

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 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!

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