

Fascinating glimpse behind the scenes

Having just returned from a Secretary and Regional Administrators meeting at Aldwark Manor, I would like to take this opportunity to say what an education it was for me. I'm sure everybody else who was in attendance would thoroughly agree.

Our meeting started with Neil Thomas making the necessary introductions followed by Ken Richardson giving an education update and Chris Boiling talking about *Greenkeeper International*. Finally we were entertained by the lively talk of Bill Lynch on sales and marketing.

The evening session was filled by Fenchurch Insurance who made us more aware of our membership rights and benefits, and where part of our subscription goes. We were informed of our 24-hour direct line service. This was followed by a relaxing evening talking to fellow secretaries on how everybody's section operates.

The next morning we were introduced to Brin Bendon who has been involved in the management courses at Aldwark Manor. Brin conducted a very good session on public speaking and presenting ourselves in committees. The morning finished with Brin giving us the task of making a presentation to a committee, which created some nerves when everybody's case had to be read out by themselves.

The afternoon session was a tour of the BIGGA HQ by John Pemberton who showed us how things operate and introduced us to all the staff. The day finished with an open forum for everybody to put their ideas forward.

To summarise, I would like to inform fellow members what a dedicated team we have working for us at BIGGA HQ and I would like to see more members actively involve themselves in the Association. We have come a long way since 1987 but can still proceed further with everybody's help.
Antony Bindley, East Midlands Section Secretary

A dog with a bone

With reference to two of your articles in the February edition of *Greenkeeper International*, I would, if I may, make certain observations. Firstly, "Com-

A gap does exist between our profession in UK and Germany

In reply to the two letters in the February edition, under the heading 'Jerry Bashing'.

Firstly, in reply to Mr Walton at the Sennelager Golf Club. I am sorry if you got the impression we were, as you call it, "Jerry bashing." The point was more than anything aimed at the profession and the vastly different practices between the English and German greenkeeper, and was not particularly aimed at the race. Also, if you would like to visit your local Arbeitsamt (unemployment centre), you will see there is no such 'beruf' (occupation, trade, profession) as greenkeeper. In the event of becoming unemployed, which I hope you never do, you would be registered as a Landwirtswirtschaft worker which is 'farmer or agriculturalist' or even Landschaftsgartner (landscape gardener). Let's hope this will all change as golf becomes more popular.

Secondly, I would like to reply to Mr Seve Schmitz. You're quite right, in any work you must earn respect from the people you work with and for. The former has been no problem, whether it be a German or

paction - the fight goes on" by Philip Shaw. I would most certainly agree that aeration is of utmost importance to any played grass area summer and winter alike. (Committee members and agronomists please take note.) To this end I would suggest that any golf club official reading this article actively encourage this procedure as often as is possible, it is in everyone's interest. As for any greenkeeper that is having trouble persuading his or her club of this point, consider two possibilities. Firstly, are you sure that you have effectively "sold" the idea to your committee? (Some really do take a lot of persuading.) Be like a dog with a bone - don't let go. I have had the same problem myself. Secondly, if you are cer-

tain there is nothing more you can do to persuade them to make the correct choice, leave! Yes, leave. Vote with your feet, go elsewhere, as that club does not deserve a conscientious qualified course manager. Take heart, it's not all doom and gloom. Some clubs have woken up. The others think we do it for our own good, not theirs!

The second thing I'd like to comment on is Paul Bishop's letter, "Bad and the good". Well, Paul, you are not on your own, (you may have noticed a reference to agronomists above). You state in your letter that you parted company from one golf club - be positive, be glad you are no longer there. I have met good guys but fortunately only one of

Japanese worker. The problem we had was the golf course owner was an architect who would overrule many decisions made by Mr Bishop. Mr Bishop would explain why the owner's suggestion would not work etc, only to be told: "Yes, I understand - now do it." To cut a long story short, the so-called fight you referred to took place in court which, due to Mr Bishop's professionalism, which should not have been questioned in the first place, we won.

We cannot understand why many German golf clubs seek British greenkeepers because "they are the best", only then to question decisions made by the head greenkeepers. Lastly, I would like to thank the response from readers and would be grateful and curious to hear from anyone else living in Germany with regard to any aspects of the profession. We can gain much from these opinions, so it's about time you all put pen to paper.

Elaine Holland

● Elaine's partner, Stuart Bishop, is now head greenkeeper of 27-hole Domane Niederreutin Golf Club, due to open in July.

the other kind. Having given much thought to this gentleman over the years, I cannot decide if it was his fault or not. Think about the following. A number of years ago I took over a golf club which, in the early 1980s, had run into problems and called for help. They were sent an agronomist who was a specialist in a different field of sports turf. So I would ask, who is at fault? The agronomist could have said he could not help for obvious reasons, but surely he should not have been sent in the first place.

Do we need agronomists? I, for one, would say at certain times; a problem can arise which you or your colleagues haven't encountered before. Then a true golf course agronomist could be invaluable. Do not be discouraged by one or two unwitting people.

For any one who is interested, I am a qualified head greenkeeper of some 30 years, and in charge for over 20. I have been in Germany now eight months and have thus far not regretted the move. If anyone is thinking of the move out here, go for it, it is different to the UK but not as bad as some would have you believe.

Ray Jackson, head greenkeeper, Sennelager (British Army) Golf Club

Not an ideal world

In reply to my earlier letter regarding hard hats, Martin Petherick (*Letters, March*) states that, rather than greenkeepers wearing hard hats, it would be better to educate golfers not to hit golf balls when greenkeepers are in the vicinity.

This, of course, is the ideal. Unfortunately it is not an ideal world. Many golfers, regrettably, hold greenkeepers in contempt, the attitude "if they will cut the greens when I want to play my ball they deserve to be hit" is, sadly, not uncommon. Given this attitude, and that greenkeepers frequently use highly dangerous machinery, I believe they should use both hard hats and education, and any other method of protection available, and that golf course management should support and encourage them to do so.
James Smith, Ollerton, Nottinghamshire