

# Beware of Groundhog Day

There can't have been too many occasions in the last 30 years that have witnessed the scale of flooding we experienced at the end of October and beginning of November. It was truly horrific and a large proportion of the population suffered to some degree or another.

At the sharp end, and that included a number of BIGGA staff, homes were flooded and incalculable damage done, not to mention the loss of custom for many shops and businesses in flooded cities, towns and villages. Further down the scale were those people whose routes to work were blocked, and down further to those people who had to cancel weekend trips or recreational pursuits. All in all, a sizable percentage of the British population were affected.

As Elliott Small says in his "As I see it..." column golf courses are not the top priority when compared to people's homes but members will no doubt expect to get back on their courses as soon as is possible, if not sooner, to work out their frustrations on a lump of balata.

I suppose it leads to the pointed question. How tall should the posts for "Course Closed" signs be to keep them visible above water lines?

Regular work schedules go out of the window, winter programmes shelved and the thought of the effort required to bring a course back to its best after the floods have gone is enough to bring grown men to their knees. Which is exactly where those Course Managers, Head Greenkeepers and their teams earn their stripes.

Clearing up debris from sodden ground, ensuring that still saturated areas are roped off and that course furniture is retrieved and repaired can be a thankless task. Particularly if conducted under leaden skies, in the certain knowledge that with water tables at record levels the whole rigmarole will have to be repeated, and not just once. Groundhog Day comes to greenkeeping.

The golf course at Aldwark Manor, home of BIGGA HOUSE, is divided by the River Ure - a tributary of the River Ouse. Normally this flows quietly on, gobbling up the odd ball misdirected from the 14th tee, but as I write it has totally overwhelmed the entire area to the extent that most of the course is under feet of fast flowing water - the same thing happened in June would you believe - and remember we're just at the beginning of the winter. It provides a perfect example of the frequency with which this is likely to occur in the short, medium and long term and the problems which Richard Gamble and his team now face.

Looking at the pictures on page 5 you will see that the 14th fairway at Aldwark Manor looks far more inviting to Steven Redgrave than Lee Westwood.

Perhaps it will not just be the Coxless Four's magnificent achievement in Sydney that is a major shot in the arm to the sport of rowing.

**Scott MacCallum**  
Editor



Address your letters to **The Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF**, or email them to [reception@bigga.co.uk](mailto:reception@bigga.co.uk)

## Toro thanks from a valiant Terry

I am writing to thank Toro and BIGGA for organising the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping 2000.

I was fortunate to reach the final four candidates for judging and was England's representative.

Unfortunately I was unsuccessful in winning the main prize, but I feel proud of what the Greenkeeping team has achieved at Dartmouth Golf and Country Club and to have represented England in this prestigious award.

I would like to thank a few people for their part in this achievement. Starting with Ralph Hitchens who originally orchestrated Dartmouth Golf and Country Club and recognised my talent at a very early stage. Members of my greenkeeping staff, for their exceptional efforts in preparing the course during the assessment stages of the competition and their professional approach to their work throughout the year. They were Kevin Yeoman, Graham Sulley, John Farkins, Dave Sroka, Charles Crisp, Neil Carter, Neil Curtis, Steve Reeves and Gene Lee. Thanks also to Jamie Waugh and all the staff and

members of DGCC for their encouragement and good wishes.

This award gives the opportunity for Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers to show their golf course management skills, it motivates and will improve all those who take part in the competition. As golf course management becomes more and more demanding by the golfing public, it is vital that greenkeepers continue to develop themselves and keep up with modern techniques, this will all lead to better playing surfaces for longer periods and greater recognition to the Greenkeeping Industry. I would recommend all Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers to use this competition for improving and developing themselves.

I would finally like to thank everyone associated with this quality competition and wish all the Greenkeepers that I was fortunate to meet at Aldwark Manor, the very best for the future. Well done Iain Ritchie a worthy winner.

**Terry Farkins**  
Course Manager, Dartmouth G&CC

## Praise for BIGGA training courses

I recently attended a Budget & Project Management course which was held at BIGGA HOUSE. I would like to thank Ken Richardson and Sami Collins for supplying us with fantastic facilities and organising a faultless course. I would also like to thank Brin Bendon and his co-helper for once again delivering a good and informative four days of knowledge which was clear and understandable. I would like to congratulate Brin for his efforts in trying to understand our trade. Taking into account that Brin has no experience in golf course management he always relayed his knowledge across to us in a language in which we could relate to and which was received well by the group. This ability enabled the courses to roll along freely without anyone being left in the dark.

On my arrival at BIGGA HOUSE, I was surprised to hear that out of all the courses that had been organised, only the four days that I was attending would be run, even then, there were only six people attending. I have now attended a four day course, once a year for the last three years and I am amazed at the lack of support shown considering these courses have been set by information gained from Greenkeepers

and Course Managers alike. Like every single Greenkeeper, I have had a very busy year and am facing a hectic winter but I always manage to plan my programmes around the courses that I want to attend. I can't understand why a few more people who, like myself, take their careers very seriously and want to progress, don't do the same. Greenkeeping is a very specific art and requires a high standard of training. You guys at BIGGA deliver this standard.

I can strongly recommend that any person attending these courses, do get value for money and gain some sort of knowledge from precise and direct subjects. There is nothing scary or off putting because they have been put together especially for our trade, in a language that everyone can relate to.

Ken, I hope you and your team are able to gain the interest and support you need to continue to produce this high standard of education and the friendly environment to which it is delivered. I will see you next year.

**Anthony Kyle,**  
Head Greenkeeper, Datchet GC

## Sandy McDivot's right to reply

Just a short reply to the letter from A J Mannion in the November edition. Three things basically. Firstly lighten up.

Secondly, you may not like it but in the real world networking or "arse licking" as you so cynically and unimaginatively put it, is considered a highly recognised and essential skill. Big business, politics and industry are littered with people who are specialists at gaining friends and support and as a result become highly sought after as individuals who have the reputation of being able to get things done.

If you remain adamant that you know best, then I strongly suggest reading Dale Carnegie's classic book, "How to win friends and influence people" Although written some 80 odd years ago it is perhaps more relevant today than it has ever been. The title itself sums it up. If you want to influence someone, then the best way is first of all become their friend.

I was not trying to encourage BIGGA members to adopt the principles that have helped me so much, just trying to give people some ideas about how they may be able to relieve the pressure that is sometimes

placed upon them. Often, it is better to look at problems from a different angle and my ideas maybe unorthodox but, who knows, they may just work.

Thirdly, can I point out another basic fact to you? If you do not agree with what I have written, then ignore it. That is the marvellous thing about advice, you don't always have to follow it.

On a different note, can I say how delightful it was to see John Nudds writing in. John, who does not know my true identity, used to maintain Gerrards Cross in that traditional manner that produces greens that I so admired in my October article. He may have got a little bit of stick from some of the less discerning of his members as a result, but owing to his natural charm and friendliness would have come away with the respect that he deserved. No surprise that he became recognised as not only a superb greenkeeper but also as a first class long serving Captain of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon county golf team. Well done John, keep reading the magazine.

**Sandy McDivot, alias, who knows?**  
Head Greenkeeper, Sludgecombe Pay and Play