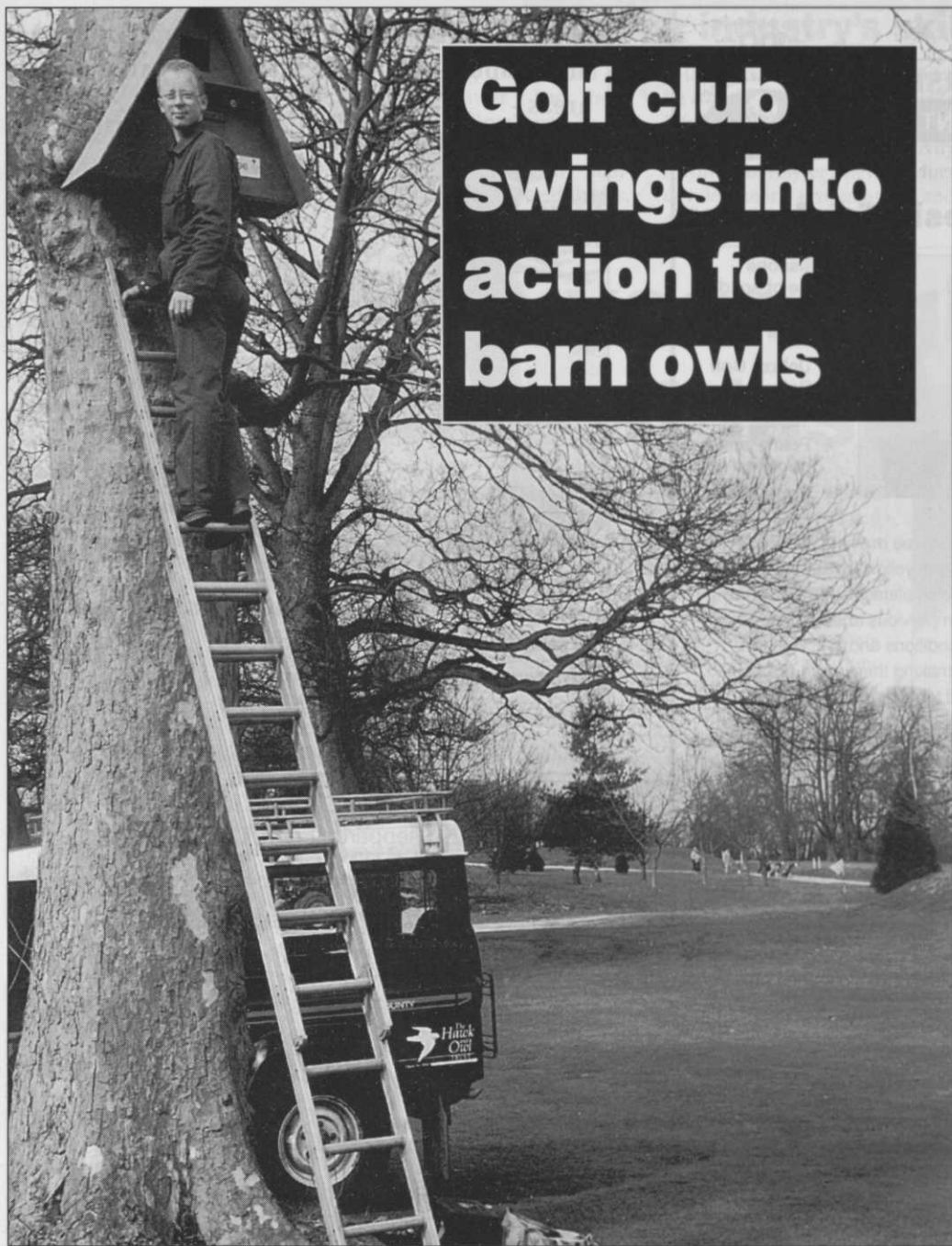


Golf club swings into action for barn owls



John O'Gaunt Golf Club's Steve Thompson inspects the nestbox put up by Colin Shawyer

Golf and wildlife conservation have joined forces again to offer a new home to a pair of barn owls – just in the nick of time before this spring's breeding season.

Steve Thompson, Greenkeeper at John O'Gaunt Golf Club, near Sandy, Bedfordshire, sent an SOS to specialist conservation charity The Hawk and Owl Trust. A pair of barn owls have traditionally nested in an old building on the golf course, but it was being restored and converted.

Hawk and Owl Trust Director of Conservation and Research Colin Shawyer went to the rescue with one of the Trust's new A-frame nest boxes which are proving particularly attractive to barn owls. But before putting up the box, he carefully selected an appropriate tree within easy reach of good, rough grassland hunting habitat, near to one of the practice greens.

"Now it's finger's crossed for the breeding season said Colin. "Although the building conversion will include a special space for the owls, it will take time for them to get used to it as a nesting site. Our immediate problem, therefore, was to find them a home for this year."

This summer Colin will also be monitoring the success of four different kinds of owl boxes which he put up two years ago at Northampton Golf Club. The club organised a special fund-raising tournament to enable the conservation work to go ahead.

"The Hawk and Owl Trust aims to carry out similar conservation work in partnership with other British golf courses," said Colin. "We hope clubs which are inspired by these examples will contact us so that we can get a nationwide programme under way."

"Many owls and other bird of prey species are still under pressure and we all need to do as much as we can to help them survive," explained Colin. "Golf courses can offer ideal habitat for owls – and if this doesn't already exist it can be created with just a little effort. But only then is there any point in putting up a nest box or basket."

Golf clubs which would like to become involved in this conservation initiative or to get a flavour of the work the Trust carries out may like to purchase a copy of the new booklet, Boxes, Baskets and Platforms (£3.75, UK postage and packing free).

Please write to Colin Shawyer, Director of Conservation and Research, The Hawk and Owl Trust, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

Founder member quits AGMA

Statement from British Seed Houses

British Seed Houses has announced its resignation from the Amenity Grass Marketing Association (AGMA) which it helped form in 1981.

In a press statement British Seed Houses Managing Director, Neville Bark, commented "As one of the founder members of AGMA we are obviously saddened to be leaving the Association and it is a decision the company has come to only after lengthy consideration. However, we have for some time felt disappointed with the way the association was moving.

"The original objectives in setting up AGMA were quite clear. As well as ensuring that high quality products were available to end users, another key aim was one of education, as only with accurate knowledge about the relative merits of individual varieties, can consumers make informed decisions when purchasing seed.

"We now feel the company can better achieve these aims outside the association."

Reply from the Amenity Grass Marketing Association

AGMA (the Amenity Grass Marketing Association) was naturally disappointed in the resignation of British Seed Houses from membership of the Association.

In 1996 the membership has grown to include major European Breeders, UK Wholesale and Retail organisations that account for over 80% of the total UK sales of amenity grass seed.

We have seen an increase in our Distributor Members at the rate of two a month this year.

We have introduced new Affiliate Membership categories for Educational establishments – the STRI having become the latest to join the category.

AGMA's 'voice' is ever present on legislative matters – for we have just been thanked by the Seeds Division of Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in bringing to their notice imported lawn seed packs that did not conform to the Seeds Marketing Regulations. Furthermore we are an active member on the Committee making recommendations on the review of the BS Standard for Turf production.