

Address your letters to the Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF. You can also fax them to 01347 833801, or email them to reception@bigga.co.uk

A journey back in time

Reading Ian Forbes' letter to Walter in the September issue of Greenkeeper International sent my memory flooding back to 1955 when I took over the Head man's position at Lenzie Golf Club. Up until this period I was not very interested in people who came to ply their wares to the courses where I had worked. Then I became a Head Greenkeeper it took me only one season to realise what helpful information I could glean from the travelling Salesman who willingly sought me out whether I was in the sheds or in the furthest-most out part of the course. No telephone calls to say they were coming, nor the irritating mobile phone stuck on the belt or inside pocket.

I remember receiving the postcard saying "The Company's Representative would call" on a certain day, at a certain time and if this was not convenient to me, would I be kind enough to give their office a phone call. I always thought it peculiar that

the Company Reps. all came in the same week but never the same day. They must have loved wet days when most of the Greenkeepers could be found in the compost sheds, or tinkering with some mower or other.

I looked forward to a visit from Ian Forbes. He was so interested in nature that I think he enjoyed walking the course to find you, then he would enquire about some wild flower, bird, or the condition of your course and greens which he had noticed in his seeking you out. Selling fertiliser or seed etc. seemed to be the least of his worries.

I became Secretary of the West Section around the late '50s and had the task of arranging Speakers for the Winter Lectures. Speakers were hard to come by, especially those who could impart their knowledge on all subjects concerning greenkeeping. Ian Forbes was such a man. What insight he had on the flora and fauna of our country.

These lectures were a delight to all who attended. I can't remember a year that he was not invited to speak to the Greenkeepers in the West Section, of SIGGA where he always came with something new and interesting. What I enjoyed most from Ian was Question Time at the end of his lecture. His wealth of practical information was remarkable. I never remember his flanneling over a question and, believe me, some of the questions that were put to him were pretty near the bone; arguments about fertiliser prices, or a certain product he had sold someone not coming up to expectation.

As Walter said, Ian Forbes was a gentleman, may I add to that a friend who would impart his excellent guiding advice to all who sought him out.

Cecil George, Lenzie

Making the earth move?

I read the above article with great interest and feel that to describe the Vertidrain as "the first anti-compaction machine built anywhere in the world" is a rather sweeping statement. Your article also gives the impression that the only method of aeration available prior to the 1980's was a hand fork.

Compaction can be treated very satisfactorily in many instances by deep slitting or hollow coring and greenkeepers have been doing just that since the 1930s. The first SISIS deep slitter was horse drawn and produced

in 1936, by the 1940s we could offer 9in. times and by the 1980s 12in.

We acknowledge the introduction of the Vertidrain as a major landmark and indeed the SISIS Soil Reliever works on a similar principle, but to claim that it was the first ever anti-compaction machine is not true.

Redexim may have developed an alternative method of deep aeration and incorporated the "heave" factor which can be useful in certain situations but SISIS were the true pioneers of aeration as a means of compaction relief some 45 years earlier.

Compaction and the role of aeration in its relief is clearly explained in the STRI's "The Care of the Golf Course" by Roger Evans and those of your readers interested in the development of aeration machinery could not do better than to read Chapter 7 of the excellent book "Practical Greenkeeping" by Jim Arthur, the legendary agronomist whose personal experience goes back 60 years.

J.W. Hargreaves, Managing Director, SISIS Equipment Ltd.

Finding the right employer

Due to my recent unpleasant experience in employment I wish to bring to the attention of all members seeking work, the importance of vetting any potential employer.

After attending interviews at a club in the South of England, I was politely shown around the grounds, course, plant and sheds, etc. However upon accepting the position of Head Greenkeeper it soon became clear to me that all was not as it should be.

I was not allowed to make any purchase however small without going

through the Management who took unnecessarily long periods of time before dealing with same. Use of strongly unacceptable language by Management to ALL staff was a common occurrence. No regular contact was possible due to absence of Management for prolonged unknown periods. There was threat of physical abuse directed at me when I questioned the reasoning behind certain requests.

There was an extremely high turnover of staff on the course and in

the clubhouse. This together with the fact that the local residents had nothing good to say about the Management gave out warning signs on the door.

Had I taken the trouble to look into these areas, and check my prospective Employer thoroughly, I would have saved myself a lot of inconvenience and stress.

I hope that by writing of my experience I can help others to avoid falling into the same pitfall.

Name and address withheld.