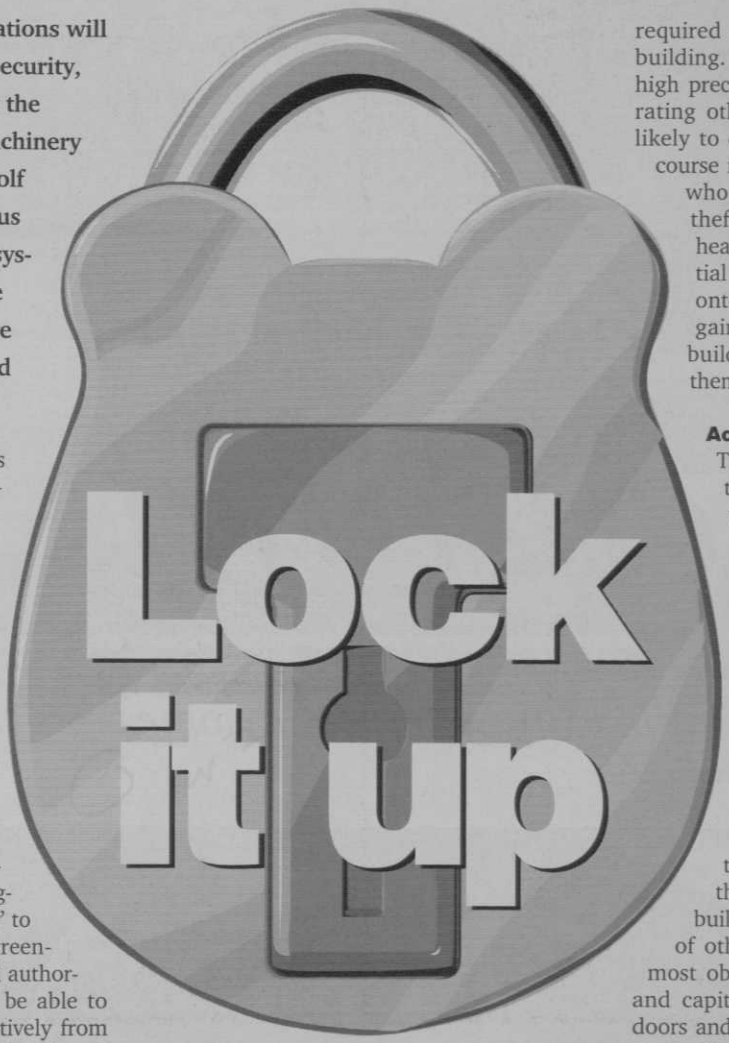
Greenkeepers in vulnerable locations will be aware of the problems that security, or lack of it, can bring. Housing the sophisticated and expensive machinery necessary to maintain today's golf courses should be a concern to us all. Greg Preston explains how system-built structures can provide greenkeepers with a secure store and workshop, with many added functional advantages.



Historically the greenkeeper's shed has been purposely constructed far away from the clubhouse and, ironically, its isolated location is now increasingly a contributory cause of theft and vandalism. As golf clubs are faced with the escalating costs of machine, equipment and materials replacement; building damage and higher insurance premiums, what can be done to minimise these disruptive effects?

Clearly there can be no absolute guarantee of totally eliminating the problem but careful consideration at building design stage can legislate against the 'remoteness factor' to the satisfaction of members and greenkeepers and without offending local authorities. The greenkeeping staff must be able to service all parts of the course effectively from a building that is accessible, functional and enhances working conditions.

Such is the flexibility of today's system building, that the greenkeeper can actually benefit considerably from improved space utilisation, leading to even greater efficiency and control. Whether a new building is under review, or an existing structure scheduled for upgrading or replacement, it is sensible to invite the system-building manufacturer to visit the site to survey the existing facilities, establish the club's short and long term aspirations and assess the proposed site.

The initial survey and proposal should focus on such aspects as:

- access to meet the needs of vehicles and storage
- provisions for external storage of fuel, top dressing and fertilisers
- provisions for machinery washdown
- organisation of internal space to achieve maximum security, safety and operational efficiency
- passive and active security
- the building programme and timescale
- the building structure and any customised requirements.

Personnel access doors are available in a variety of materials and finishes, including:

1. Timber
2. Lightweight steel
3. Simple plate steel
4. Sophisticated security doors

The first two would require supplementary alarms to be fitted whereas three and four, although more expensive, are likely to obviate the need for additional security measures. The skill is in balancing aesthetics and function with total construction costs. For vehicle entry, the roller shutter door, for example, provides excellent accessibility and is the best and simplest door for internal locking, without any visible means of entry. It has a proven track record of reliability and, being big, heavy and noisy to operate, will put off the average intruder. Windows should be as small as possible; high level; lockable; double-glazed – preferably with laminated glass and without visible hinges or fixings.

In particularly high-risk areas, an external, protective steel grille should be incorporated which also acts as a visible deterrent. Not all segregated areas actually require lighting from windows and this fact should be taken into account at design stage.

A cleaner, quicker process

A predictable building programme is assured because, using dry construction, the project will not be delayed through poor weather conditions. Compared with traditional wet construction there are no unsightly piles of bricks, sand and cement. There is minimum disruption and inconvenience to members during the construction period and the completed structure will blend harmoniously with its environment – an important consideration for members and the local authority planning department.

Strong, solid and secure

A major deterrent in the battle against theft and vandalism prevention is a structure that looks solid and secure. This will of itself cause the potential intruder to think about the effort required and the risks of breaking into the building. A steel framework clad in tough, high precast concrete wall units and incorporating other visible security features is very likely to dissuade the would-be offender. Of course it is not simply the professional thief who is responsible for the upsurge in theft and damage. Unfortunately in heavy residential areas, there are potential problems with children who venture onto courses for either opportunistic gain or sheer devilment. The isolated building is perceived as fair game to them.

Active and passive security

The greenkeepers building can be protected with active security measures which embrace intruder lights and an audible alarm system linked with either the clubhouse or security company. However, it is sadly the case that the remoteness of the building can mean the damage is done before anyone can respond. This further reinforces the importance of the building having passive security from the first day it is handed over.

The more progressive system build manufacturers will accommodate all the appropriate security features in their design solution and offer the building owner and operator a number of other benefits. The best advice is the most obvious. Start with a secure building and capitalism on this position with secure doors and windows. By assessing key areas of the building, design decisions can be taken at the outset which optimise door and window type and position. Being the daily working and entry point of the building and offering a 'soft target', every effort should be made to keep doors to the minimum.

Requiring virtually zero maintenance, the more high performance system building will be clean, functional with the capability to offer the greenkeeping staff office, toilet, shower and mess-room facilities. Additionally the building fabric should of itself reduce the risk of fire and control the spread of flame but normal fire precautions should also be taken in the event of a fire starting inside or outside the building.

One further word of advice. Having made the commitment to a secure building, it is important to plan and organise internal and external space for that building. COSHH and The Health and Safety Executive ask that separate facilities be provided for:

- Hazardous storage
- Equipment/Workshop
- People

At the initial survey stage, therefore, time should be spent discussing the orderly and regulated division of all internal space to cover among other items fertiliser and chemical storage; plant and vehicle garaging; workshop facilities; parts stores; oil storage; flags and other course furniture. Thus it may be seen that system building can be a quick, cost effective, practical and secure solution to the greenkeepers storage and workshop needs. Close inspection of its many aesthetic and functional benefits may serve to underline just why.

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