



Welcome

GRASS CUTTERS WITH DIPLOMAS

You know how the tone of a day can be set very early on. It's summed up by the saying "Getting out of bed on the wrong side".

Well I got out of bed on the wrong side last week when I woke, as usual, to The Today Programme to hear John Humphries quizzing someone on the Conservative Party's new idea to abolish tuition fees for students. They would do this by getting rid of some of the "Mickey Mouse" courses that are currently available. Well the course Mr Humphries mentioned first was, you've guessed it, Golf Course Management.

I remember visiting this theme a couple of years ago when the then Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, derided the course in a similar manner inspiring another editorial column. Well, it would appear we still have an education process to carry out.

The idea that greenkeepers cut grass and not much else is still prevalent. It seems to be accepted and fashionable to think that the only possible thing that a greenkeeping brain is used for is to predict how many more lines can be mown before the grass bucket has to be emptied. I can't for the life of me think of any other reason why Golf Course Management is picked on so readily as an example of all that is wrong with the British further education system.

I'm sure there is a debate to be had about vocational courses when set against academic courses and how vocational courses are now studied at University and not College. The chances are the University is probably just a College with a name change. For instance the College in Edinburgh where I studied Journalism is now a University and the people coming out at the end of their courses are University graduates and not College graduates. Snobbery?

Such a discussion is worthy of John Humphries' attention on The Today Programme, but the high handed swipe at greenkeepers is just lazy, ill considered and poorly researched.

Of course, we shouldn't be blaming John Humphries, who conducts many interviews during the course of just one programme and has to rely on notes from a researcher.

I am here to tell you that the depth of knowledge required to pass successfully an HND in Golf Course Management is probably greater than that required to pass a similar diploma in Media Studies, or whatever qualification John Humphries' researcher has to his or her name.

Your job is not made any easier by such exposure in the media, and it is high time you were given credit for the job you do. It is not a case of blowing your own trumpet just educating golfers on the range of skills you have at your finger tips and the skills that are required to make your golf courses what they are. Otherwise you will continue to be thought of as grass cutters, albeit some with diplomas.

Unfortunately it's easier said than done.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

ALEX ROBERTSON

The sudden death of Alex Robertson, Head Greenkeeper at Grangemouth Golf Club, came as a great shock to his many friends and colleagues especially in the greenkeeping fraternity.

Alex, who was 50, started his greenkeeping career as an apprentice at Glenbervie Golf Club in 1968 and he was one of the early students who went through the new greenkeeping apprenticeship courses at Woodburn House in Glasgow.

After finishing his apprenticeship and spending another few years learning his trade, Alex, like so many young greenkeepers, moved onto the 9 hole course at Bonnybridge as Head Greenkeeper and then from there to Carmuir Golf Club.

Having a break from greenkeeping, Alex became Groundsman at Brockville Park, home of Falkirk Football Club, for a couple of years before returning to greenkeeping as an Assistant at Grangemouth. He was a proud man when he took up the position of Head Greenkeeper there three years ago. He was popular with the members and the hard work and dedication he put into the course did not go unnoticed as many of them commented on the many improvements he made.

Alex was a great supporter of the greenkeepers' Association for many years and was a well known face under his shock of red hair at both educational and golf events from Section level through to National events including BTME. He served some time as a committee member of the Central Section and was always ready to do what he could to help. His was always one of the first entries in the Support Team for The Open each year and he was

successful on making the team on many occasions.

He was the "Quiet Man", so quiet sometimes you didn't realise he was there, but he was always there if he was needed. At his first Open, on going out as a bunker raker, he obeyed the



instructions to be as discreet as possible so well that we had a call to say there was no raker with his game. But he was there all right, being so discreet the marshals never noticed him.

At another Open an appeal was put out in the tent for someone to go out for a second round. Alex was first to volunteer even though, 30 minutes earlier, he had just finished a five hour round in pouring rain and blowing a gale.

One of the great things about Alex was his indomitable spirit. He was never at a loss especially in getting to BIGGA events. Although he did not have a car if he said he was going he would always be there. Many's the time I gave him a lift home from a committee meeting or golf outing after discovering that to get there he had taken a bus or a train or sometimes even both.

He also showed this same spirit playing golf and was a frequent prize winner as he always kept going.

Alex was a man who never had a bad word to say about anyone and he loved being a greenkeeper. He was always respected by all who knew him and this was evident at the huge turnout at his funeral which included many people from the greenkeeping fraternity.

He will be sadly missed by those who knew him.

Elliott Small

NEW APPOINTMENT AT JOHN DEERE

John Deere Limited has announced the appointment of David Hart as Commercial & Consumer Equipment (C&CE) Division Sales Manager, responsible for managing the company's sales and marketing operations for golf & turf, commercial and homeowner products and dealerships in the UK and Ireland.

David takes over from Pieter Nel, who has returned to his homeland after 18 months in the UK to become Marketing Manager of John Deere's agricultural and C&CE divisions in South Africa.

After graduating from Lincolnshire College of Agriculture & Horticulture, David began his career with a John Deere dealership. He joined John Deere



Limited in 1990, becoming an Area Service Manager and subsequently Area Manager Product Support (AMPS) in south-east England, a Territory Manager in south-west England and then Harvesting Equipment Product Manager.

He was brought up in Norfolk, where his father Ernie Hart was a well known and respected figure in the amenity and grounds care industry for many years. A keen golfer, David took part in the inaugural John Deere Team Championship golf tournament finals at The Belfry last year.

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