

As I see it...

BY DEAN CLEAVER
BIGGA CHAIRMAN

This has been one of the quieter months I've had since becoming Chairman and I've actually been able to get some work done on my course. In fact the joke is that I had to dig out the A-Z to find my way to the club. I made the most of it though and did some vertidrainage just to show the membership that I'm still about!

It hasn't meant that I have been totally quiet however.

I attended the British Institute of Golf Course Architect's Silver Jubilee Conference at Wentworth. The dinner was certainly a unique occasion with many familiar faces from the golf world gathered in the stunning surroundings of Wentworth's Ballroom.

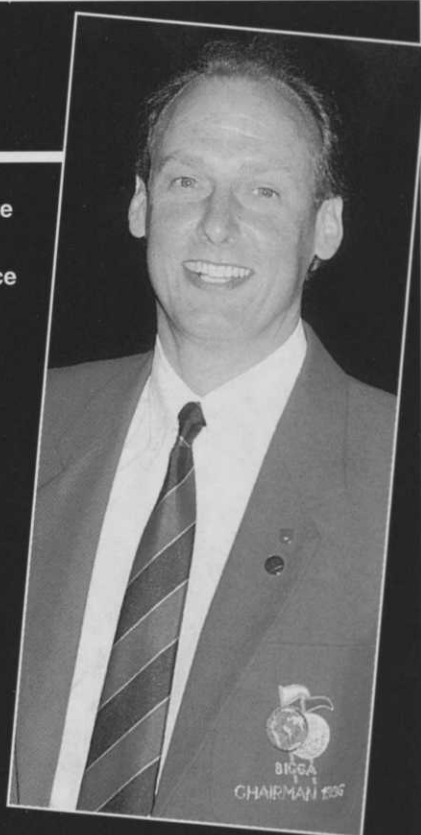
Although I had to miss the actual conference I understand it was superb and the role of the greenkeeper and work of BIGGA was highlighted by many of the speakers. Howard Swan who organised the Conference wrote to me and thanked BIGGA for supporting the event.

After Wentworth it was on to The Belfry for the annual Kubota Challenge, one of the highlights of the year.

After coming fourth and last last year it was better this as we got to the final only to be beaten by the English Golf Union, who won for the second successive year.

Now I'm not one to carp, and each one of the eight men who represented us in the final was a superb ambassador for BIGGA, but I do believe that if a 10pm curfew had been in place the night before the final the result may have been different. I curse the fact that I was unable to arrive a day earlier to supervise preparations for the final. Joking aside it was a wonderful event and I'd like to congratulate Rene Orban on his excellent Kubota Challenge debut.

At the moment I'm preparing for a trip to Interlachen in Switzerland for the International Greenkeepers Association Conference. I'm attending in my capacity of Chairman of FEGGA. I'll report back on my time in Switzerland next month.



NEWS



Jobs boost for new John Deere dealer

Nairn Brown Ltd at Busby, near Glasgow, is the latest recruit to John Deere's nationwide grounds care dealer network – the first time a main John Deere dealership has been established in the west of Scotland.

The appointment increases the opportunity for professional and domestic customers from Oban to Dumfries to invest in John Deere's full range of commercial and consumer equipment.

Dealer principal Nairn Brown founded the business in 1965. Nairn Brown Ltd was the Mountfield distributor in Scotland for 20 years, and several of the key staff have been with the company for over 25 years.

"We see the John Deere range as a way of extending and developing our customer base," says Nairn Brown. "Around half our current business is with local authorities and golf courses.

"Staffing levels will be increased to provide full sales, service and parts back-up to all

our customers. We carry 18,000 parts in stock, and are computer-linked to John Deere's worldwide Distribution Network System."

The company has been accredited to ISO 9002 certification since 1993, one of the few grounds care dealerships in the UK to have achieved this international quality standard.

● Pictured: Nairn Brown staff celebrating the new deal.

■ The Good Director 96 and 97 for Golf Owners Operators and Developers is now available from Golf Business Communications Ltd, 5/7 High Street, Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, OX10 7HH priced £15.

The second edition contains the names and details of over 700 companies and there are more than 4,100 entries under the product and service group headings.

Environment competition winner nets £5,000

As reported in last month's magazine Rudding Park, in only its first full year as an operating golf course, clinched the Amazone Golf Environment Competition. Mark MacKanes, Managing Director of the golf course received the £5,000 first prize from Rod Baker, Managing Director of Amazone Ground Care at a presentation at Rudding Park last month.

Other winners in the competi-

tion this year were as follows: Northern Region: Rudding Park Golf - Winner; Catterick GC - Highly Commended.

Midlands Region: Lindrick GC - Winner; Arscott GC - Highly Commended.

Southern Region: Liphook GC - Winner; Wilderness GC - Highly Commended.

Western Region: Manor House GC - Winner; Burnham and Berrow - Highly Commended

Wales: Cwmrhydneuadd GC - Winner

Eastern Region: Old Nene G&CC - Winner

Scotland: Linlithgow GC - Winner; Newtonmore GC and Royal Dornoch GC both Highly Commended.

● BIGGA's Executive Director, Neil Thomas, happened to play Cwmrhydneuadd the week after the presentation and can vouch for its excellence.



Six information boards have been erected at Rudding Park, covering aspects of their flora and fauna

Optimism for 'great' jobs on golf courses

Great job opportunities still exist on golf courses in spite of the continued march of mechanisation. That's the optimistic view of Walter Woods, former links supervisor at St Andrews Links.

Speaking at Scottish Grass Machinery's turfgrass seminar held at Gleneagles, Walter pointed out that much had changed during his lifetime in the industry.

"People now expect to be able to play golf all year round and in all weathers, creating major difficulties with compaction and course wear and tear," he said. "Although specialist machines are now available to help combat the problem, they are becoming increasingly complicated to set up, use and maintain. The ever growing sophistication of equipment virtually demands the full-time employment of a trained and dedicated engineer to look after it.

"There is also a requirement for qualified irrigation technicians to help look after pumps, control systems and the associated water delivery systems. There must be a fortune in materials buried underground."

Walter pointed out that it was

20 years since the various authorities had recognised that greenkeeper education would have to be a priority if the standard of golf club management and maintenance was to move forward.

"I was fortunate that my position at St Andrews allowed me to bring young trainees onto the links to further their training," he commented. "Our mission was helped greatly by colleges such as Elmwood, the greenkeepers' associations and the golf unions, who helped promote the need for education to be extended beyond a basic first year."

Such has been the march forward in technology and standards that greenkeepers today need to be assessed on a regular basis in both the practice and theory of their job. The more enlightened are now able to study to become supervisors and, if they are high fliers, can move on to an HND course which can lead to a golf course manager's position.

"There is a clear and growing demand for more advanced education and training," pointed out Mr Woods. "New courses continue to be built and these will be looking for advanced greenkeep-

ing skills and knowledge. At the same time, the older courses will have to sit up and take notice in order to compete with the growing challenge to provide the highest quality playing conditions throughout the year."

Walter predicted that the staffing levels on many private golf clubs will double over the next 10 to 20 years in order to provide the conditions that golfers want. As a result, greenkeeping career prospects look extremely good, with better pay and better conditions backed by a strong association which will help look after the interests and needs of all involved in the industry.

"I admit that I could not handle all the education nor the machinery that greenkeepers need today," stressed Mr Woods. "However, I believe that golf clubs are really starting to appreciate the value of their maintenance staff and their needs and problems. The educational opportunities are being put in place to help greenkeepers achieve perfection and I believe that many are well on the way to getting there.

"There will be a wide range of greenkeeping career opportunities in the years to come and I see no reason why they should not be grasped by young men and women alike."

Thanks from Don Hunt

Don, Liz and the girls would like to take this opportunity to thank all those friends who so kindly phoned or sent cards, letters, flowers or fruit during my recent illness. I apologise for not writing personally to all concerned but the strength of the support has been so great

it was impossible.

A big thank you to Bill and Carol Pile and Gordon and Marion Childs who visited me in Torbay hospital and kept me in touch.

See you soon on my usual route.
Don

(mis)adventures of Gordon the Greenkeeper

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Yet another benefit of **BIGGA** membership

Bangkok Golf Club at sea in worst flood in golfing history

Don Major, formerly of Betchworth Park GC, had some interesting reading when he returned from Hong Kong on a Cathay Pacific flight earlier this year.

In the *South China Morning Post*, which thankfully for Don is in English, was a report on the horrific flooding experienced by the Bangkok Golf Club and their Course Superintendent Chan Mekavichai.

"I couldn't believe the flooding that the golf club had experienced

and I thought readers of *Greenkeeper International* might want to read about it as well," said Don.

Reports the *South China Morning Post*: "It probably has to go down as the worst flood in golfing history," said American Greg Jerolaman, who doubles as General Manager and Professional.

A mere 90,000 sand bags could not prevent a dyke and a 12 inch thick concrete retaining wall bordering the 7th hole from collapsing under the sheer weight of

pressure of the rain that had fallen incessantly for eight weeks.

Over the next 24 hours in the region of two million cubic metres of water (about 20 cubic metres per second) poured on to the course, which had been closed for three days due to the non-stop downpours.

"It was terrible. There was nothing we could do except watch the water level rise," said Chan. As it rose by between 10 and 15 centimetres per hour, Chan led the frantic rush to reinforce the clubhouse by placing a further 5,000 sand bags around its perimeter.

The defence was neither high enough nor strong enough. At 5.30pm some seven hours after the flood gates had opened the water burst through. Fearful for the safety of the staff the clubhouse was abandoned. Ten minutes later the basement was under one metre of water.

Returning to survey the wreckage the next morning in boots rented from the military, it was doom and gloom. The average

depth of the water on the course was eight feet. In some areas it was 11 feet. "It was surreal. Everyone was in a state of shock," said Jerolaman.

For two months it was only possible to reach the clubhouse by boat...

For a four month period leading up to the reopening on the last day of March this year 200 labourers joined club staff working 12 hour shifts clearing the debris and irrigation system and 20,000 metres of drain liners, constructing a new 8,000 metre cart path, Re-grassing 16 greens and planting 200,000 square metres of grass, 10,000 flowers and 1,000 trees..."

It is understood that just 20% of the work was covered by insurance and the bulk of the \$4 million had to be met by the Club President.

Many thanks to Don Major for bringing this harrowing tale to our attention and perhaps allowing us to put our own problems in perspective!



The amphibious Watermaster dredger 'walked' into the lake to clear it of weeds and reeds before dredging it

...but clear water adds praise for St Pierre GC

Land and Water Services, the Surrey based inland dredging contractor and lake builder, was responsible for much of the excellent praise heaped on St. Pierre Golf Club, Chesham during the Solheim Cup.

The work done by the company involved dredging and restoration of the existing 11 acre lake and construction of a new reservoir to hold 22 million litres of water.

The first stage of the work was to completely redefine and landscape the lake edge, using

a Nicospan geotextile to support the fill material. This, together with clearance of the weeds, detritus and debris, has returned the lake to a focal point of outstanding natural beauty.

To prevent further weed growth the lake was deepened in places by up to one metre. Extreme care had to be taken at all times in order to cause as little disturbance as possible to the wildlife of the lake, one family of nesting ducks posing a particular problem.

FLYING DIVOTS

County Crops have added Brian Spencer to its team of reps. Brian who will cover the North Yorkshire/Tyneside area and will allow the greenkeepers of the area to take advantage of the 24 hours chemical service.

Sports Ground Irrigation, the Hunter distributors and

Tonick watering, have signed a marketing agreement to promote "Winwater" control systems.

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Keen-to-learn staff receive top training

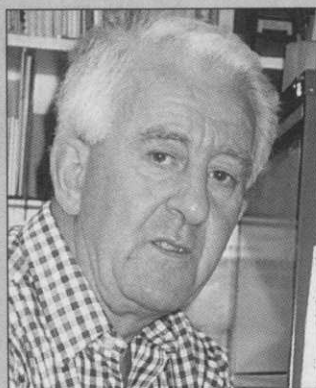
A series of product training sessions has been held for the whole of the workforce at Ransomes' European headquarters and manufacturing centre at Ipswich.

Designed to give all Ransomes' staff an insight into the design, operation and various applications of the company's professional grass and turf care machinery, the familiarisation sessions are an integral and essential part of the programme being followed by Ransomes in order to achieve an 'Investors in People' award.

A total of eight training sessions have been held at the Ipswich factory during the past six weeks. Attended by 400 staff, the sessions were split between the company's range of golf

course equipment and machines used primarily for local authority and contract grounds maintenance.

Leading the training was Ransomes' Product Training Manager, Nigel Church: "The interest and attention paid by staff from all departments demonstrated that they are keen to learn about the products that they help build and the company for which they work," he commented. "Seen from both the human and the commercial points of view, it is important that everyone understands and appreciates what the company does and where they fit into the operation. It can only help instil greater pride in their work and further boost Ransomes' position within the industry."



Ecology section's leading expert at the helm

PSD Agronomy Ltd has responded to the call for a better understanding of conservation issues on golf courses, by securing an arrangement with Michael Schofield. A former director of English Nature, Michael, pictured, is to head PSD's new ecology section. This follows PSD's recent recruitment of David Rycroft, hydrologist, and continues the policy of providing a package of high quality, expert consultancy to the golf club.

Michael Schofield is a career conservationist, who has worked for the Nature Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy Council and English Nature over a period of 30 years, making his way from Warden Naturalist to

Member of the Management Board. He is, therefore, well versed in both the theory and practice of ecological management, and the implementation of sound policies.

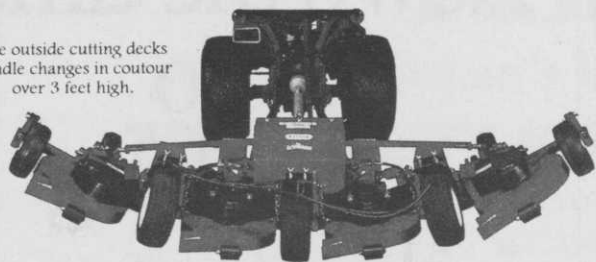
Mike also understands the problems of the golf club committee member. Having been Chairman of Green at his own Club for a number of years he has had a good view of what some see as the other side of the fence. His links with golf extend further than one club though - he has prepared plans for good ecological management for a number of others, and has advised the R&A, the EGU and the European Golf Association on conservation matters.

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