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Great praise for Honorary award

My reason for writing to you is two fold. Firstly, I would like to congratulate Mr Jim Arthur on his award of Honorary Membership of BIGGA. For some of us the name of Mr Jim Arthur is British and international golf greenkeeping and as such this is a most fitting award.

Secondly, I would like to thank the association for giving this award.

During my time in greenkeeping I have noted on many occasions that either verbally in discussions with or when I have read interviews with some of our most respected Course Managers, they would be very strong in their praise and respect for Mr Arthur. This respect I believe comes from their many years working with Mr Arthur and watching their courses improve under his guidance.

We, as an industry, are very fortunate and owe a huge debt to Mr Arthur for writing his book for all of us to study and benefit from. Now with this award, I hope we will have many opportunities to discuss greenkeeping for many years to come with the man in person.

Gordon Irvine MG,
 Mill Ride GC

Experience of a lifetime in Canada

Gordon and I have just returned from Ottawa. Because we made so many friends at the CGSA in Toronto last year, we were determined to return and renew our friendships. Now, we are equally determined to visit Vancouver in 2001. I shall start saving up now because for me the trip is well worth it.

The ladies' programme is an extremely good way to meet people and at the same time enjoy new experiences. They are a great bunch of people who make you feel very welcome. If you have the opportunity try to get on the trip with your partner. I am told that the education programme was excellent and would be very good for UK greenkeepers, largely due to the fact that the Canadian Superintendents are working with the same cool climate grasses as we do. As for Vancouver, I'm told it's a very beautiful place and quite spectacular, definitely an extremely popular venue with all the regulars from around Canada and America, and now the Swedish. The dates are February 24-27, 2001.

Marion Child,
 Churston

Environmental: Not eco-warriors

With regards to the Environmental Summit at Valderrama and the world attention in general on green issues, I believe we, the golf industry, are at the centre of what is a very important and emotive subject.

It is generally accepted that controls over chemical usage are being tightened and will continue to be so, therefore one must accept a need to use other means. An environmental approach is an avenue that may serve all parties; by encouraging wildlife which in turn can be incorporated into an integrated pest management programme and so be seen to be doing the right thing.

However, management of this style

does come at a cost, and with budgets becoming ever tighter, environmental issues seem to be placed well down the list of priorities. The general planning and carrying out of such actions are left to enthusiastic individuals who use their own time and efforts to achieve results. This situation must change for us to go forward.

For these changes to become mainstream, we have to embrace a wider environmental educational programme, not just for greenkeepers, but for the golf watching public. The media are quick to show the negative side of golf courses, maybe this can now be turned around and golf seen in its true light.

We can, and should, embrace a more environmental approach and not think of it as long haired hippie types, in open-toed sandals, waving peace banners, but as a sound practical tool that can be used to great effect. Whether we like it or not, things are changing environmentally and we have to adapt to the challenge.

There are many programmes on TV about wildlife, but how many feature a golf course? Perhaps the powers that be would like to redress the balance.

Well who knows?

Simon Coles, Greenkeeper,
 The Kendleshire Bristol

New Canadian friend offers BTME thanks

I can't express my thanks for the hospitality that was extended to Dean Piller and myself at BTME 2000 in Harrogate. It was truly an unforgettable experience. The Conference itself was educational and professionally managed in its entirety. The BIGGA Staff could not have been more accommodating, and the genuine friendliness of all the BIGGA members, both Superintendents and industry personnel, was overwhelming.

The invitations to all your social activities really made me feel like an

honoured guest. The wind up banquet could not have been more fun (what a party). When I returned home I could not believe the collection of business cards that I had from many European countries. Truly your conference is an international event. I will tell everyone to find a way to make the trip to participate in future BTME's. The value this experience gave me will help guide me through the next three years of service with the CGSA.

I look forward to seeing the many

new friends I made and please extend my thanks to the rest of the BIGGA staff for looking after me. In closing, I would just like to say how optimistic I am about the challenges that face our associations and its members when we discuss things together and the direct result of the trip for me is that the world has become a much smaller and friendlier place.

Jay Leach, Secretary/Treasurer,
 Canadian Golf Superintendents Association

Icy solution to winter greens damage

I have just glanced through this month's edition of Greenkeeper International and saw Peter Broadbent's letter regarding spike problems. I wrote to him direct and included details about myself that may have been of interest to him. Below is my answer to his query.

Playing in frosty conditions is an emotive issue, but I never found any damage of green surfaces which were frozen hard, that could be attributed solely to such play. Although blackening of turf was noticeable on semi rough, fairways and tees etc I very rarely found any such marks on green surfaces. It is my view that as golfers walked on spikes and the surface was usually hard, their shoes stayed clear of the closely mown sward of a green. I never mowed higher than 3/16" (5 mm) I could never see the point. However the sward on a fairway for instance, is mown at 1/2" (12 mm) or more. A golf shoe therefore does come into contact with individual grass blades, thereby causing bruising damage, which is manifested as blackening.

I have also noticed the phenomenon of rapid (sometimes within 2 or 3 steps) build up of slushy frost and

ice on golfers shoes. Especially one morning last winter, whilst playing in the winter league at Willesley Park GC. I noticed the build up of ice on my shoe studs and I had to tap my shoes regularly to remove it. On reaching the green I was horrified to notice large stud sized holes and immediately realised what was causing them. By this time however it was past nine o'clock and a large number of golfers had already gone out. To suspend play now would be pointless as; 1 The damage had already been done. 2 It would mean contacting all the golfers on the course and asking them to stop play. 3 I could imagine the outcry, as most golfers resent any interruption to their game and rarely understand the reasons you give for such a request. 4 As the phenomenon would only be short lived, would it be a lot of effort for very little gain.

I also noticed that it only seemed to happen when the frost was not severe: - the temperature was hovering at, or just below, freezing point. This could be because of (*see note) water's unique property of expanding (or becoming less dense) between 4 and 0 degrees centigrade. Therefore it has far more bulk than would other-

wise be the case and builds up rapidly on golfers' shoes. As you mention it forms a lump of soft ice on each stud, and, unless golfers remove all traces of it, before walking on the golf green, it can, as you say, cause severe damage.

It is worth noting that the slush can still form on studs whilst on the green. In my experience it seemed to form readily on metal studs and I cannot think of a reason for it to form more readily on plastic studs. Unless of course it is linked to the fact that plastic is not as good a conductor of heat as metal. This could mean that the warmer plastic initially adds to the thawing of the frost.

P.N. Bettenshaw

(*Note) As far as I know, water is the only liquid that has such properties. All other liquids become denser until finally solidifying at their respective freezing points. The only other exception to this rule is Helium, which only liquifies at 4.2 degrees Kelvin (-269 degrees Centigrade). It never solidifies even at absolute zero, unless subjected to high pressure, i.e. 25 atmospheres.

Erosion issue questioned

I am surely not alone in questioning the dogmatic forecasts of impending doom on our links courses as expressed at the St Andrews' Conference 'On course for Change,' let alone statements which are debatable, such as that sea levels around our coasts have risen 15-20 cm in the past twenty years ie; less than one centimetre per year. I am sure that someone will tell us how such minute rises are measured – on the same lines as greenkeepers stating that they set their height of cut in terms of fractions of a millimetre!! Even in these computerised days, how can they measure such microscopic differences?

One thing is certain – that such pessimistic forecasts that climatic changes will destroy our famous links are made by "experts" on weather who know nothing about golf and less about coastal protection. No one denies that there are changes in weather patterns but there always have been for centuries. Prophets of doom and gloom all throughout the ages have virtually always been confounded by events. At regular intervals over the past 200 years we have been told that there will be mass starvation as this earth of ours cannot produce enough food to feed exploding populations. Yet, today, the problems are all to do with distribution and very little to do with production. Whatever happened to the millennium bug?

The most sensible comment on weather changes was made to me by a senior officer at the Met office who said that we were dealing with imponderables and that rash forecasts of disaster based on straight line graphs were certain to be proved wrong by events.

Coastal erosion, by wind as well as waves, has been going on for centuries as for example at Dunwich in Suffolk where no less than eight churches lie beneath the advancing sea – the first going back to 800 AD and clearly that had nothing to do with global warming.

Virtually all coastal erosion is due to man's activities, varying from destabilisation of dunes by pedestrian traffic and scrambler bikes, to off-shore or estuarine dredging, the construction of long jetties; uncoordinated defence schemes (which merely transfer the problem along the coast) and to altering the course of rivers. Global warming simply does not enter the equation.

It is simply not true to say that properly planned and comprehensive protection schemes are ineffective, though gales breach them. As someone who has been involved in such golf links schemes for over thirty years, I am the first to admit that in

some cases I had to say that there was no answer, eg; where a huge jetty had been built 20 miles away so altering the set of the tides that little could be done to save the sand, while in other cases the astronomical expense of a fully comprehensive scheme ruled it out, but in the main most schemes have worked well – especially where pedestrians have been banned.

One statement that our famous links will inevitably lose holes and have to migrate inland is demonstrably utter nonsense! In many cases there is nowhere to go. Furthermore our links courses have stabilised the dunes – and where this has not occurred, fairways have been buried in wind-blown sand. Talk of courses migrating inland as new dune structures cover the old are fiction, because not only would the courses be covered but also agricultural land and even housing.

Nearly all the evidence produced by these experts is capable of different interpretations is nothing new and will be contradicted by events. Almost always, unforeseen inter-related balancing influences reduce extreme effects.

Congratulations are due to those practical men who observe the effects of wind and tide and devise schemes which trap blowing sand or stop it being washed away and which work despite the scarcely concealed derision of the boffins. Admittedly, such schemes have to be planned on a broad scale and need regular attention but they work. The biggest worry is the sheer cost, though chestnut paling is far better than gabions in many cases and vastly cheaper. Here's a toast to such eminently practical stalwarts as George Brown at Turnberry and Cyril Sutherland at Brancaster whose effective measures have harnessed those very elements which threaten their courses. I have always valued the ideas of practical men and experts should do the same instead of dismissing them as amateurs. They should remember the first precept of problem solving namely correct observation, followed by correct deduction.

Many are good at the first but hopeless at the second. Of course we must note what is going on but the doom and gloom brigade need to accept that nature is a very tough and resilient old bird and can be constructive as well as destructive. I speak from a lifetime of working as a team with practical men on the ground as well as learned academics, some of whom were man enough to go round with me and admit that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory!

J.H Arthur, Budleigh Salterton
East Devon

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