

FLYING DIVOTS

■ Time for a reminder. Members should note that the Association is approved by the Board of Inland Revenue under Section 201 Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. This means that individual members can claim tax relief on their subscription payments through their annual tax returns whilst golf clubs paying subscriptions for members can claim tax relief through their accounts. This benefit for members substantially reduces the cost of their annual subscriptions and in claiming relief members should simply list their membership of BIGGA and indicate that the Association is an approved body under Section 201 ICTA 1988.

■ Brokenhurst Golf Club in the New Forest was fined £2,500 plus costs of £610 for "illegally" taking water to irrigate its greens. The club admitted it took 80,000 gallons more than it was licensed to use because of a breakdown in communication. Secretary manager Stewart Craven said: "When I took on the job my predecessor did not tell me about the conditions. It was a genuine mistake."

■ Andy McKee has left Fisons after seven years to join Erin Marketing Ltd as sales and marketing director.



■ The greenkeepers at Brighton's Hollingbury Park course had a shock when they turned up to prepare the course for a pro-am. A vehicle had been driven across the 12th green leaving tyre marks in the turf, the flag had been stolen and children had used a bunker as a sand pit. People, believed to be travellers camping just to the north of the course, had also been spotted playing football on the green.

The local council's three municipal greenkeepers, led by Terry Spence, worked frantically with rollers and did a bit of "cosmetic surgery" to get the green fit for the club's biggest event of the year.

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

Criticism against STRI is unjustified

After reading Paul Copesey's letter in your May edition ("Advice Left Wanting"), I must take issue with many of his remarks and especially those comments based on assumption, inaccuracy and misunderstanding.

Whilst brief details were provided to produce an interesting March edition article on the reconstruction of the greens at Royal Birkdale Golf Club, I hope your readers will appreciate that as advisers/consultants, the STRI will always operate normal professional and business criteria with its clients, including that of confidentiality. I am, however, able to say that the decision to replace the old turf of *Poa annua* after the greens were reconstructed at Royal Birkdale was not based on economic grounds. It is, perhaps, somewhat naive to suggest that a golf club totally committed to producing the best possible standards would jeopardise the success of remedial reconstruction works for the sake of an item costing a relatively small percentage in the context of the significant overall costs (least of all Royal Birkdale Golf Club).

The option to import new bent/fescue turf was fully considered but decided against in the light of previous experiences with top quality imported bent/fescue turf laid onto an improved sandy soil rootzone (such turf took several years to acclimatise during which time there was significant invasion by clumps of *Poa annua*). The relaid turf at Royal

Birkdale (which was cut at 18mm thickness) contained no organic mineral soil – the turf comprised of some thatch layers with sand (the latter material originating from several years of past top dressings with pure sand). Mr Copesey's assumption that the relaid turf was inappropriate as it must have contained in part the "undesirable soil" is wrong. Could I also say that in making his criticism of the re-use of the predominantly *Poa* turf, Mr Copesey appears to substantiate his position by purporting to quote from my remarks in the March edition article about Birkdale. He misquotes!

The articles in your March and April editions do not demonstrate inconsistency of agronomic advice from the STRI. Each article was quite different in its concept and purpose, viz an article about green reconstruction in unique and specific circumstances in contrast to Mike Canaway's article on part of a short-term research project. Whilst Mike Canaway's article properly points out some of the possible dangers associated with returning sandy rootzones (substantiated with facts and figures), potential dangers associated with turfing works had been well appreciated by STRI advisers for some considerable time, as well as many greenkeepers and others in our industry. Similarly, the possible merits of washed turf have long been understood but as yet this avenue of establishment has not been pursued in this

country for maybe several reasons, including commercial ones.

I agree with Mr Copesey's comments that in all areas of performance bents and fescues out-perform *Poa* any day. However, I do not think that one should ignore the fact that *Poa annua* is a ubiquitous species which is found in most golf greens in varying degrees. Of course, if greenkeepers can apply good management to sites where architectural, constructional make-up and environmental factors are favourable towards bent and fescue development, then *Poa annua* content can be minimised. Nevertheless, at many clubs it is clear that without *Poa annua* there quite simply would not be golf greens. Yes, thatchy, stagnant, disease-prone bogs of *Poa annua* is the nightmare scenario for any greenkeeper, but there are many courses (including Championship courses) which will have varying but often significant amounts of *Poa annua* (usually with some bent), and whose greenkeeping staff proudly present such greens as very good playing surfaces throughout most of the year (and where members are very happy).

I trust my response will be seen as being mainly explanatory in nature, although I suspect that in some quarters with a blinkered outlook it will be seen as a purely defensive repost!

J Perris, assistant director (advisory services), STRI, Bingley

Why we must build on 'The Way Forward'

May I make a comment on "Looking Back to The Way Forward" (GI May '94) and congratulate Michael Bonallack for the clear description of the R&A's role in golf, probably not well understood by many.

"The Way Forward" surely exceeded the expectations of the authors and its publishers in the impact it made. Accepting that, it had a slow start, partly I suspect because of the reticence in introducing it with much publicity, and partly because the greater part of the audience to whom it was addressed, ie those in influential positions in members' golf clubs, didn't think there was anything wrong in their current methods. But those who did take

it seriously and took some action found much support and enthusiasm. Some, not many, clubs and the Home Unions, especially the English Golf Union, have really moved with their seminars up and down the country.

But I sense that the momentum has slowed and this is the reason why thoughts were expressed at the BTME workshop which I attended that an update of "The Way Forward" would be timely. We still hear too often of large greens committees meeting frequently and the head greenkeeper taking instructions from a chairman who knows all about the technical problems – surrogate greenkeepers they call them. And

then, if things go wrong, who is blamed?

The R&A is respected throughout the golfing world and any report or recommendation emanating from St Andrews is listened to and trusted. I believe "The Way Forward" was a success and I would like to see further advance on that success. Some sort of review of where we are now and what future is indicated would be relevant and very influential.

I am glad that BIGGA has stirred up this subject and hope the organisation will keep the discussion going; but we must also get Golf Club Management involved.

Arthur King, Lympington