

IoG's thanks for BIGGA's positive attitude

To the Executive Director,

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Institute of Groundsmanship to thank yourself, Bill Lynch, the members on your BTME steering committee and your members at the BIGGA AGM for the very positive attitude taken towards the SALTEX/BTME partnership on mutual co-operation.

I feel sure, as does the team from Independent Exhibitions, that after talking to your exhibitors on the Thursday and Friday that P&O will now have great difficulty in proceeding with their proposed exhibition. The attitude from the exhibitors was positive and the co-operation factor between our two organisations was welcomed as a very constructive move by both BIGGA and IoG.

I can assure you that the IoG will not withdraw from any co-operation policy if P&O announce they are not proceeding, in fact I hope I see that the co-operation between our organisations can proceed further over the coming years, certainly in the area of education and training which I am sure will receive the support from our executive and members in general. I know our respective training officers are going to talk this through in order to report back.

It was very unfortunate for BTME that the weather took a turn for the worse on Thursday but how you must have been pleased to see queues to get in. I must admit we thought it would be empty.

Congratulations on an excellent BTME, this must have been one of your best exhibitions, the feeling among the exhibitors was very positive and it is now assured a future calendar slot along with SALTEX, supported by both the exhibitors and visitors, both to the benefit of the profession.

Derek Walder BEM, vice chairman, the Institute of Groundsmanship

Defending hard hats

Is there a golf course in Britain where the greenkeepers wear, as a protection against flying golf balls, hard hats as a matter of routine? This would seem a simple and obvious safety measure, given that the golfer's traditional shout of 'fore', if called, is frequently made inaudible by the noise of machinery the greenkeeper is using.

I ask this question because, at the club where I play, the committee recently bought each greenkeeper a hard hat to wear when working on the course, but failed to make its wearing compulsory. The result of this is that 75% of the greenkeepers refuse to wear their hat. The reasons given to me by the non-wearers for not wearing the hats have been both varied and unconvincing. I can only think that the underlying reason is that they think it sissy and unmanly to wear visible safety

clothing. They are quite happy to wear safety boots, also provided, which are of course indistinguishable from normal boots.

James Smith, Ollerton, Nottinghamshire

Bad and the good

Regarding the article on 'poor consultants' in the December issue. I am presently a course manager in the West Country. I have been in the business for nearly 15 years, with nine of those at management level.

The previous course I worked at was a new one in Kent. I can safely say that this was the worst experience of my career to date. A major part of this was caused by the so-called agronomist.

Firstly, the greens and tees were constructed poorly from the outset, under his guidance. I took the job on when the course was 18 months old because I could see the huge potential of the course. Then when the obvious problems ensued and I put my case forward with articles and evidence aplenty, the management of the golf club still took the advice of the agronomist. (He even said that slitting greens was totally unnecessary and a myth amongst greenkeepers!)

The end result was that I had to seek alternative employment and what made matters worse was that the present course manager actually took my position well before I left and effectively pushed me out, even though he knew all the problems I had encountered.

The reason I have written this letter is to ask: "How much longer do head greenkeepers/course managers have to put up with poor conflicting advice from certain agronomists?" There seems to be no standard amongst their trade. What qualifications do you have to have to call yourself an agronomist? Obviously, there are some good experienced agronomists but there are also a relative number of poor ones.

Head greenkeepers/course managers have to ask themselves: "do we need these so-called agronomists telling us our jobs?" Let us just get on and do the job we are paid to do and call upon them if the need arises (which is fortunately the case in my present job).

I would welcome other greenkeepers' comments as I am sure I am not the only one who has suffered this fate.

Paul Bishop, Yate, Avon

...It was very interesting to read about greenkeepers' anger at poor consultants in the December edition. I have a feeling that the number of greenkeepers being asked about their experiences with consultants has been limited.

If the head greenkeeper/course manager knows the business really well I don't think he or she should be in for a "surprise show" when calling in a con-

sultant. In the UK and abroad, we know of very capable people doing their business and also of people who are below acceptable levels.

First of all here, we are confronted with a choice. Is greenkeeping not a matter of making choices many times during the seasons? Preferably the right choice as many times as possible. This is beneficial to him/her and of course to the club, the members and the course.

Speaking of my own experience I am very enthusiastic about working with the STRI and have been for many years now. The feeling is they are part of a team that is working towards the same goal. In this team the head greenkeeper has his/her specific job or role to play. A consultant can be a good assistance here.

Frederick Ten Hage, LGV-Leeuwenberg

Why 'Jerry bash'?

I am putting pen to paper to express my displeasure after reading the article about being a greenkeeper in Germany. First of all, why do all articles concerning greenkeeping in Germany have to be negative to the point of being ridiculous. It seems that some people have nothing else to do but 'Jerry bash'!

I shall confine myself to one major point to avoid getting boring. This point concerns the matter of greenkeeping qualifications in Germany at the present moment. To publish a phrase like "you must have attended six weeks over a three-year period at a greenkeeping college, you do not have to be employed by a golf club" is absolute rubbish. For the sake of anybody wishing to come to Germany I shall quickly outline the procedure to become a qualified greenkeeper in Germany.

This is taken from the Delila GmbH near Krefeld in central Germany, one of only two recognised colleges in Germany so far.

Possibility 1: Four years as a labourer at a golf course followed by - 'course A,' three weeks at college and one year practical; 'course B,' three weeks at college and one year practical; 'course C,' three weeks at college and final assessment.

Possibility 2: A horticultural qualification is necessary as an agricultural manager or forestry or as a landscape gardener (either of which is a full three-year college course equivalent to block release). This is then followed by one year practical in your chosen direction and if you decide to change to greenkeeping you must do 'course A, B and C' as above.

As you can see, far more than six weeks is needed. By the way I'm Welsh not German.

Alan Walton, assistant head greenkeeper, Sennelager Golf Club, Germany

...I have been a greenkeeper for 25 years. The last seven of which have been spent in Germany. No, it was not all plain sailing for me at the beginning but statements like "We don't do it like that here" would surely not be accepted by a professional greenkeeper (without putting up a fight!)

It sounds like Elaine Holland and Stuart Bishop have had a bad experience in Germany, therefore their article represents the negative side of greenkeeping here.

Greenkeeping in Germany has many benefits other than earning more money. When a greenkeeper has earned respect as an expert in his field he can set about educating the members and his staff.

Mistakenly, a lot of greenkeepers coming to Germany expect everything to be the same as in the UK. It is not and probably never will be. But rewards can be high for the right people and working conditions are good.

I feel the article "Life can be tough as a greenkeeper in Germany" is too much of a generalisation of a country which varies greatly from north to south.

By the way, my staff do not finish work at lunchtime on Fridays, they also work weekends.

Seve Schmit, course manager, Golfclub Schloss Myllendonk, Korschenbroich, Germany

Just go for it

As runner-up in the 1993 Toro Student Greenkeeper Award, I have just returned from my third and final week as guest of the PGA European Tour.

Through the pages of this magazine, can I extend my thanks to Bruce Jamieson, my host at the Tour, and Louise Davies who made all the necessary arrangements.

I must also mention all those friendly faces, too numerous to name, who made my trips to La Manga, Mallorca and the Forest of Arden such a pleasure and success.

Finally, may I suggest to any student that this award offers a unique insight into the highest levels of greenkeeping and is a remarkable learning experience which is well worth every effort that it takes to win.

Richard Andrews, Highgate, London

Well-deserved win

I would like to congratulate David Walden on his victory in the ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Awards. Having met him at Aldwark Manor, no-one could doubt his commitment to the profession, and I know he will be a great ambassador for BIGGA. I wish him well in his year, and for the future.

My thanks also to everyone from ICI and BIGGA headquarters.

Stefan G Antolik, head greenkeeper, Cooden Beach Golf Club (runner up)