

Duncan McGilvary's article in last month's magazine under the heading "Should we lead or should we be led" has already produced exactly the type of response he requested.

He ended the piece by urging you to respond and "show the 'powers that be' within the golfing world that we are ready and willing to take on the responsibility necessary to ensure not only the efficient management of our golf courses but our own futures."

As I write, the November issue has only been with you a few days but we have seen, by our standards, a huge post bag. You can read some of the responses on the Letters' page.

All agree that the job would be far easier if qualified, professional Course Managers had the autonomy to make decisions on the well being of the golf course without having to consider the opinions of a group of lay people in the shape of a Green Committee.

However, Duncan's point was also about how to get to that ideal state of affairs and how do qualified professionals persuade golf clubs that they should be given a freer rein to get on and do the job..

As one of the correspondents says, "we wouldn't tell an electrician how to wire a house or a mechanic how to fit a new engine".

The difference in golf, however, is that while an electrician and mechanic have one right way to do a job and many wrong ways, in greenkeeping there is a perception, rightly or wrongly, that you can choose from a range of approaches. That brings "opinion" to the table and, let's face it, everybody has one.

The Course Manager has, therefore, to persuade the Green Committee that his opinion carries more weight than that of the collective group of club members who make up that Committee.

Put it another way. The Committee can feel that, unlike on issues such as wiring houses or fitting engines to cars, its opinion on matters agronomic is worth hearing. Of course that, in the vast majority of cases, is nonsense and a typical case of little knowledge being a dangerous thing. However, subjects on which a Committee can, and does, have valid comments to make are the obvious matters of course tidiness and fault finding.

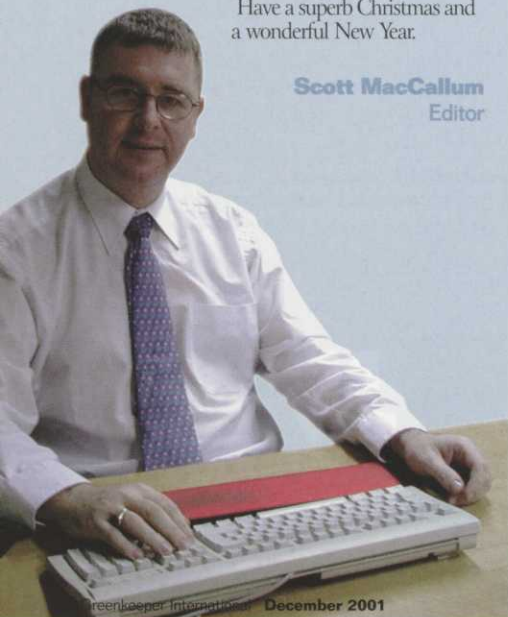
If the Committee can tell a Course Manager about a broken sprinkler head, or a litter bin which hasn't been emptied for weeks, it can then make the jump to wondering if the agronomic welfare of the course is also being "neglected".

One of the answers, therefore, is not to give a Committee any ammunition. By beating the committee to the punch on what might be otherwise regarded as the small things, it might ultimately give you more freedom to look after the more important issues.

I hope this doesn't come across as a case of teaching egg sucking methods to mothers but more a case of adding a few personal thoughts to the interesting issues raised by Duncan.

Have a superb Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Scott MacCallum
Editor



Gentleman's dinner a big success

The average golf club might have about 20 Members in the Spikes Bar when a proud golfer returns from his round having scored a hole-in-one. Not so for John Cook, the Chairman of Green at Orsett Golf Club, who chose the 155 yard par 3 17th hole at Walton Heath Old Course for his magical moment. On this occasion however there were 100 golfers plus another 20 guests ready to enjoy the evening banquet and entertainment at the South East Region's Gentleman's Dinner. Needless to say, in keeping with tradition everyone enjoyed a drink with John in the form of an after dinner brandy!

The event should have happened last March but had to be postponed due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic but the Region was indeed fortunate that Walton Heath Golf Club could accommodate us later in the year. With very heavy rains on the Saturday and Sunday things were looking very doubtful. Neighbouring courses had been closed due to the rain but Clive Osgood, Mick Haynes and their Staff did a

tremendous job in having ready for us on a beautiful sunny autumn Monday morning a course in superb condition and the Region's thanks are very much due to them for enabling the event to take place.

The Region's thanks are also due to the Trade who stayed with us during the postponement. It was nice to see Alan Stow who came out of retirement to renew a lot of old friendships.

The golf was incredible. The "Shullockie Putter" was won by James Seisun, Highgate Golf Club, with an unbelievable 42 points playing off 8. A full list of prize winners who received their prizes from Walton Heath Captain Peter Souster after first enjoying a superb banquet and after dinner entertainment from Bob Webb were:-

Cat 0-9. 1. James Seisun, 42 pts; 2. David Badham, 40 pts; 3. Mark Harvey, 37 pts. Cat 10-17.1. George Brown, 43 pts; 2. Lee West, 41 pts; 3. Richard Dunmow, 38 pts. Cat 18-24. 1. Malcolm Smith 35 pts; 2. John Jennings 31 pts; 3. Rae Sergeant

35 pts. Guests. 1. Gary Ogilvie, 39 pts; 2. Peter Russell, 36 pts.

Greenkeeper/Club Official. 1. John Davidson/Rae Sergeant; 2. Jon Hill/Chris Allen Longest Drive. Ian Semple. Nearest Pin 7th. John Payne. Nearest Pin 11th. Tony Bremer. Nearest Pin 17th. John Cook.

Lastly the Region must mention and thank the Companies that sponsored this event and provided so many wonderful prizes:

Aventis Environmental Science; Avoncrop Amenity Products Ltd; Bioseed Ltd BSP Landscapes Ltd; CMW Ltd; Ernest Doe And Sons Ltd; E. & S. Sports Grounds Ltd; Farmura Environmental Products; GEM Professional Ltd; Grass Roots Trading Co. Ltd.; Prime Irrigation Ltd; Rigby Taylor Ltd; Rolawn (Turf Growers) Ltd; The Scotts Co (UK) Ltd; John Shaw (Machinery) Ltd; Sheerwater Leisure Ltd; Sherriff Crop Care; Sisis Equipment Ltd; Tacit Ltd; Vitax Ltd.

Derek Farrington
South East Regional Administrator

Turf industry recovers

According to the Turf Growers Associations 11th market survey, carried out during the summer, members are well-placed to meet this demand over the coming year, having recovered well from the floods of autumn 2000 and the cold, wet start of 2001.

Autumn and spring sowings are largely in balance with crops heading towards maturity at sufficient levels to meet projected sales during 2002.

However, the survey shows that a market slow-down was being anticipated by members with sowings planned for this autumn leaning towards prudence.

According to TGA spokesman, Graeme Forbes, events occurring in the USA and Middle East since the survey was completed have heightened concerns also of a global slowdown and even a recession.

"Any fall in consumer confidence is likely to have a knock-on effect on the house building market, which is a key outlet for cultivated turf," he commented.

"Clearly, turf growers will be watching home and world events closely as they go through the winter and approach the spring sowing period."

New man for Reco

Reco has appointed a specialist demonstrator for the Kioti range of compact tractors launched at Saltex this autumn.

David Broad has a degree in agricultural engineering from Harper Adams College and previously worked in the European export department at Renault Agriculture.

He has practical experience of tractor operation, including shop floor assembly, servicing, in-field operation and dealer product training.

He will be available to demonstrate Kioti tractors and provide detailed training to dealers and end-users as part of Reco's support for its range of ground care equipment.

Happy retirement to Claus

Claus-Detlef Ratjen has been a long time friend of BIGGA and many of its members. Many years ago now he had a vision for uniting greenkeepers on a European basis and as Chairman of the German Association he worked unceasingly to that end.

His efforts came to fruition in March 1996 with the formation of the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Associations. Claus was the guiding light behind this Association and went on to become its Chairman. Greenkeepers throughout Europe have much to thank him for as today there is a close unity amongst greenkeepers and their Associations.

At the recent German



Greenkeepers Association Conference in Dortmund, BIGGA Chairman, Clive Osgood expressed the Association's appreciation of all that Claus-Detlef had done for greenkeeping and greenkeepers. In making a presentation to him on behalf of his many friends in BIGGA, Clive thanked him and wished him a very happy retirement.