

#### **Key Skills corner**

"Wear your learning like your watch, in a private pocket: and do not merely pull it strike it; merely to show you have one."

Philip Dormer Stanhope. Earl of Chesterfield

A great theory, but I am beginning to feel that the greenkeeping industry should start to wave the tune-piece in its pocket around a little more.

I am referring to the new Key Skills Corner in Greenkeeper International. I was so embarrassed to read Ken Richardson's article telling members where to place capital letters in a sentence, grammatical basics we were

taught at the age of six.

It is time to stop dumbing down and rid ourselves of an unwanted stereotype. Greenkeeping is an industry rightly committed to education and training, however it is my opinion it should be setting its standards and pitching its levels higher than this. To explain to readers the function of a capital letter is little short of condescending and frankly insulting, and considering the Association is implementing a minimum NVQ entry for membership I find it somewhat bewildering.

Daniel Lightfoot, Deputy Course Manager Gatton Manor Hotel Golf and Country Club, Surrey

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If you've got an email account, and want to keep up to date with the latest news and events from the turfcare industry, drop us an email, and we'll add you to our ever increasing list of online subscribers. We'll then inf

Simply send an email to:

updates@bigga.co.uk quoting your name and Membership number, and we'll do the rest!

#### A big thank you

As a recipient of the Scottish Patrons' generosity, I spent a very interesting trip to BTME at Harrogate. To be able to attend so many seminars and listen to some of the most knowledgeable speakers in the world of golf was certainly a revelation. As usual on display were the best machinery and other course necessities which were of the highest order. The camaraderie among fellow greenkeepers was also very much appreciated. In closing I would like to thank the sponsers for their generosity and also my East Section for their kind nomination.

lan Aitchison

## Our members are leading the way!

To say I am proud to be a part of our profession at this moment in time is a considerable understatement.

As you will see from the publicity in this month's magazine, BIGGA, our professional Association has just approved a very exciting initiative, which will ensure that our profession, and with it our professional futures, are secured

From a personal and professional low point, when I first penned the article "Should we lead or should we be led" some six months ago, I am now extremely excited for all of us now and in the future.

BIGGA officials and Board members had already been looking at areas of concern among the profession (not least apathy), and my article helped to galvanise members' concerns into well reasoned and thought out reaction -your response was admirable.

You will no doubt have read many of the replies and spin off subjects and debates published in the pages of our magazine over the past months – it is still going on!. But there have also been many discussions behind the scenes, involving a broad spectrum of green-keepers from within the profession, offering positive opinions and suggestions, which I have found extremely heartening.

Get - togethers were arranged during "Harrogate Week" to discuss various issues further, in a more structured way, and recommendations were discussed with BIGGA officials.

BIGGA's Board of Management has subsequently approved the setting up of a group to be named the "Futures" Sub Committee, which will be made up from a wide selection of differing denominations within greenkeeping and golf course management from our membership, who will sit and recommend action regarding the future of our

The terms of reference for this group, which will be finalised at the inaugural meeting, are itemised within our Executive Director's article elsewhere in this issue.

Action on various issues will, I am sure, filter through fairly soon so watch

this space as they say – in fact the first meeting should have already taken place by the time you have read this letter.

I would also like to use this opportunity to impress on every member the importance of voicing your opinions and ideas for the future of our profession - don't sit on it or just talk amongst yourselves – get in touch – any problem or grievance can be solved by discussion and debate.

As a Course Manager I have received valuable comments, ideas and opinions from apprentices through all designations of greenkeepers and managers, to even Captains of golf clubs (honestly!).

Please talk to our professional Association and let them know your feelings – only then can they do something about it.

Through your response, over the past six months or so, I am now convinced there is a secure future for us all.

Duncan McGilvray, Course Manager Potters Bar Golf Club

## Clearing the cloudy waters

profession.

For many years BIGGA has worked hard to implement a workable plan for the education and training of green-keepers and to achieve this in conjunction with the GTC. It has all too often been hampered by a lack of adequate funding and a differing of views as to the respective responsibilities for such education and training.

I am pleased to report that in recent months much has changed for the better and there is now a much greater sense of cooperation and working together, brought about by the willingness of all involved to pull in the same direction. Gone forever, I hope, are the old suspicions of doubt, which clouded the waters of progress for education for all. The GTC and BIGGA education sit closely together, largely due to a good working relationship between David Golding and Ken

Richardson, and it's building on that cooperation that has made the present positive thinking possible.

At the last GTC Management meeting, it was agreed that Ken Richardson should be asked to attend the GTC Technical Panel meetings, and at the same time I agreed to ask the BIGGA Board if they would agree to David Golding being invited to attend the BIGGA Education Sub Committee meetings. I am pleased to say that our Board to a man agreed that it would be a big help for further relations and communication between both bodies. So, it's from a very positive and cooperative mood that I am able to inform members that we can go forward from here knowing that BIGGA, GTC, R&A, and all the Home Unions are pulling together, which must be good news for everyone.

Greenkeeper education is the one most important issue for us all, and we are now in a better position than ever before to make big strides forward. We need the input of all bodies within our industry, not just for funding, but also for new and better ideas. Each and every one of us wants the best that education and training can offer from colleges, BIGGA and GTC, and with the support of the R&A and Home Unions the future looks very healthy. Now it's time for cooperation and moving forward.

I for one feel very optimistic for the coming years. Good luck to you all and thanks for taking the time to read this letter.

Gordon Child, BIGGA Past National Chairman and the Association's GTC Representative

#### Clarification

I am writing to clear up any confusion that may arise from your presentation of my article "Changing the Nature of your Greens" in the April edition of Greenkeeper International.

Firstly, the photographs were designed to illustrate the characteristics of each of the primary growth strategies should have been captioned as follows...

 Common mouse-ear (Ruderal). Rapid life cycle and seed production in anticipation of disturbance.

 Mono-stand of competitive species (Ragwort and Rosebay willowherb) in a



productive environment. The greater proportion of time here is devoted to producing biomass for resource capture. A picture which was not included would have illustrated the following:

 Heather carry, a good example of a stress tolerator. Trampling disturbance or competitive exclusion from invasive grasses will serve to eradicate this important species.

Also, the conclusion to the article ("Feeling the Pressure?") was for some reason placed in the middle of the article. I realise that the article was quite complicated in nature but feel that it was not presented as written. I hope you will print these comments to help clarify any confusion that may have arisen as a result.

Henry C Bechelet, Turfgrass Agronomist, STRI

#### Happy Greenkeeper responds

It's the 8th of April 2002, I arrive home from work at approximately 4pm. Yippee! The excitement of the new issue of Greenkeeper International sitting on the door mat, I can't control myself any longer and rip open the plastic envelope. First things first let's look at the jobs' page to see who has been moving around. Nobody I know has moved so on to the second part of the magazine that most people look at, the letters page. One heading caught my eye, "A Right to Replay from Denmark'

This could be interesting I thought. A quick skim through the letter and "Oh my God!" my name at the bottom of the second column. A more thorough read was required. It starts off well with a thank you from Mr Ian C Tomlinson for my letter in the February issue but it quickly took a downturn, and by the time I had read to the end of the third column I was the worst greenkeeper in the world. I should have been burnt at the stake like an old medieval witch, or put in the stocks at BIGGA HQ so all green-keepers could throw bags of rotten seed or sponges soaked in Farmura at me. (Only joking I know they don't burn witches any more).

Once I stopped the tears after this violent attack of words I read through the letter again then I read my own letter again. I believe that Ian missed the whole point of my original letter. The whole point was that more communication is needed Greenkeepers to members, committees and other members of the golf clubs management team and vice versa to ensure that the needs of the golfers are met without compromising the condition of, or the maintenance of the golf course. The education of greenkeepers is now so

much improved it could now be the time to start educating the golfers.

Ian may well be fluent in French and have a working knowledge of German but he can not copy a simple passage of English from another issue of this magazine as I was misquoted in Ian's letter. Ian's version of my letter changes the context in which it was written. But don't worry Ian I won't sue you for liable. (BIGGA legal help line advised against the long and expensive court

Having read Ian's article in the January issue, which was both interesting and well written, it became apparent that we have very similar problems to deal with at work, in both cases inherited, and both deal with them in a very similar ways, So why this clashing of the pens? Maybe the pen truly is mightier than the sword.

We are all fighting for the same cause but we have different ideas how to achieve the final goal, perhaps some of us should sit down with some of the National board and throw some ideas around for the way forward and stop all this internal arguing, among us, the greenkeepers.

If Ian or any other member of the association would like to discuss my first letter or any other matter with me in person I can always be contacted on 07702 435122 and would be more than happy to chat.

PS. As a final point we hollow or solid tine and top dress every month from April to October and Slit tine almost every week as the weather allows through the Winter months. So we do aerate at Cleethorpes.

Leslie Howkins, "STILL HAPPY" Head Greenkeeper, Cleethorpes Golf Club

### Sharing the knowledge 2

Ian Chenery's comments ("Sharing the Knowledge," April, 2002) regarding informing golfers, whether members or fee paying guests, about maintenance operations are absolutely right. Explaining maintenance operations, why they have to be done, how they will be carried out, and when, further improves greenkeep-er/golfer relations through improved communication. This also demonstrates to the golfer that the greenstaff are knowledgeable and fully conversant with all aspects of golf course maintenance.

A better educated golfer will be more understanding of the problems and difficulties that can arise at any given time. Those greenkeepers that feel golfers shouldn't know about the maintenance operations may only be masking their own lack of knowledge, or inability to explain or justify their maintenance regimes.

Like Ian I too believe that there are qualifications to suit the individuals career aspirations, and that BIGGA is putting too much emphasis on NVQ's. In the article Education and Training Update (February, 2002), Ken Richardson as the Education and Training Manager of BIGGA spoke as briefly as possible about qualifica-tions such as national certificates through to post-graduate degrees. He stated that "these qualifications show what the holder knows and not necessarily what they can do" which may or may not be true. But in the context of the article he implies that these qualifications are not as good as NVQ's. Ironically, these are the qualifications (NC, HNC, BSc (Hons) etc) all of which can be taken on a part-time basis, that BIGGA should be promoting if it wants the industry to be taken as a serious pro-

Finally, before everyone writes in to say that there is no substitute for experience, I completely agree, but only if this is experience of the correct management techniques. We don't have to look too far back in history to see the problems that resulted from the feed and water brigade, which thankfully is a dying breed.

Colin Mumford

Email your news, views and letters to; scott@bigga.co.uk





**Turf Management** for Golf Courses

Second Edition by **Dr James B Beard** 

This new edition of Turf Management for Golf Courses is now available from the STRI priced at £90 plus £8 post and packing. It represents a major update on the First Edition but retains a similar format and organisation.

## Review: Turf Management for Golf Courses

Jim has drawn on a wide range of experts from across the US to help produce this updated version which covers: Golf and Turfgrass; Designing and Building a Golf Course; the Putting Green; The Tee; The Fairway; The Rough; The Bunker; Golf Course Equipment and Facilities; The Irrigation System; Pests and Stress; Golf Course Management and other Golf Course Operations.

Although aimed at the American market and written in American English, this book contains a vast amount of information useful to the British Greenkeeper. It includes a large number of colour plates, diagrams and flow charts to illustrate the well written text. Indeed, the Chapter on Pests and Stress introduces you to pests and

diseases that you may never encounter. However, if you do, then you will be able to identify and control them using the information in this book. A word of caution, however, not all chemicals approved for Golf Course use in the US are approved in the UK. The Chapter on Management gives an

insight into the way that golf courses are structured in the US, giving Job Descriptions for a range of staff. The specifications for Superintendent and Deputy closely resemble those of Course Managers and Deputies. However, not many British courses have a Fertiliser Technician and I think that we call a Landscape Horticulturist a Gardener. Joking apart, this Chapter contains useful information on Staff Training, and Appraisal, Communications, Grievance

and Discipline and Record Keeping.
The final chapter of the book looks at Championship and Tournament Preparation, Water Features and Landscaping, including a vast range of trees that can be used on golf courses.

The book closes with information on Grass Identification. Seeding and Planting, the Measurement of Areas, Conversion Tables and a Glossary of

Despite the cost, this book is a useful guide to greenkeeping and golf course management. Care must be taken to interpret its guidance into local language and apply it to the rules and conditions of your country. A useful addition to any bookshelf, it would sit well alongside Jim Arthur's 'Practical Greenkeeping'. KR