



**BIGGA
GOLDEN KEY
CIRCLE**

It all adds up



DAVID WHITE meets Clive Williams (left) and Bernard Hedley, the men behind Rigby Taylor and supporters of the Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

In the dim and distant past, before pocket calculators made their mark as popular playthings, this writer would often struggle with the intricacies of a slide rule, failing miserably and gnashing teeth in exasperation. Thus if there is one thing guaranteed to make this math ignoramus gasp in admiration, it is the apparent ease and aplomb with which accountants skim through balance sheets, making huge mental calculations with nary a keyboard in sight. I will admit to the world that I hold the rarefied field of accountancy in very high esteem indeed, I am in awe.

The subjects of my most recent Golden Key interview, Bernard Hedley and Clive Williams, are as unlike the popular conception of accountants as you will ever find, being extrovert, relaxed, fun to be with people – yet both began their careers in accountancy. Both are living proof that accountants are not the stuffy number-crunchers of popular misconception, being warm, sensitive, utterly charming human beings entirely tuned to the real world, empathetic and oozing charm. In a nutshell, these two stalwarts of the fine turf business that is Rigby Taylor are the power-houses that make the company tick, clockwork and precision-like, each contributing in his own way to making Rigby Taylor a force to be reckoned with.

Bernard Hedley, the chairman and managing director, is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants who began his association with Rigby Taylor in the seventies as their accountant, partner in a local professional practice. There is no doubt that from this privileged position Bernard was better able than most to recognise a good thing when he saw it, and when a management buy-out of Rigby Taylor was mooted in 1980 he was instrumental in seeing the purchase through smoothly, whilst also seeing the wisdom in becoming a shareholder. At first he took on the role of financial director, becoming the chairman and managing director in 1986, a task which Clive likens to 'being in charge of the total logistics package'.

Bernard, a Lancashire native, likes to describe himself as an ex-accountant, rightly so when one considers the huge responsibility involved in directing such an extensive operation, and he sums up his job as being 'almost a referee', giving people their heads – within the framework of company policy – and creating an atmosphere where the customer is king. That the policy works there can be no doubt, for with a field force of 28, coupled with their own agronomists, technical experts and back-up staff, together with distributors of their Mascot range, Souters, Spray-Chem, GCSE

(Germany) and Lindsay's, they are most certainly major league players in the sports and leisure business.

I like to dig a little in these discussions and was curious to learn more of company philosophy, the thinking behind the doing. Bernard was not unhappy with my suggestion that they are the big fish in the little pond that is the sports and leisure industry. 'In the manufacturing context', he told me, 'I may draw a parallel with Marks & Spencer. We know where to go to get our own name brands manufactured, made to our own specifications, utilising ideas that we have devised and perfected. By definition I suppose we are relatively small in global terms but big in our field. Whether a client spends £200 or £200,000, the same philosophy to total service always applies'. Clive chips in – 'We are big enough to say to the major world-wide manufacturers, we will be your vehicle for new products in the marketplace, we'll give you coverage in Britain and Europe. Big or small, the thinking behind Rigby Taylor is one of professionalism, of really caring about individual needs. We can concoct a one-off cocktail, package a special mix, as we have done just recently for an environmentally sensitive area, we're quite unique in that situation. We're different from normal distributors, we search for products that will fit a real need in the market place, we have our own technical staff who trial, test, write labels – everything that is necessary to bring fine products to the end user'.

If Bernard is the referee, Clive Williams, Rigby Taylor's sales director, is certainly the team coach. He's been in the business for what seems like forever, beginning his career as an accountant though soon realising that a sales career was his forte. He cut his teeth with the Murphy Chemical Company, working through the sales ranks and ending as their general manager, following this with a spell at May and Baker in their garden products section before joining Rigby Taylor in the spring of 1989. I think of him as 'the happy fella', indeed both he and Bernard I see as a jovial twosome who know the importance of communication. They talk together; campaign together; laugh together, get things done together – they're kindred spirits.

The 'happy fella's' task sounds simple enough, but it is a huge one none the less. His is the task of training and moulding the sales team, ensuring that their technical abilities match their selling skills. He coaxes, motivates, inspires. He's hugely proud of his sales force, especially of their high level of technical knowledge. Both in the field and the sales office the emphasis is always on being recognised as experts. ■ 46

'Customers won't accept the advice of someone they don't trust'

45 → All are BASIS trained, constant updating in the light of new technology their way of staying ahead. Clive's thinking is summed up when he says 'customers won't accept the advice of someone they don't trust. Most of our selling is done by giving advice, therefore the advice must be utterly believable, true and honest, the client must believe in the man'.

Clive's a countryman at heart, never happier than when pottering in his lovely garden in the Cambridge village of Hardwick or when taking aim with a shotgun at clay pigeons, his second love. For all that, he covers 50,000 business miles a year in his car, so he must have some affection for the motorway system! He and Bernard are like twins when they talk of work.

To some this may be a dread disease, but to them it's a highly enjoyable experience from which they both get a positive 'buzz'. Bernard says that when he gets to his desk the adrenalin starts pumping and both liken their work to sport, a game they'd rather be winning than losing!

No interview would be complete without some discussion on the BIGGA connection. Rigby Taylor have become Golden Key supporters for one simple reason, they believe in the education of greenkeepers! As an investment in the future both Bernard and Clive see BIGGA as central to their thinking: they like their company to be involved both at section and region level and are glad that this new

way of saying thank you can be registered now on a national scale.

Asked what they would like to see for the greenkeeping profession if they could wave a magic wand, their reply in unison was for a greater awareness at club level – members, committees and green chairmen alike – of the professional qualities involved in caring for such a valuable asset as a golf course – the assets are massive, the recognition should be likewise.

Above all, they enjoy dealing with 'our' profession, expressing the view that it is populated by nice people with nice attitudes. From two nice people with nice attitudes, that's a very comforting statement.

AROUND THE GREEN

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the regions

SHEFFIELD

A Happy New Year to you all! What a marvellous Christmas dinner we all had at Wortley Golf Club. Our thanks to Rigby Taylor for sponsoring the event and providing the prizes, also to Rigby Taylor's Brian Booth, a very popular trade member whose support for BIGGA is very much appreciated. Thanks also to Barry Heaney for arranging the event and presenting us with a superb course (as always), and to Wortley GC for allowing us the courtesy of their course.

Congratulations to all the winners and don't worry, Barry Heaney is taking stock of your handicaps!

February Lecture *

We are again privileged to have Mr Peter Greenhough, captain of Brough GC and a member of the R&A Rules Committee, to talk to us on the Rules of Golf. As examples, do you know why you cannot go back to retrieve a forgotten club, or why you cannot start a match anywhere you like, even if you both agree to start on the eighth tee? Please bring your questions for Peter to answer – it will be an evening not to be missed.

March Lecture*

A trip to the GEM Fertiliser factory is planned – limited to 30 greenkeepers. Please contact me on 0298 813374 if you are interested – we are arranging a coach and Gem are providing lunch – please book early.

April Lecture*

Howard Evans, (Howard Evans Financial Services), will talk to us about pensions, mortgages or any other financial problems we may have. Howard visited my club recently to advise and arrange pensions for our green staff, and I was very impressed with the professional service he offered. Nothing was too much trouble for him to explain, and we all know how most of us struggle with gobbledegook jargon. Please pose any queries or questions you may have on matters financial that you do not understand. Howard will also be holding a private clinic for any confidential matters.

* Please note that all lectures are held on the first Thursday in the month.

JANE RYAN

DEVON & CORNWALL

Happy New Year to you all! China Fleet G&CC was the venue for our AGM, held on Wednesday 11 November. The morning's golf was a foursome competition for the Toro Trophy, played over China Fleet's excellent new course. Our non-golfing members were treated to the customary 'course walk' by course manager Richard Shapland, who I hear had a few sleepless nights before our meeting. After lunch the prizes for the Toro Trophy were presented by Joe Turner of Lely and Alan Dommett of Devon Garden Machinery to: 1st A Woolnough (Teignmouth) & R Whyman (Bude) 29pts. 2nd D Manley (Mullion) & C Miles (DGM) 27pts. 3rd T Farkins (Dartmouth) & G Tamblin (Mullion) 26pts. Our thanks to Joe and Alan for donating and presenting the prizes, also many thanks to Richard Shapland, who had the course in superb condition and to China Fleet G&CC for allowing us the use of their excellent facilities. The section AGM followed, opened by our chairman, Bill Pile.

Agenda & Minutes

1) Opening of the meeting.
2) Approval of last year's minutes: Proposed by D Parr, seconded by W Potter - Approved.
3) Financial report: the balance sheet showed a slight loss of £15.82 on the previous year, which now stands at £868.63. The approval of the balance sheet was proposed by G Child, seconded by T Pipe - Approved.

4) Secretary's report: The secretary thanked all members for supporting the section in such large numbers over the past year, also mentioning our two new meeting sponsors: Avoncrop (February) and C.R Willcocks (Guest Day). Thanks were expressed to our main Iseki dealers, Devon Garden Machinery & PJ Flegg, who once again provided breakfast and travel to the 1992 Iseki final.

5) Chairman's Report: The chairman opened by congratulating Tony Gooch, head greenkeeper at Torrington GC, on being runner-up in the 1992 Toro/PGA Student Greenkeeper of the Year competition. The chairman also congratulated Gordon & Marion Child and the regional board on their continued success of Westurf, which is now the premier turfcare show in the south west. With the success of Westurf, members were offered an excel-

lent package to attend BTME, and this was very well supported. The chairman further reported that membership had passed the 100 mark and asked all members to promote our Association to those greenkeepers who haven't yet joined. On closing he thanked all our trade members for their continued support.

6) Election of Officers:

i) Chairman – B Pile. Proposed T Pipe, seconded J.Mills – Approved.
ii) Secretary/Regional Board member – R Whyman. Proposed G Child, seconded B Summers – Approved.
iii) Vice-Chairmen. J Mitchell, S Redman and B Summers were all re-elected en block.
iv) Vice President- A. Dommett. Proposed G Child, seconded T Pipe – Approved.

v) Any Other Business – Suggested venues for 93/94 were: Oct: Tehidy. Nov: Torquay. Dec: (AGM) Okehampton. Jan: Fingle Glen (section seminar). Feb: Trevoze/Thurlestone/Looe. March: Padbrook. July: Launceston (guest day). B Mitchell asked if the committee could look into a less expensive menu for lunch at meetings, so that some of our younger members could afford to attend. The venue of our Christmas meeting was also raised, as numbers were limited to 80 at Okehampton. After some discussion it was agreed to keep this venue,

as Oakhampton GC always make us very welcome.

Gordon Child ended by congratulating and thanking the committee and secretary for running section affairs so efficiently.

RICHARD WHYMAN



SOUTH COAST

Our winter lecture programme got off to a good start in November, well attended by both members and guests. Our speaker, Alan Betts from the Forestry Commission, gave an illustrated talk which included details of grants which are available when planting woodlands.

On 3 February our guest speaker is Jim Arthur, who will be talking on 'Commonsense Greenkeeping!' In view of the expected large audience, the venue will be at the Dorset College of Agri- → 48

