

Greenkeeper wins fight to clear his name

David Hinks, a highly skilled head greenkeeper with over 27 years experience in the art of fine turfgrass care, celebrated with champagne following successful action taken against Hayling Golf Club, his former employers, at a recent industrial tribunal. In publishing David's account of this miserable affair, he suggests it may serve to inspire other greenkeepers into action, especially those who feel they may have been dismissed summarily without good and proper cause. His account also serves to highlight the huge problems that can occur when those with scant knowledge, committee men in particular, get it into their collective heads to discount the advice of their head greenkeeper and perform as surrogate greenkeepers, plus swallowing as gospel every utterance issued by an outsider – an explosive double act.



David Hinks and his wife Vicki: justice was upheld

and at the time, who did their best to bridge the rivers of animosity and belligerence that others chose to flood upon them.

"If all this was not enough, my dismissal was carried out with an apparent lack of knowledge for employment law and procedure; somewhat surprisingly, as the person set with carrying out this task practices in this field in a professional capacity.

"To summarise, Hayling members lose out because they do not have the course they deserve, plus bearing the not inconsiderable costs of seven years of what was (and remains), in my view, totally unsuitable agronomic advice. In addition, the poor club members bear all the legal costs accumulated in resolving my case.

"I lose out also, because I've had to wait nearly 15 months to clear my good name and reputation, thus making it nigh on impossible to secure another post. Additionally, a point that depresses me, any greenkeeper succeeding me is left with a terrible legacy, the last thing any thoughtful and caring greenkeeper would ever wish to enact.

"Since the beginning of this miserable chapter, with such a shadow hanging over my technical skills and ability, I have been restricted in choice of work and have become self-employed (still as a greenkeeper), involved in course construction and maintenance.

"Clearly, I could not have held out for so long had I not been a member of BIGGA, entitled to the excellent insurance cover that comes automatically with membership. Thus a very big vote of thanks to my friends, folk who supported my action, especially those who took the time and trouble to read my very detailed case history and who then prepared factual reports.

"In conclusion, a vote of thanks to my solicitor, who took on the case at short notice after my first attempt at gaining legal advice failed, and to my dear wife Vicki, for without her love and support I would have found it almost impossible to win through and see justice upheld."

■ *David Hinks took his case to industrial tribunal in March, claiming he was wrongfully dismissed. The hearing was adjourned until November 1, when the club avoided reappearing by offering a cash settlement of £7000. He was also offered an ex-gratia payment of £2700 when he was fired.*

Concern over new turf standards

Turf growers Rolawn has joined the debate over turf accreditation and quality standards.

Terry Ryan, Rolawn's sales and marketing director, says he speaks from his company's position as Europe's largest turf producer in taking a firm stance to maintain high standards. "We want to ensure that any proposed standards are up to the highest levels of quality and not drawn so broadly that they become meaningless – and thereby self defeating – by letting the 'almost good enoughs' through," he said.

"Our principle concern is that we have no wish to see a fall in quality standards, which is a real possibility unless the utmost care is taken."

Pesticides guide now available

The latest edition of the British Agrochemicals Association's Amenity Handbook – 'A Guide to the Selection and Use of Amenity Pesticides' is available now. The revised section on choosing pesticides helps managers to select the right pesticide for the job. The handbook includes a summary of legislation related to the use of amenity pesticides and explains some common pesticide terms. Advice on the careful and accurate application is also given, covering in particular calibration, storage and disposal. Free from BAA, 4 Lincoln Court, Lincoln Rd, Peterborough PE1 2RP. Tel: 0733 349225. If you'd like more info about amenity pesticides, talk to Patrick Goldsworthy.

New man at GCSAA

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has a new executive director. He is Steve Mona, aged 36, and he replaces John Schilling who has left to start his own business.