

## Legislation is the key

Re Richard Penley-Martin's letter in February's issue. Just a few observations. You are a manager and you understand that your Head Greenkeeper is as well. Good, that's the way it should be. I have been in greenkeeping for nearly 30 years, 23 at my present club Denbigh. In the past, and this is tongue in cheek, a Secretary had to have the right accent, drink the right whisky and carry out the wishes of the committee unconditionally. That is not now the case. In the time I have been in my present job I have seen a dozen Secretary/Managers come

and go they have all been good men and I have had a good working relationship with all of them. They have all made it their business to understand the greenkeeping side of things. They have left because they weren't allowed to manage. Secretary/Managers and Head Greenkeepers do have good relationships because our associations keep us informed of all legislation etc.

Gone are the days when old Tom can climb a ladder to clean the gutters of the clubhouse and golf clubs now need truly professional people to run their affairs

both on the course and in clubhouse who should be paid accordingly.

Which brings me back to my original letter. It will be legislation that forces the way the average members' club is run, this is why I feel there aren't as many volunteers as before, they are starting to realise where there's blame there's a claim and who in their right mind wants to take up a position with out pay that could end up with them on the wrong side of a court case.

P.S My dad was in the RAF.

Dave Goodridge, Denbigh Golf Club

## Sharing the knowledge

I have been reading the letter from Mr T. A. Smith in this month's magazine 'In defence of NVQs' and I feel it deserves some sort of response.

I could not believe the comments Mr Smith made about keeping information from the club members on how we maintain the golf course and mocking record keeping and report writing, indicating for those greenkeepers to get out on the course and do some work, then finishing the statement with the comment 'if they don't ask then don't tell them'.

Is this the year 2002 or is it 1802? These comments and attitudes are out dated, untrue and have to change or greenkeeping as a professional industry will never be taken seriously. Science and industries can only progress with the sharing and understanding of knowledge. I feel it is our duty to share the knowledge we have with not just people in our industry but also the people who keep our industry alive - the paying customer.

The comment stating that a little information in the wrong hands can be dangerous is perfectly true. However, it is our responsibility to educate the uneducated in such a way that they understand what the hell it is we are talking about. At the golf course I work on we have an information board (The greenkeeping board) in the clubhouse right outside the pro-shop. It was put in this location to encourage everyone who comes into the building to read it. On this board we have such information as a weather forecast for the week ahead (taken from the met office website), rainfall records from the past two years in bar chart form for easy comparison, the Course Manager's report for the month ahead stating what work is likely to be carried out on the golf course. There is a photograph of every greenkeeper who works on the course with their title underneath so everyone actually knows who we are. There is a section headed 'Green keeping methods and techniques in which every month I write a short report on an aspect of greenkeeping, such as Hollow Coring,

explaining in layman's terms the reasons for the operation. In the past there has been headings such as 'The top 10 questions asked to green staff by golfers' and 'Aeration - what it is and why we do it' to name but a few. This sharing of information has been nothing but a great success with golfers and visiting guests alike show their appreciation for the work we do.

It is not dangerous to share knowledge if it is shared correctly. I agree with Mr Smith with his comments that people do not want to know the exact science behind an operation; this is why you must explain in a language the non professional can understand and appreciate. This sharing of knowledge has given the members and guests to the golf course an insight into the skilled profession of greenkeeping and the comments such as 'why do you always have to do that now' are vanishing. The feedback we have received at committee meetings has been remarkable and very positive. The age old impressions of the greenkeeper as the man who just cuts the grass is disappearing and we are being looked upon as qualified professional people which surely can only benefit this profession.

Knowledge and education is the key for any type of progression in this industry and it is extremely important that we all understand that the NVQs are not the only way forward. It is clear by reading the magazine month after month that the NVQs are the flavour of the month where further education is concerned. It was quite disheartening to read the comments on the very next page stating that the Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates can breed people who know how to do the job on paper but might not be able to do it in reality.

This may be true to some extent, but I have worked with people with NVQs who also can't do the job very well. This may be down to poor training and just getting bums on seats at colleges, 'get them in, get their money, and pass them. I have worked with people in the past who's NVQ level 2 training

on weed identification consisted of a quick walk around the golf course with the lecturer pointing at the weeds and telling 25 students what it was - and that was it... or the level 4 which consists of one visit a year from your tutor to see how you're getting on, where's the training? This letter is not about putting down the NVQs or any other type of training but I would like to state that they are not the be all and end all of further education and that for an organisation such as BIGGA to point out that the HNC student may not be able to do the job is an unfair statement. This is also unfair to the student who has undoubtedly studied hard for the course.

I have completed NVQ training and I have also completed the HNC and found both of them to be extremely worth while courses. At this moment in time I am one year into my MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I decided to go for the MSc rather than the other courses on offer because of the high level of teaching and the fact that it is recognised world wide as a top qualification.

The fact that this high standard of qualification even exists in our industry is a huge step in the right direction for our industry.

This profession is moving forward, lets all start singing from the same hymn sheet and recognise that all the different qualifications on offer to the greenkeeper have their benefits and this industry does not revolve around just one. There is a qualification out there to suite each individuals' career aspirations be it NVQ, HND, HNC or MSc, all of which have their own merits and all will undoubtedly increase one's knowledge and understanding of the job to what ever level you feel you can handle. Gaining knowledge and sharing knowledge surely can only be a positive way forward for us.

If we do what we've always done we will get what we always get - lack of respect. Let's move on.

Ian Chenery, Assistant Course Manager, Woodbury Park Hotel G&CC

## Huge thanks to well wishers

At 9am on the 22nd January this year I had two appointments, one with a surgeon's scalpel, and the other with the opening of the BTME. It seemed ironic that both should be exactly the same day and the same time as each other. I had always said that I would never miss a BTME, but on this occasion I had little choice. However, as days went by I became very much aware of another aspect of BIGGA membership, that of camaraderie, and the bond that runs through greenkeeping and our Association. I received so many cards, letters and phone calls from members and staff wishing me well, that I lost count, but I can assure you that every one was very much appreciated, as was the rum from Devon and Cornwall Section, and the box of fruit from the South West & South Wales Region. I wonder how they knew what to send.

I would like to thank every one of you for the kindness shown, you will never know how much it meant to me and Marion to know how many of you took the time and trouble to send your best wishes. I am getting fitter by the day and will soon be back among you all. Thanks again.

Gordon Child, Churston, South Devon

## Textron thanks

On behalf of myself and all the others who attended the GCSAA Show in Orlando Florida this year, I would like to extend a big thank you to Textron. The show was very enlightening especially for those of us who have never had this opportunity in the past. The hospitality, accommodation and indeed everything else during our stay was second to none. The group focus meetings were interesting and helpful to both Textron and their customers and I am sure will go a long way to ensuring more improvements and innovations in the future.

Ross Wilson, Course Manager, Parasampia Golf & Country Club

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