

A LOOK BACK TO A DECADE AGO
Back Lapping
 FROM GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL

Take a time-honoured look back through the pages of Greenkeeper International from a decade ago



DECEMBER 1991

Elliott Small paid tribute to Cecil George on his retirement as 'a man 'o many parts: greenkeeper; educator; committee member; secretary; chairman; president; editor; poet and sometime singer of 'auld Scottish songs'. Cecil had begun his greenkeeping career in 1943 at Whitecraigs Golf Club finally settling at Lenzie Golf Club where he spent 37 happy years. Above all perhaps Cecil remains synonymous with greenkeeper education with his active interest continuing to this day. He remains closely involved with BIGGA and his contribution to each AGM remains eagerly anticipated.

Jim Snow, as National Director of the USGA Green Section, covered the topic of winter play on greens. It is common knowledge that three topics are simply too controversial and should never be brought up at social functions; politics, religion and winter play on greens. The last mentioned topic - few subjects raise such an emotional response from greenkeepers and golfers alike. Jim concluded that winter play can do an inordinate amount of damage to the health and playability of the greens in relation to the number of rounds. Every club considering winter play should question whether or not it is worth the risk of damaging the greens and affecting their playability for a significant period of the regular season by allowing a relatively small percentage of the Club's members to use them all the time. In the view of most head greenkeepers, turf grass scientists and agronomists, it is not.

Allen Power open day

Allen played host to nearly 200 dealers and their salesmen in a recent series of demonstration days in Scotland, the north and south of England. The first day at Murrayshall Hotel and Golf complex near Perth was well attended by dealership representatives from all over Scotland and the far north of England.

The entire range of Allen equipment was at the disposal of dealer sales personnel to test and try the machines in a variety of demanding situations.

Also in attendance from the suppliers was Mark Barnett from Honda who went through the new engines and Tim Mitchell from Friendly Robotics who manufacture the Robomow robotic mower recently taken on by Allen.

The culmination of the road shows came at Blenheim Palace, near Oxford. Over the two days 100 dealers and their staff had the Allen range presented to them against the stunning background of Blenheim.



Try the Samuel Ryder Cocktail!

Celtic Manor has developed a cocktail in honour of the club's successful bid to host the Ryder Cup in 2010. The 20/10 might well have appealed to seed merchant, Samuel Ryder, as it is produced with ingredients which are based on grasses and herbs.

They include Zubrowka vodka, each bottle of which contains a blade of Bison Grass, Pikesville Rye Whiskey, and Galliano, the famous Italian herbal liqueur in a distinctive bottle.

Preparation

25ml Galliano
 25ml Zubrowka Bison vodka
 25ml Pikesville Straight Rye Whiskey

Preliminaries

Stirred not shaken over ice. Chill the glasses and shaker with ice and drain when ready for use. Add ingredients to shaker and stir vigorously for 30 seconds then strain into glass.

Presentation

Garnish with the tip only of a sprig of fresh mint and a 1cm twist of lemon, preferably organic.

Support boost for Hydroscape

Simon Squires has joined, the Hydroscape Group as the company's UK Technical Support Manager.

Simon's brief covers all technical aspects of the Hydroscape Group's distribution interests, ranging from Toro golf irrigation products, Otterbine Barebo (water) aerators, Global Atmospherics electrical storm warning systems to Sweetwater International sulphur burning units.

Simon recently worked closely with St Andrews Links Trust officials as Contracts Manager responsible for the second phase of the £940,000 irrigation update of the Old, New and Jubilee courses, completed in May of this year.

Prior to that, he managed phase one of the St Andrews project, involving irrigation for approaches, greens, tees and fairways on the Eden, Balgove and Strathyrum courses which was completed within budget and ahead of schedule, in 1999.

"We are delighted that Simon has become part of our team. He will ful-

fil a key role in providing technical support for the complete product range which we, a national distributor specialising in the use of water resources and its management - primarily in UK sports turf markets - view as extremely important," said Graeme Francis, Hydroscape's Marketing Manager,



Leading the way

I read Duncan McGilvary's article in November's Greenkeeper magazine with interest and found myself agreeing with much that he said, as well as being very concerned. It seems strange that as a profession we have progressed so far in developing ourselves in the last 10 or so years, yet many greenkeepers are respected less now than their predecessors of 30 years ago. Then the greenkeeper's words were law. As you talk to many greenkeepers the recurring statements seem to be "It's what our members want", "We can't do that as it upsets our members" or "I want to keep my job".

There are far too many people writing about, and teaching, greenkeeping principles with those statements in mind. I can't think of many other industries that employ professional, well-trained managers to manage their major asset, and then expect them to be told by committees and members how to manage this asset and, of course, if this asset is in poor shape then it's the manager's fault.

In answer to Duncan's question we should, of course, lead. We are well-trained professionals who have been trained to understand how our courses should be managed. But we need strong minded greenkeepers who have a sense of tradition and of what is right, who want to lead and if they are not out there already then managers from other professions will eventually end up managing many golf courses with dangerous implications. These managers will have no sense of tradition and will undoubtedly change the face of British golf. As greenkeepers we need good training and first-rate leadership to help us in these difficult times. Where this comes from is the real question.

Golf clubs also need to look at themselves very closely too, as their aspirations for their golf course are far too often wide of the mark and against what is traditionally right. We live in an "environmentally friendly" world yet many clubs want to produce a totally artificial environment instead of a natural course that enhances it.

First and foremost we, as greenkeepers, need to come to the front and lead the way forward. We then need our members, committees and professionals to leave us to do what we do best, without having to pander to them and work our management around them.

They are the ones who need education. Who does that is the next question...

Alex McCombie
 Deputy Course Manager
 Parkstone Golf Club

Professional concern

I would like to thank Duncan for having the guts to stand up and say what he believes and to air his views in public.

I have spent most of my greenkeeping career working on the continent except for three years when I returned to work in the UK at one of Duncan's average members' clubs. All I will say is that the politics at this club caused a constant fight between me, trying to do my job as a professional, and amateurs trying to tell me what to do. We had four Club Secretaries in two years! I am not saying that all members' clubs are like this but I believe that, after talking with many colleagues, the majority are.

I talked with a leading consultant who advised me to return to the continent. His reasons were quite clear. The greenkeeping profession has come so far in the last 15 years but the attitude of the committees has not changed for the last 30 years and herein lies the problem. So where does that leave us. Good Course Managers become disillusioned and yes many are leaving the industry. Last year a drainage company advertised for a contracts estimator. I talked with the Managing Director of this company and he asked me what on earth is going on within the greenkeeping industry. He informed me that 70 Course Managers had applied for the vacant position. Need I say more.

We have a choice in life. You can either accept your present position or do something about it. In my case I left my club in the UK and am now working in Scandinavia where I am treated as a professional and allowed to exercise my abilities and management skills that I have acquired over the last 27 years.

So what is all this nonsense about golf professionals and interested club officials wanting to get involved in greenkeeper training?

Where were these people 20 years ago when we as an industry were educating ourselves as they did not want to know? As for greenkeepers not wanting to take on the demanding role of training here is one greenkeeper who did the opposite.

When I worked in Switzerland there was no greenkeeper education system at all and no contact between the greenkeepers themselves. The greenkeepers learned their profession by making mistakes and learning from them. I brought all the greenkeepers together by organising the first Swiss Greenkeepers' Golf Championship, and followed this up by organising education days at my club. I then helped create the Swiss Greenkeepers Association and set up the first ever greenkeeper education programme in Switzerland with David Golding at the GTC, using the Level 2 Training log book that we had translated into French and German. I did all this without any help from golf professionals or club members. I did all this for the love of my profession and to help my fellow colleagues and the end result is better maintained golf courses for the Swiss golfers and a greenkeeping profession that is now recognised by the Swiss Golf Association, with a far higher profile for greenkeepers in their country.

So after 15 years of going forward do we now need amateurs telling us what to do? Do these people not realise that if there is a problem today that they are the ones who have created it? What are golf club committees afraid of? It really is quite simple. You employ the best Course Manager that you can, give him the budget, staff and materials that he needs to maintain the course to the standard that everyone wants and then leave the professional to get on and do his job unhindered.

It would appear though that this solution is difficult to accept at members' clubs in the UK. I believe that it is something to do with "power".

Education of greenkeepers. Let's look at a recent advert in the October issue of Greenkeeper International. Hartpury College are looking for an experienced greenkeeper/sportsturf specialist to teach the skills and management of golf courses. The college is committing substantial resources to the development of its sports facilities. So why do I feel insulted when I see a salary of £16,800 offered for this position when a Course Manager can demand between £30,000 and £35,000? Do these colleges not understand that if we are to raise the standards of greenkeepers' knowledge today then the only way is to attract the top people from the industry into the education system to impart their knowledge. Offering £16,800 is hardly an incentive, is it?

So is Duncan right or wrong? I believe that he is right to be concerned about our profession. The way forward for the future is always going to be difficult until golf clubs accept the fact that today's greenkeepers are professional, educated and very committed to giving first class playing conditions if only they are allowed. They do not need interference from a Chairman of Green, Club Secretary or Golf Professional. By implementing a golf course policy document which will guarantee continuity on the course when committees constantly change and by communicating with members can we assure that the course will be maintained and managed correctly for the next generation of golfers.

Ian C Tomlinson
Course Manager
Rungsted Golf Club
Denmark

Leave it to us

Re: Duncan McGilvray's article in the November issue.

I could not agree more with Duncan's article. After being a Chairman of Green for 10 years at my own golf club and now working on another I have first hand knowledge. Chairmen of Green and Green Committees interfere far too much with greenkeepers.

They would not tell an electrician how to wire a house nor would they would tell a mechanic how to fit a new engine. Greenkeeping is a very professional job with lots of skills.

Let's hope a lot of other greenkeepers write in.

We must lead. Not be led.

Well done, Duncan.

Harold Blackshaw, Assistant Greenkeeper
Onneley GC, Staffs

Run by committee

With reference to Duncan McGilvray's article in last month's magazine.

I feel that the issue is a very complicated one. As a greenkeeper of nearly 30 years I think that while we still have an industry that is run by mainly well meaning amateurs we have got a problem. Committees change too often and they don't have the right credentials to do the work that they put themselves up for, and there's the problem.

However I feel that will change as they become aware of their responsibilities in law. We are already seeing the shift in secretaries from the retired RAF types to the ex banking men and even women.

Only when the present private members' club structure changes will any of us be allowed to take on the responsibilities that we crave and know we can do.

It will happen but it will be legislation that will force the issue in the average members' golf club.

Dave Goodridge, Head Greenkeeper
Denbigh GC

Redexim clarification

I enjoyed the piece in the September issue about the Bargoed Golf Club, but I think the writer must have had trouble reading his short-hand!

I was somewhat bemused by the statement "the course uses a Wiedemann verti-drainer" as there being no such animal. VertiDrain is a Redexim Trademark and while it has been used as a verb over the years the name cannot be used in conjunction with Wiedemann.

The piece of equipment used at the

Bargoed Golf Club is indeed a Redexim VertiDrain, and is verified by turning the page and finding a picture of our machine in storage on a pallet!

While pleased to see our machine featured, I wonder if there is some way you could clarify the situation regarding the VertiDrain name and the correct company that manufactures it.

David Jenkins, Managing Director
Charterhouse Turf Machinery Limited

You've got m@il!

If you've got an email account why not send an email to us here at BIGGA, where we can place you into our exclusive email address book. We can then keep you up-to-date with news and event information as soon as it happens.

Send an email to: reception@bigga.co.uk

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