

## We deserve a fair wage

As a qualified greenkeeper and a BIGGA member I feel I must express my concern over the wage scales that a lot of golf clubs are applying in Scotland.

The fact that many clubs won't even look at the BIGGA recommendations, let alone consider them, sums up the situation perfectly.

Throughout my nine years as a greenkeeper I have yet to be given a straight answer to the question, why?

Surely in this day and age when the role of the greenkeeper has come a long way from the 'old farm worker' or the 'glorified grass cutter', golf clubs could listen and appreciate how much more complicated the job has become.

I feel that communications between the club house and the greenkeepers' shed could be greatly improved by not only involving the 'committees' but also the ordinary members. This can easily be achieved by holding regular open nights where the members would be invited to put any questions to the greenstaff regarding the course. This would not only improve relationships, but also supply the answers that golfers frequently require after many a good or bad round.

Only when more people are aware of the job of the greenkeeper will they realise that we do deserve a fair wage and that we could possibly catch up with other skilled tradesmen.

Name withheld

## It's all about teamwork

To the Executive Director

Further to the topic of your welcome article on communication, I'd like to contribute a viewpoint, extend the debate a little further, and possibly assist those seeking improved communication channels. The ability to project a professional image, in our industry as in any other, relies heavily upon effective communication.

As you rightly observe "communication, to a greater or lesser degree is a problem in all large organisations" (and, sadly in a great many small ones). But the criticism "poor communication" is in itself a negative critique, and all too easily aimed.

So, how effective are we all at our respective methods of communication? This is addressed not only to fellow Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers, but also to Golf Club Managers, Secretaries and committees.

The stress occasioned by "poor communication" is largely brought about by ambiguity – direction is unclear, the message or information to be conveyed is unclear, and often the messenger is even more unclear.

I doubt I'm alone in believing that the most effective communication method is still the spoken word followed by a written factual account of discussion and events. Yes, the perennial, much maligned and misunderstood

## A FROSTY DAY AT ST ANDREWS

by WALTER WOODS

When winter comes and frosts appear  
the grass turns white and the air is clear,  
Greenkeepers arrive at their work each day,  
Then decide – early – if golfers can play.

Damage to greens is caused by walking  
and not by playing (if you hear them talking)  
The leaves are broken all over the place  
and the roots can't cope in keeping pace.

So, when spring comes and the greens should be good,  
the ball starts bouncing – and golfers are rude.  
"Why are the greens not smooth?" their song,  
*Just keep off the greens when the frost comes along!*

Little Jack Frost can go and get lost  
and give the greenkeeper some peace,  
The golfers moan, jump up and groan  
and invariably act The Beast.

No matter how you try – or effort apply  
to protect the course for the season,  
They will go and play – kick Hell and make hay  
and ruin the course for no reason.

At first break of dawn, bedcovers are drawn  
and out of the windows they peep,  
They arrive at the tee – all cheerful and free  
and stand in a crowd – just like sheep!

"Why does he do it?", they'll holler and shout  
Especially loud when the greenkeeper's about.  
He's doing it for you, to save the course  
They would argue all day – even use physical force.

So think of one thing at the onset of spring  
with the courses all pretty and nice,  
If we'd played on the frost, all would have been lost  
And the greenkeeper taking mental advice!

● *Walter Woods BEM, is course manager at St Andrews*

communication medium – the staff meeting. Be it weekly, bi-weekly or monthly it is a system I have long adhered to.

For the formulation and acceptance of course maintenance and development programmes; the introduction of quality initiatives, and determining clear collective goals and objectives, this "getting the team together" format is paramount in achieving success.

We begin with an agenda, all staff attend and the meeting is controlled and managed within two hours, each item or job is given a completion date and we all assign ourselves to the appropriate tasks. Next month we follow up, monitor progress, celebrate success (!) and set further milestones to reach, and new objectives to accomplish together!

This instrument of communication, involving all, builds team spirit, motivates, measures progress, shows tangible results and finds solutions ahead of problems. This also demonstrates a level of professionalism both in attitude to ones role as a manager – to colleagues and superiors – but also as an effective communicator.

The format will vary according to the priority of the agenda, i.e. short, medium and long term objectives. The ultimate aim being that of involving all, in following a clear direction – by the same route. Thus avoiding our old

enemy, ambiguity.

However, this process has not always been met with approval. One prospective employer listened to my rationale and agreed the principal but suggested that any such meeting including greenstaff should take place when it rained – because (obviously...) we'd have nothing better to do!

This of course was only one misguided opinion, and as we all know, opinions are like *poa annua* – we've all got some!

**Anthony Black,**  
Golf Course Manager  
(Formerly Golf Euro-Disney)

## Not all and sundry

During the Christmas break I have had time to catch up with my workload, reading nominated publications advised by my tutors at Myerscough College where I am studying for a National Diploma in turf science. I have been a member of BIGGA since leaving school and starting in the industry in 1989.

One of the books I have read is 'The Way Forward'. Considerable space has been given to greenkeepers and the BIGGA organisation has been awarded both bouquets and barbed wire. One of the points that I would like to raise and feel quite strongly about is the morale of trainee greenkeepers.

Throughout my time at work and latterly at college it has always been instilled to us the importance of our professional nature, how we must strive to become the best. To quote the editorial: how 'There is now great opportunity for greenkeepers to make a concerted effort to project themselves as technically competent, qualified individuals in a skilled profession.' To feel part of this profession we are encouraged to join BIGGA and feel part of the team.

Now I find all sorts applying to join. Get in favour with a greenkeeper and he will give you an application form, once you are a member you can play most courses in the country for free.

Please can we stop this practice before it takes too tight a hold. By all means encourage membership but be sure we have members who have the profession at heart, those who are willing to help us establish our professional status and are willing to work for that end. Not golf club members who are in the right place at the right time wanting to take advantage of one of the only 'perks' of our trade.

You are doing a grand job. BIGGA is killing off the peak cap and string belt greenkeeper and the new image is gradually coming to the fore. Our profession knows BIGGA is there, we must now get the message across to clubs and golfers that we know what we are doing.

**Tom Smith,**  
Myerscough College, Preston

● *Editor's note: "All sorts" can't join. Each application is vetted at national and local level. And at least two applications have been turned down since November because the applicants didn't work where they said they did.*