

We all share in the grief

As you are aware, it was my intention to write some words for *Greenkeeper International* following the final match of the Hayter Challenge Tournament at Ganton Golf Club. However, following the tragic death of David Spurden, such a contribution seems untimely and totally inappropriate. Instead I would prefer to record my gratitude to David and convey to his colleagues and family, my deepest sympathy at this sad time.

I first met David in May of this year. Instantly I recognised in him the qualities of warmth, good nature and pure human kindness. He was conscientious, self deprecating but with a strong sense of determination to succeed. I only met him a few times but his friendly disposition and true gentlemanly qualities were such that I felt I had known him for years. He prepared Ganton to perfection for our Challenge Tournament Final and I know how proud he was to have secured his own place in the competition, played on the course he loved and served with such distinction. He will be greatly missed by all and greenkeeping has lost one of its finest ambassadors.

Please convey the condolences of all of us at Hayter to his staff, his colleagues, his Club, but most of all to his family. No words can adequately ease the pain they will be enduring but, hopefully, the knowledge that their grief is shared will be of some comfort. He was a man of outstanding stature.

K.I. (Kim) Macfie
Sales & Marketing Director
Hayter
Spellbrook
Bishops Stortford

'Ambassador' will be missed

Everyone will be shocked and saddened to learn of David Spurden's death at Ganton GC in a tragic shooting accident.

I introduced David to greenkeeping when, as a school leaver, he joined me at Otley GC in 1962. He worked with me for six years before accompanying

me to Ilkley GC for a further 11 years after which he became Head Greenkeeper at Knaresborough GC. David then moved to Ganton, remaining there for the past 15 years.

His work was always of the highest standard, this being reflected in the condition of Ganton in recent times.

He played golf, and with a single figure handicap was a regular competitor and winner in both regional and national events. He was also a member of the BIGGA Open Support Team.

David was keenly interested in, and quite an authority, on natural history and the environment, and with a cheerful, pleasant disposition made friends easily.

A man of rare quality, his loss to golf and greenkeeping is immense.

This fine ambassador for his chosen profession will be sadly missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

Adrian Robertshaw
Middleton
Ilkley

In praise of education

While we have yet to make staff appointments from the many applications received, the response to our advertisement in the September issue of your magazine for our course vacancies has been overwhelming. The standard of applicant is evidence of the improvements that have been made in the education of greenkeepers over the past few years and the excellent training that they now receive.

Graham Bond
General Manager
Lanhydrock Golf Club
Bodmin, Cornwall

Don't believe the hype

I read the article on chemical soil analyses (p66. *Greenkeeper International* October '97) by NRM based on the old ICI Jealots Hill Agricultural research station with some consternation. The need to correct some false deductions is urgent, though few experienced Head Greenkeepers would follow ADAS recommendations for golf courses, which may be relevant to

non-greenkeeping conditions.

Details are given as to how pH, phosphate, potash and magnesium levels are analysed. My point is that I have yet to be given a level for any nutrient status below which the analyst regards that nutrient as being deficient. With phosphates particularly, we have excellent greens with levels of 10 p.p.m. and less – sometimes 3 p.p.m. We have some awful *Poa annua* ones at 300 p.p.m., sometimes over 1000 p.p.m. Most experienced men (confirmed by a breakdown of the analyses of greens fertiliser, 61% @ 8:0:0) would agree that golfing turf should never receive phosphates in fertiliser form if total dominance of *Poa annua* is to be avoided. Greens which are known to have received no fertiliser phosphate for 25 years still show figures in the 25-50 p.p.m. mark, though whether that phosphate is available to plants is debatable.

Potash being soluble may need topping up occasionally but analysis will never determine the level. There is absolutely no evidence that magnesium is a limiting factor in practice for healthy grass growth on any course – the only exception being sterile sand-only greens, virtually all of which are in poor or deteriorating condition, with increasing *Poa annua* invasion, as such greens have to be fed hydroponically and frequently with NPK and lime and even trace elements to stay alive and in comes the *Poa*.

There is no fixed figure for pH level – the ideal is the one you have which hopefully is natural to the site.

Nitrogen is the most important element in golf greenkeeping and there is no easy test for nitrogen. I rest my case.

I regard with sadness and alarm the return of fertiliser firms offering chemical analyses as a sales gimmick. Even STRI. (Dr Canaway, December 1995) states that they will no longer routinely analyse soil samples chemically, "as it tells us nothing".

If you want fine wiry grasses, use balanced nitrogen only. If you have awful *Poa annua* greens you may feel they need NPK but analysis will give you no help in deciding how much. We are not growing cereals or managing intensive grassland on our golf

courses. The link between phosphatic fertiliser and *Poa annua* has been known virtually all this century and is unarguable. Forget chemical (not physical) analysis and the sales ploy that so often accompanies it

J.H Arthur B.Sc. (Agric)
Budleigh Salterton
East Devon

How to cut card fraud

I am writing to you about the BIGGA membership cards. I wondered if in the future it would be possible to put on the cards the members position at the club and the golf club's name. Both of which on the front as there is space to do this.

I would also like to see the member's official golf club stamp on the rear just as we had to do on our membership application forms this year. This may possibly stop any fraudulent use of the membership cards as I have heard of cases of this happening.

Does anyone else think this is a good idea?

Chris Yeaman
Course Manager
Swanston Golf Club
Edinburgh

A great team effort

On behalf of all the greenkeeping staff and myself I would like to thank everyone involved for the excellent help from the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team during the week of The Open. It was much appreciated and I hope they all enjoyed themselves despite the hard work they put in.

Many thanks again and I hope to see you in future.

Billy McLachlan
Head Green Superintendent
Royal Troon Golf Club

Feature is spot on

I have just read the article, "Preparing for the Drama at Valderrama", and would like to express my sincere congratulations. It is the very finest that I've read about maintenance in this golf course!

Rafa Castillo
Technical Editor
Green Tecnico magazine
Madrid