

Damages paid to Greenkeeper

A Hertfordshire greenkeeper who saw his own job advertised in Greenkeeper International has won damages of £14,440 after using the BIGGA Legal Helpline to take action against his golf club.

The 62 year old, who had worked, often single handed on the course, for four and a half years, saw the job of Head Greenkeeper Designate for his own golf club advertised, although no discussions had ever taken place about the possibility of a new appointment.

A short time later the greenkeeper was first suspended by the recently appointed man, at which time he contacted the Hambro Legal Helpline who put him in touch with the Association's solicitors, Kirbys.

"We wrote to the club asking for reasons for his suspension and enquiring whether or not it was intended to pursue any disciplinary proceedings," said solicitor David Burton of Kirbys.

"Having received no response from the club we wrote to the owner once again indicating that unless we received a substantive response to our previous letter our client would be returning to work."

"We then received a fax from the club saying that due to the recent

change in circumstances at the club our client's services were no longer required. Unfortunately we therefore have to make him redundant from today's date."

"This is certainly the first time in all the years that we have dealt with employment work that somebody has first found out that they have been dismissed via a communication to their solicitor," said Mr Burton.

"We immediately issued Industrial Tribunal proceedings, following consultation with Hambro."

Prior to the Tribunal the club threatened that unless a modest sum of compensation was accepted the club would be put into liquidation and during the Tribunal the club argued that the greenkeeper had been offered and turned down another position and that he was suffering illness and would have been dismissed in any event.

"Perhaps not surprisingly neither argument prevailed upon the Tribunal and our client was ultimately awarded the maximum compensatory award which, together with wages in lieu of notice and his basic award for unfair dismissal, totalled £14,440," said Mr Burton.

Commenting on the award, BIGGA's

Executive Director Neil Thomas said, "This is an excellent example of Hambro and Kirbys working jointly to protect the interests of a member, albeit in the distressing circumstances of dismissal.

"It is important also that members are alert to the services that can be provided before a case reaches dismissal stage and in appropriate circumstances members can be provided with legal support at an early point in any dispute or disciplinary proceedings e.g. a summons to appear before the Green Committee.

"In this way the Association aims to assist in preventing disciplinary proceedings moving on to an advanced and possibly terminal stage.

"While other Associations provide support following dismissal and through Industrial Tribunals, I believe BIGGA is unique in the assistance it can give to members in a supportive and preventative capacity at the onset of a dispute or disciplinary proceedings.

It goes without saying that this service is a very considerable membership benefit."

New challenge for Steve



Rigby Taylor has appointed Steve Hall to the position of Marketing Manager and he will be responsible for the marketing of the company's full range of products and services including the Mascot brand. He will be based in the company's Guildford office.

His experience in the amenity market began as Product Manager with ICI Professional Products where he was responsible for the management and marketing of the amenity range.

He was involved in the changes of identity to Zeneca, Miracle and finally to Scotts, from where he joins Rigby Taylor.

SSSI status conferred on Thorpeness GC

Thorpeness Golf Club has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest by English Nature, due to the work carried out by the green staff on bracken, bramble removal and gorse regeneration which has caused the Woodlark and Nightjar population to increase to above the national average.

"In 1997, the number of nesting sites of the Nightjar was recorded on the entire area, including the Aldringham Walks and the golf course, as 10 and Woodlark nest sites as 42. Now the

golf course can boast at least 10-15 Woodlark nest sites in its own right which makes the course a SSSI," said Course Manager Ian Willett.

"On the same day as we were informed about the SSSI the club learned that it had been given a Countryside Stewardship Award for habitat creation in areas of the course that are out of play and usually left. As Course Manager I have been working with Brenda Williamson, from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and Steven

Curtis, from the Suffolk Sandlings Project, to show that golf and conservation can mix and complement one another," explained Ian.

"I have the backing of the club from the Managing Director, Tim Rowan-Robinson, Secretary, Neville Griffin and Frank Hill, the club Professional, the committee and members but last, but by no means least, my excellent team of greenkeepers. In working towards the stewardship award, this shows that team work plays off."

A cry for help from across the pond

Wanted! Information in any amount of detail about slit-tining. I am currently working in the USA in western Colorado and am trying to convince our Superintendent that deep slitting our greens may help in developing a root system deeper than the one inch we are presently having to manage. The greens are almost entirely Poa,

very heavily watered in the summer, mown at 3mm in the mid-season and played extensively. Active leaf growth ceases during mid-November and resumes during March.

I have explained the success which I have achieved in the past on both courses I have been responsible for in England and Germany and would

like to relay the experiences, methods and theories about increasing rooting depth from other greenkeepers, agronomists and manufacturers of equipment. Thank you to any of you who may like to help me.

My address is as follows and I will reimburse postage costs. Paul Davies, PO Box 1524, Palisade, Colorado, 81526, USA.

Hell of a facelift for infamous bunker

One of the most notorious and infamous bunkers in the world is undergoing a facelift.

Around 150 railway sleepers have been lined up around the highest parts of Hell Bunker on the 14th hole on the Old Course to stabilise the face. The sleepers will be re-vented with stacks of turf built up so when complete the sleepers will not be visible.

At around 1500 square yards Hell Bunkers is one of the largest on the course and at 10 feet deep is one of the most difficult from which to escape. This was highlighted in the 1995 Open when Jack Nicklaus took four attempts to free himself of its clutches.

"We usually have to re-vent bunkers every five years and this is the first time we have used sleepers. They

will help to stabilise the surroundings and provide a template for future reconstruction and repairs. The bunker is now back to its pre-1995 size," explained Old Course Head Greenkeeper Eddie Adams.

The Old Course has 112 bunkers and several have names and historic associations. Next in line for re-venting is Shell Bunker in front of the 7th green.

Carden Park's icy discovery

Evidence of an Ice Age settlement has been discovered at Carden Park, near Chester.

Suggestions are that the discoveries, which include tools fashioned from flint, may have belonged to the later Upper Palaeolithic - Old Stone Age between 11,000 - 9,000 BC. This was the time when people first returned to Britain after the end of the Ice Age.

The site, in caves between the 8th and 9th holes of the Cheshire Course, does have more recent, but still historic past as a hermit, John Harris, lived in the cave between 1744 and 1765.

"The site has caused quite a bit of interest and we have had quite a number of students from Chester Archaeology and Liverpool University studying it," said Courses Manager, Andy Campbell.

New venue for Westurf

The popular South West and South Wales Regional show is moving from its traditional home to the purpose built exhibition centre of Westpoint in Exeter.

"I believe the new venue will be a huge boost for the show and I look forward to welcoming all our regular exhibitions and guests as well as many new ones," said Regional Administrator, Paula Humphries.

Paula can be contacted on 01363 82777.