine you've secretly pined to read – or those you'd be pleased to see the back of – while any 'research' I might have undertaken (in the main, listening to every greenkeeper I ever chanced to button-hole for more than a few moments) – served merely to offer guide-lines to those features you most enjoyed (without exception, the controversial ones), whilst failing to throw up any revolutionary or untried ideas.

Striving always to present all sides of the greenkeeping conundrum, often at no small cost to my firm (some would say impenitent) beliefs, in so doing I've held true to the doctrine of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), whose words are writ large above my computer screen: "We can never be sure that the opinion we are endeavouring to stifle is a false opinion; and if we are sure, stifling it would be an evil still."

My departure should not alter your expectation of good things to come, for a tantalising array of delectables will I am sure continue to appear within these comfortable old pages, pages that I have come to regard as my own. There will be words that please and words that infuriate, words that inspire and words that are best read with a sharp instrument close at hand. If you think you are being addressed in a condescending manner, or you suspect pontification, grasp the matter firmly: your letters page was never dull, make sure it stays that way.

So farewell. Be of good cheer, trusted friends – and be kind to your new editor. This old editor cum columnist cum photographer cum copy boy isn't about to kick the bucket, he's simply taking a well earned blood transfusion. The drip is deep in the artery, the bottle flowing with a translucent amber fluid that contains reputedly miraculous healing powers!

DAVID WHITE