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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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Cover by Tony Husband



Welcome

NO KNOWN CURE

Most years around this time we allude to Augusta Syndrome in the pages of Greenkeeper International. This month, however, we have gone one stage further and featured it as a major issue. Incidentally I hope you like our cover, drawn by award winning cartoonist Tony Husband. We have an article with highly respected golf commentator, Peter Alliss, who has been visiting Augusta National for almost 40 years and who has strong views on the course, while Assistant Editor, Gareth Jones, has been canvassing opinion on the subject for this month's Talking Heads.

You may ask why it has taken until 2005 to tackle an issue which has been at the forefront of the minds of many greenkeepers for many years, and which genuinely does cause headaches within the Maintenance Facilities of clubs up and down the country.

You'll be glad to hear that I can answer that. As it is discussed in our own magazine there is a danger that we would leave ourselves open to the line, "We would say that wouldn't we". In other words it could be seen as the magazine equivalent of whinging to each other at the back of the class and not taking our concerns through the proper channels.

However, having had the chance to speak with Peter Alliss, a man who is known and respected by television-watching golfers the world over, his views, as expressed in Greenkeeper International, would be of real interest to golf club members.

With that in mind it might be worth leaving your copy of the magazine in the clubhouse for a while or photocopying the front cover and the Peter Alliss and Talking Heads pieces and pinning them to the notice board.

You never know, it might allow for some balanced discussion within the membership at a time when the usual Augusta debate rages and perhaps it may raise awareness of unrealistic expectations within golf clubs. If the articles are seen by the membership you might just make a few converts, or at the very least silence a few critics for a while.

Unfortunately Augusta Syndrome does exist but I don't believe that many club members - although they are a major factor in its existence - have ever heard of it. Perhaps that's no surprise as they are not the people who succumb to AS, it's only greenkeepers who are afflicted and there is no known cure.

However, having Peter Alliss talk about it and say that expecting a regular British course to be like Augusta National is about as realistic as thinking you can live in Buckingham Palace carries much more weight than Kerran Daly, John Pemberton or Scott MacCallum saying exactly the same thing.

To many golfers, "If Peter says it, it must be true." That says much for the esteem in which Peter is held.

So if the going gets heavy later this month make people aware of these articles. It might just help change opinion and lessen the impact of a depressing condition.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

PRIZE GIVING TRACTORS



Stephen Cabrol (left) with BIGGA's Rosie Hancher and John Pemberton and the Carraro Tractor

The BTME & ClubHouse Banquet had a unique twist this year, as all the guests were given a model of a Carraro Tractor, as part of the company's sponsorship of the evening, which marked the end of the Exhibition.

Tickets were hidden in three of the tractors and Stephen Cabrol, of Carraro UK, was on hand to present the three lucky winners, who found these tickets in their tractor, with their prizes.

EXTRA POSITION FOR GTC DIRECTOR



The Greenkeepers' Training Committee Education Director, David Golding, has been appointed Vice Chairman of Lantra's Landscaping Industry Group.

Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector and the GTC has been a member of the landscaping industry group for nearly 10 years. David's appointment follows former vice-chairman Eddie Wardrobe's promotion to Chairman of the group.

"I think the nomination is recognition for the GTC in its commitment to the promotion of education, training and qualifications to the golf club employers and greenkeepers it represents," said David.

"The GTC has worked with Lantra to develop, promote and implement the government framework of qualifications and apprenticeship schemes.

"On behalf of the sector I will continue to work with all the relevant bodies and organisations to ensure that both employers and learners can access a quality range of qualifications from the increasingly popular vocational to the more academic awards."

THE RUNNING MAN

While many consider Sunday to be the day of rest, for one man Sunday April 17 will be anything but that. As countless people will be sitting down and tucking in to their traditional roast dinner Billy Merritt, of Beacon Park Golf Club, will be pushing his body to the limit as he runs the London Marathon.

Billy last ran the 26 mile course in 1997, completing it in just three hours and four minutes. The Beacon Park Head Greenkeeper is part of the Liverpool Running Club and is raising money for Marie Curie Cancer Care. Donations to this worthy cause are welcome and can be made by logging on to www.justgiving.com/daffodils.

Billy, 43, has now been running for 10 years and in that time has entered hundreds of races, including 10k, 10 mile and half marathons. The Marathon in the English Capital received a record 98,500 applications for the 2005 race, and Billy was one of the lucky athletes who successfully got through. The international event has been running since 1981, when just 7,747 individuals were accepted to race.



Billy has competed in numerous races in his 10 years of racing

INTURF BOUNCES BACK

Turf producer Inturf has signed a new three year deal to sponsor Wilberfoss FC, who are in Division 1 of the York and District League, having won promotion last year.

"We're delighted to get behind our local team this way," said Stephen Edwards, Joint Managing Director of Inturf. "Sport at the grass roots is important for us all yet it's remarkable to think that in the very same week that we teamed up with Wilberfoss we also signed up for turf orders with the likes of Everton and Burnley Football Clubs and Carnoustie and The Belfry Golf Courses. It's an exciting time for our business, which celebrates its 20th Anniversary in May."



Inturf's Stephen Edwards (left) with Wilberfoss Manager, Brian Walker

GOLF TEE SIGNS APPOINT ROBINSON



Golf Tee Signs has appointed Charmian Robinson as Sales and Marketing Manager for the UK, with the aim of increasing the market share of Golf Tee Signs in the golf and Leisure signage market.

Charmian has many years experience in promoting machinery and associated products to the Golf and Amenity markets. For the past year she has been employed by Golf Tee Signs as a Marketing and Publicity Agent, resulting in a significant increase in sales and general awareness of the company within the market.

"We felt that there was a requirement for a more coordinated sales and marketing strategy that required the expertise of someone with a broader perspective of the sales potential," said Simon Challoner, owner of Golf Tee Signs.

"Charmian has a vast knowledge of the golf and associated industries and has proved that she can generate enquiries not just in the golf sector, but in other markets as well. We welcome her to our management team and look forward to even greater success in the future."



The Sheffield Section at Rotherham Golf Club after their golf match

TARGET BREAKERS RECOGNISED

Dave Tullett (left), from Parks and Grounds Machinery, receives his Award from Philip Threadgold (right) and Cees de Bree



The performance of nine Charterhouse Turf Machinery dealers has resulted in them being

named as the company's Target Breakers for the 2004 sales year.

The dealerships that surpassed their target sales levels are Ben Burgess Garden Equipment, FG Adamson & Son, Geo Brown Implements, Keith Morgan Mowers, New Forest Farm Machinery, Parks & Grounds Machinery, Campey Turf Care Systems, Rickerby and Tomlinson Groundcare.

Representatives from the nine Target Breakers recently attended a special presentation ceremony with Philip Threadgold, Managing Director of Charterhouse Turf Machinery. Also in attendance was Cees de Bree, of Holland-based Redexim, Charterhouse's parent company.

Two special awards were made in recognition of particularly outstanding performance. Keith Morgan Mowers were named as Charterhouse Dealer of the Year, and David Common scooped the Charterhouse Salesman of the Year Award.

EASTERN GARDEN COVERS JERSEY

Eastern Garden Machinery, based in Gorey on Jersey, has taken on Tracmaster's BCS Dealership for the island of Jersey.

Tracmaster's Managing Director, Stephen Pitt, said: "We are delighted to welcome Bob Messervy and

Eastern Garden Machinery to our growing team of BCS and Camon Dealers. We are currently looking to expand our Dealer Network as we are changing the way we trade in the UK. We propose to offer our entire BCS and Camon range through Dealers."

SUPATURF GO ORGANIC

Supaturf Products Limited and Sport Organics Limited have entered into a sales and marketing partnership for the products and services offered by Sports Organics. The new arrangement provides Supaturf Products Limited with complimentary sales and services for the local authority and sports turf market.

Marcus Palmer, Supaturf's Managing Director said: "With our sales team's activity in the local authority and sports turf market we will be able to provide our customers with a wider package of products and services. Sports Organics has developed products that provide sports turf and amenity managers with powerful management tools in the form of Plan IT and technically proven alternative methods to current drainage methods."

"This new venture is very exciting and enables our technologies and services to be exposed to a broad, targeted audience through the Supaturf sales team," explained Justin Smith, of Sports Organics.

ETESIA AND SGM ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP



SGM Hire's Business Development Manager, Andrew Racle (left), with Colin Plumb, Sales Manager for Etesia UK Ltd

Etesia and Scottish Grass Machinery have announced a new partnering agreement between the two companies.

Under the arrangements SGM Hire's customers nationwide will now be able to contract hire new Etesia machines.

"While Etesia is heading this venture nationally, all machines will be supplied through our local specialist dealer network in order to maintain our high standards of supply and back-up. We are very pleased to be taking a proactive role in this partnership which we believe will make Etesia products more widely available to end users," explained Les Malin, Etesia UK's General Manager.

SGM have also signed an agreement to distribute Yamaha golf cars and utility vehicles in Scotland. In the past 3 months SGM has signed up distribution agreements with CLAAS UK, Shibaura and Kioti.

"In building this business, our focus has always been to add top quality names to the list of manufacturers we represent and, with Yamaha, we have certainly achieved that," said David McInroy, Chairman of Scottish Grass Machinery.

Andy Pumfrey, Divisional Manager, Power Products, Yamaha Motor (UK) Ltd, commented: "We are confident that the sales, service and support network established by SGM in Scotland will provide a major boost for our products north of the border and we look forward to a long, mutually rewarding business relationship with SGM."



In March we placed the incorrect photo of Lee Strutt MG into the Tip of the Month. We wish to remedy this now.

SEVENTH HEAVEN FOR PATTERSON



St Andrews Links Trust has appointed a Head Greenkeeper for its seventh course, which is being created just outside St Andrews.

Allan Patterson, Head Greenkeeper on the Kings, Queens and Wee courses at Gleneagles, will oversee the construction, opening and long-term development of the cliff top course.

The appointment was made following a thorough selection process involving over 70 applicants from as far a field as Australia, Canada and the USA. The decision, as the Trust's Links Superintendent Gordon Moir indicates, was based

on Allan's experience and knowledge.

"Allan has the desired greenkeeping skills to develop a golf project of this size and quality. His experience at Gleneagles combined with his ability will help ensure that the new course complements the broad range of golfing experiences available at St Andrews."

Allan held the position of Head Greenkeeper at Gleneagles for seven years following an apprenticeship that saw him take on a variety of roles including Deputy Head Greenkeeper and Assistant Greenkeeper at the resort. Prior to this, Allan spent nine years at Powfoot Golf Club, Dumfriesshire.

His appointment at St Andrews Links is a move that the 38 year old greenkeeper is relishing: "This is a great opportunity to work at the Home of Golf. The course design is fantastic and the location couldn't be better. It promises to be an outstanding golf course."

At over 7,000 yards, the seventh public course at St Andrews is being created in response to demand on the existing Links courses where approximately 210,000 rounds are played every year. Designed by David McLay Kidd, the new course is expected to open in 2007.

NEW HEADLAND DISTRIBUTORS

Headland Amenity has appointed Stewartsturf Ltd as the company's main distributor for Scotland. Based in Mayfield, Dalkeith, south of Edinburgh, Stewartsturf is a family company with over 100 years in the Amenity Turf Market.

"Stewartsturf has built a sound reputation over many years and developed an impressive coverage," said Headland's Andy Russell. "The key thing for us is that they understand our programmed approach to turf management and will go out and look at the customer's situation as a whole rather than just sell products in isolation."

Kenny Archibald, Stewartsturf's Sales Manager, is delighted with the new deal: "Headland has the whole package which works as a programme and sends out the right message about Stewartsturf."



Headland's Andy Russell (left) with Kenny Archibald, Sales Manager for Stewartsturf

NEW ROLE FOR MCGILVRAY



Duncan McGilvray with Kerin Conn, Marketing Manager, Haztek International

Haztek International, Golf Club Health and Safety Specialists, have announced the addition of Duncan McGilvray to their team.

Duncan's role will be as Sales and New Business Manager for the UK and Europe and he will be looking to expand the company into new areas.

"I am thrilled about Duncan's appointment to the team. He has over 30 years experience in greenkeeping and golf club management and will be a valuable addition to the company. His expertise and contacts within the industry will enhance our operations to a large extent," said Jerrard Winter, Haztek Director.

Duncan added: "With the advent of Health and Safety legislation the need for simple, robust, Health and Safety systems has become paramount. I am looking forward to the new challenge not only from a personal viewpoint, but also in doing my bit for the industry as a whole in ensuring safer places for people to work and play golf."

PROMOTION FOR DAVID ROBERTS



David Roberts has been appointed Sales and Marketing Manager of Kubota UK Limited's tractor and groundcare division.

Taking on responsibility for managing and directing the sale and marketing of tractors, tractor attachments and ride-on mowers for the Thame, Oxfordshire based business, David had been previously the company's Sales Manager. In his new integrated role, David's principal responsibility is to ensure the effective

distribution, sale and support of Kubota agricultural and horticultural products by the company's appointed dealer network in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

David joined Kubota's sales office in 1989, having gained higher education qualifications in agricultural engineering. During the 1990's David worked both as Distribution Manager and then a Regional Sales Manager for Kubota UK before becoming the company's Sales Manager in 2002.

"My intention is that the name Kubota becomes a by-word not solely for product quality but also for customer service and support, building on the excellent dealer network that we have appointed throughout the UK and Ireland," said David.

SOUTH COAST SEMINAR SUCCESS

The South Coast Section held its annual seminar at Canford Magna Golf Club in February. The seminar is part of the BIGGA Continue to Learn Programme and the close working relationship with Ken Richardson and Sami Collins has seen it continue to develop and become a huge success.

As well as receiving sponsorship from BIGGA, the day was also sponsored by Farmura and Bredy Irrigation Services and received excellent support from both the GTC and the R&A. The day had 110 delegates and was sold out well in advance with a long reserve list too.

The theme was 'A natural golf course' and was promoting traditional greenkeeping and a sustainable golf course. Jim Arthur, who chaired the day, opened the proceedings. The morning saw three excellent presentations from Rungsted Golf Club's Course Manager, Ian Tomlinson, Royal Cinque Ports' Course Consultant, Gordon Irvine, and Temple Golf Club's Course Consultant, Malcolm Peake. The afternoon session saw two more excellent presentations from Tyrrell Wood's Course Manager, Billy McMillan, and BIGGA National Chairman Kerran Daly.



A Greenkeeper's nightmare: The Minchinhampton course is left devastated by horses that broke out of the next field just two days before the Club Championship

HAYTER AWARD DEALERS



Jason Scott (right) receives his Award from David Sturges

Held yearly the Hayter Dealer Awards Dinner is eagerly looked forward to by distributors both in the UK and abroad. The awards are given for outstanding achievement and are much prized by the recipients. The dinner is also an opportunity for Hayter to thank all of their dealers and distributors

for the hard work they have put in throughout the previous year.

This year one of the most popular people in the industry in the USA, the UK and Continental Europe, Stan Kinkead, received the International Distributor of the Year Award on behalf of the National Mower Company in the USA.

The Top Dealer of the Year Award was given to Lister Wilder Agriculture Ltd, and the Outstanding Dealer of the Year Award was presented to Carrs Billington Agriculture. Each year an Individual Achievement Award is given and this year Peter Bagguley, of Mitchell Industries Ltd, received it.

Commenting on the evening's events David Sturges, Sales and Marketing Director for Hayter said: "These awards are not given out lightly and a great deal of thought goes in to who should receive them. We deliberately keep the awards to a small number to ensure their individual value but at the same time we do recognise the tremendous efforts made by our dealers and distributors."

MACMILLIAN QUALIFIES AS PARALEGAL

Ian MacMillan, of the Scottish Central Section, has recently qualified as a Fellow of the Society of Specialist Paralegal. Ian, Course Manager at Murrayshall Hotel and Golf Courses, has gained the specialist



degree in order that he could aid other greenkeepers who are having difficulties in their employment on top of the BIGGA Legal Helpline.

Ian sailed through the degree course, completing it in just six months and the Headman was the only student out of the 38 sitting the exams that was not practising law as a profession.

COLLEGE ACHIEVES EXCELLENCE

Plumpton College has achieved full status as the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for Rural Business Management Training, after a year of developmental work. The award has brought with it over £500,000 of investment from the Learning and Skills Council to the colleges.

In recognition of this achievement, Plumpton has invested in a fully equipped training centre, The Sussex Rural Business Centre, which enables the College to deliver courses and seminars tailored to rural business needs. "This has been an important development in the future direction of the College," said Des Lambert, Principal of Plumpton College.

EDWARDS TAKES OVER



Past Chairman Chris Carr (left) hands the Chairmanship of the TGA to Stephen Edwards

Stephen Edwards, of Inturf, has taken over the Chairmanship of the Turfgrass Growers Association when members gathered in Cardiff for its AGM recently.

"I'm committed to the turf industry as a whole, not just those growers who choose to be members of the TGA," commented Stephen. "As Chairman I plan to encourage the TGA council to work proactively with existing members to encourage new membership and to promote its benefits to both the grower and the end-user."



David Golding emphasises both the role and importance of the employer in greenkeeper training.

The 'employer' at golf clubs has been the topic of many a conversation during my years involved in the sector.

The Home Unions have continually tried to engage employers by hosting seminars and workshops during recent years that have included a wide range of subjects all aimed at ensuring the most up to date information is available to the affiliated clubs they represent. The GTC has the English, Scottish and Welsh Golf Unions' representatives as Board Members and I am aware of their frustrations when delegate numbers for many of their events have been disappointing.

In Britain we are fortunate that the Unions do play an active role in terms of supporting greenkeeper education through their funding support to the GTC and their pro-active Golf Course Committees or Services Committee. I know it is a responsibility the Home Unions take very seriously and they are always looking for new ideas on how to ensure the employer is supported in all the key matters relating to the management of the golf club and course.

The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, the major funding body of the GTC, has also been very active in its efforts to support golf clubs by establishing a Golf Course Committee with a full time Secretary, Steve Isaac, continually trying to share good practice with golf clubs. The uptake on registrations on the www.bestcourseforgolf.org website is very encouraging and I am sure, once a club has registered, many of the checklists will need the Course Manager's input successfully to complete many of the categories. Please check if your club has registered and, if they have, who is responsible for updating the progress. I urge all Course Managers to become involved in the R&A initiative to assist clubs in accessing best practice and principles for golf course maintenance and management.

One major problem we seem to have is in identifying the 'employer' at the majority of our clubs. I believe this accounts for much of the frustration from Course Managers, who often feel they cannot maximise their own knowledge and experience due to the fact that they are not able to liaise directly with the employer.

Often a club will give the Secretary/Manager overall responsibility for the day to day administrative running of the club including the golf course but, while there has to be someone identified as the overall Manager, they too are an employee and I believe there should be a mutual respect between the Secretary and the Course Manager for each other's responsibilities. The Course Manager's position can often be a lonely one but hopefully through training and experience they can also educate the club to be active in their support for staff development as well as supplying adequate resources to implement agreed policies.

The policies now include matters such as Health & Safety, the environment and course maintenance principles. These should all be embraced by a club policy document, which must be approved by the membership. The membership must have the confidence to allow the Course Manager to manage the course and this is why management training is made available to give greenkeepers the confidence and competence to add to their greenkeeping skills and knowledge.

At the proprietary clubs it is obviously the owner who is responsible for all

the issues and decisions to be made to ensure the desired standards both on and off the course are maintained. However at resort type courses it is often the General Manager and the Course Manager who liaise on behalf of the owners, whoever they might be, working together to an agreed budget which is often a recipe for a business like approach to producing an all round product which customers require.

Is this then the way forward for our traditional golf clubs? Do we need to keep talking about the missing 'employer' or should Course Managers be allowed to manage the course in line with the agreed policies liaising with the Manager as and when necessary?

It has to be said that some clubs do have excellent Chair of Green/Green Convenor and those who have been sufficiently interested in remaining in the post more than a year or so often prove to be ideal employers. I think Mr J. H. Arthur B.Sc. may well have got it right with his quote: "The best committees consist of an uneven number, and three is too many." While those of us continue to promote this ideal let us try to encourage that one person, hopefully strong in character, to take on the responsibility of the employer.

In the past I have heard from Course Managers who feel that their Chair of Green should not be encouraged to educate themselves in turf maintenance. We

all know the dangers of the 'surrogate Course Manager' role but somebody has to be identified as the employer. We all know the problems associated with the ever changing Chair of Green/Green Convenor at some clubs, but maybe if when appointed they were registered onto the first available STRI short course specifically designed to give an overview of best principles for

maintaining a golf course, this might encourage more to enjoy their position and to be more understanding of the work of his/her Golf Course Manager.

It is also so important that Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers take every opportunity to keep their own professional development updated so they can manage the golf course and not have to rely on someone else to carry out that role. The excellent management training courses organised by BIGGA all address the key areas of effective communication and tutors are appointed because of not only their credentials as trainers in management skills but also their empathy for the role of the Golf Course Manager.

The numbers of people who I would describe as typically knowledgeable, experienced Head Greenkeepers who have attended a short management course and returned for more sessions because they got so much out of the course are countless. Do you take advantage of these courses? If not, if you see your role as a Manager please consider this option for your personal development as they can be both enjoyable but also inspirational.

It seems that the debate will go on, with most traditional clubs still preferring the committee rule structure, but one very pleasing aspect of my work for the GTC is that all bodies involved in golf have never worked closer together in an attempt to provide information to clubs.



Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

Unlock the doors to progress through BIGGA's Education and Development Fund - the key to a great future for greenkeepers, golf clubs and the game of golf.

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Education Update



With 2005 quickly ticking by Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, highlights the FREE training for Greenkeepers available across the UK.

By the time that you read this article, Easter will have come and gone, the clocks will have gone forward and a third of 2005 will have gone by. My thoughts are now on the TORO Student of the Year Programme, the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, FREE - yes - FREE training for greenkeepers and the BIGGA Education and Development Fund.

TORO Student of the Year 2005



Information leaflets and application forms for the 2005 TORO Student of the Year Competition have been sent out to all colleges and training providers. Completed entry forms have to be returned to BIGGA HOUSE by May 6 2005. Judging will commence on Monday July 4 in Scotland, followed by Manchester (Northern and Ireland) on July 5, South East on July 6, South West on July 7 and finally Midlands on July 8.

The 2004 Student of the Year, Alex Shore, has recently returned from the USA and he will be letting us all know what he achieved in a future article in this magazine.

BIGGA Golf Environment Competition

You should have all received an invitation to enter the 2005 BIGGA Golf Environment Competition sponsored by WRAP, Scotts UK Professional, Syngenta Professional Products and new for 2005, Waste2Water.

The 2005 Competition will run on similar lines to previous years although, due to extra sponsorship, more clubs than ever will receive a visit from the STRI judges.

Entry forms will be sent to interested clubs in early April and they will have to be returned to BIGGA HOUSE by early June when the Competition judges assess nine areas of environmental management:

Nature Conservation
Energy Efficiency
Landscape and Cultural Heritage
Education and Training
Water Resource Management
Turfgrass Pest Management
Communications
Public Access and Awareness
Waste Management



Golf Environment Competition

Those clubs judged to meet the criteria best will be selected to progress to the second stage of the Competition while clubs not selected will receive extended feedback on their entry. Clubs selected to progress to the second round will be visited by the judges who will, subsequently, select the prize winners for 2005.

The National Winner will receive a cheque for £2,000, a Scott's Weather Master Weather Station and the BIGGA Golf Environment Trophy. Each of the other four area winners and the runners up in the winners region will each receive a cheque for £500.

Prizes of £500 will be awarded for:

- The Best Environmental Initiative
- The Most Impressive Newcomer
- The Best Use of Recycled Materials

All prize winners receive a plaque to display in the Clubhouse.

Whether your course is large or small, it provides an important link in the environmental chain, helping to achieve long term ecological benefits. Let your members, local residents and the World see what you are doing by entering this year's Competition. Who knows, it may be your turn to join this year's winners at the BTME & ClubHouse Exhibition held in Harrogate in January 2006.

FREE Training

It's not often that you can get anything for free, however, free training is available for golf greenkeepers. The first way of obtaining free training is to enrol your trainee onto an apprenticeship. Contact your local training provider and/or your local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) office for further details.

Free training is available in other parts of the country for all trainees. I mentioned a scheme in the Midlands in a previous article and South Yorkshire has become the most recent area to offer this deal. Again, contact your local LSC office for details.

BIGGA Education and Development Fund

BIGGA has been able to produce a wide range of training support material and to subsidise training courses thanks to the generous contributions made to its Education and Development Fund. Over the past year, more than £25,000 has been used to subsidise Regional and Section Seminars and Conferences and to subsidise local training courses.

Many greenkeepers, who have had to pay their own fees, have benefited from the Refund of Fees Scheme and we have awarded a contract to produce the long awaited Training and Development Manual.

We are very grateful for the contributions made by companies and by individuals to the Education and Development Fund. However, if you wish to contribute or you know of a company or individual who is interested in joining the Fund then please let me know.

Rachael and Gemma from Membership Services would like to welcome 101 new members to the Association.

Membership Update

SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW AND EXISTING BIGGA MEMBERS FROM HAZTEK INTERNATIONAL

BIGGA have teamed up with Haztek International, Golf Health and Safety Specialists, to give new members access to a free Health and Safety hotline, available 24 hours a day.

Members will be able to call or email with any Health and Safety concerns and get instant free advice from one of our NEBOSH/IOSH qualified consultants.

New members will also have the opportunity to subscribe to the Haztek International Maintenance Plan and get one year's free audit on a three year plan, i.e. four years for the price of three.

A Health and Safety Maintenance Plan will ensure that all matters relating to Health and Safety in your club are constantly maintained. The purpose of the Plan is to ensure that the club remains injury free and, secondly, to ensure full compliance with the laws in place.

- The plan will promise to keep you informed of all legislation changes and their implications.
- To carry out a full annual audit of your Club's Health and Safety.
- To update the Health and Safety Policy annually.
- To notify you of the changes to Risk Assessments.
- To notify you of changes to safe working practices.

A monthly bulletin will also provide information on new legislation and case studies.

This offer is also available to existing members renewing their membership for the following year.

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Golf Club Health and Safety Specialists

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David Nicholson, North
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Allan Rodgers, West
Andrew Stables, North
Craig Wilson, Central

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David Budden, Northern
Daniel Burrows, Northern
Gareth Evans, North Wales
David Gillett, North Wales
Damian Hartley, North West
David Hebden, North West

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Robert Glover, South Coast
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APRIL'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win a FM DIGITAL SCAN RADIO/ALARM CLOCK, with a detachable speaker and headphones. Our congratulations go to Derek Neve of Brough Golf Club.





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Course Feature



▲ Andrew Ross, Kevin Hill, Mark Campbell and Robert McTurk

From Small Acorns...

Gareth Jones visits Thornhill Golf Club where a three man greenkeeping team are battling with limited budgets and time to produce a top course.

We have all heard and, most probably, used the phrase “from small acorns large oaks grow” at least once in our lifetime. This particularly poignant saying can be applied to many instances but it is no more apt than at Thornhill Golf Club, an 18 hole course nestled away in the Dumfriesshire countryside, where a three man green staff has been battling with restricted budgets, time and man power to produce a superb parkland/heathland golf course.

The club was established in April 1893 as a nine hole track and had to wait 86 years until it was extended to 18 holes in 1979, the club waiting until 1996 to enlarge its Clubhouse. In the years between the two extensions, particularly in the early to mid 1990’s, Thornhill enjoyed a membership of over 700 and a green staff of five full time and two seasonal workers.

However, as with many smaller clubs, as the 90’s progressed they were rocked by the changing times within the golf world, namely competition from other courses. The club was hit hard when two local, but higher profile and wealthier clubs, the Dumfries and Galloway Golf Club and Dumfries and Country Golf Club, opened up their membership. Thornhill’s membership plummeted to below 500, with the resulting decrease of income meaning an obvious cut back in resources and the greenkeeping team was reduced from five to three, with the seasonal workers being targeted also.

The tightening of the Thornhill purse strings came at the same time as Kevin Hill was promoted to the position of Head Greenkeeper, in 1996. Despite landing his dream job, Kevin, who has now been at the club for 16 years, faced the ominous task of improving the course in order to attract back wandering members, while working with impedingly small budgets and just two other men.

If the Headman’s job wasn’t already tough enough Kevin and his trusty men had to rewrite the wrongs of the past and put the course back to its rightful state before they could actually move on and improve the course, a case off taking two steps back to take just one forward.

“When I first got the job we focused all our energy on getting the course back up to scratch. We needed to improve the course and move it forward, but before any of that we had to mend what I considered some of the errors of the past. From a greenkeeping point of view a lot had been done to the course which just shouldn’t have happened,” said Kevin, as we chatted in a corner of the cosy clubhouse with Thornhill’s Green Convenor, Robert McTurk.

Inherited problems included poor drainage, tees, greens and disease; in Kevin’s first season he was spraying for fusarium every week.

“Previous to 1996 we fed the course all the time and we had so many problems with disease all over the course, we just never got rid of it. I believe in minimal feeding and I don’t use fungicides, mainly due to these early experiences, and when I took over I installed this policy straight away. Now we are at the stage when we don’t get too much disease at all, particularly on the greens. Obviously we still get a bit, which course doesn’t, but it is only the odd isolated spot and that is it. The greens are better than ever now,” stated Kevin proudly.

Drainage was the next headache for the three man team, the 4th fairway especially needed attention. Drainage pipes had been placed incorrectly, so that they actually ran up hill as they came to the ditch, which wasn’t deep enough in the first place, and to add to the predicament the pipes only ran to the edge of the fairway instead of all the way to the end of the rough. Visually, the 4th was the most dramatic portrait of this trouble but other parts of the course were suffering from the inadequate drainage. The materials used in the construction of tees and greens had left a lot to be desired and in the long run had cost the club both valuable time and money, both commodities it just cannot afford.

“The drainage that was put in just wasn’t up to the job and because it wasn’t done right it is still causing us problems 10 years down the line. Back in 1996 we rebuilt three tees straight away, as they were in such a bad way. The tees and greens had not been built correctly originally and the wrong materials were used, so they looked and played well for the first season, but after that we had so many problems with them.”

Kevin and his team of Mark Campbell, Senior Greenkeeper, and Andrew Ross, Assistant Greenkeeper, knew that, with constricted time, money and manpower, they could no longer afford continually to come back to elements of the course that needed repairing time and again. In order to eradicate this and achieve healthy, stable greens and tees they liaised closely with Richard Windows, Turfgrass Agronomist with the STRI, and developed a set method and standard of materials that all Thornhill tees and greens would be constructed from if required.

“We have a certain specification, based on USGA guidelines, in place now and we use this for everything. It doesn’t matter what the job, whether we are placing pipes in greens or fairways, we use the same sand, the same grit, and the same gravel all the time. We know this method works for us and it has benefited the course massively. Having a standardised set of methods also means that if I left the club and somebody else came in they could look at this system, see that it works well and carry it on,” said Kevin, who is a Dumfries lad and, despite his last comment, gives the impression that he will not be leaving his beloved Scottish course for a long time to come.

Rebuilding tees and greens, using a USGA based specific for this process and purchasing the correct materials doesn’t come cheap and it is here that the relationship between Kevin and Robert has become a crucial part of the club’s success.

“We have known each other for a long time, I used to play golf with Robert when I was a kid. I wouldn’t say we have always seen eye to eye, but

as both a Greens Convenor and before that as a Captain he has always been strong and has done a lot for me. He gets done what I want, rather than what he wants."

"We had a fundamental problem here that each Captain, rightly or wrongly, wanted to make his mark, this meant there was no continuity to what was happening on the course. We needed to put the course in the hands of people that really knew what was needed and we are very lucky that we have this with our greens staff, ably led by Kevin," said Robert, who has been in his current position since 2002.

"I see my role as the link between the staff and the Committee. As a four we discuss as much as we can in order to develop a better working relationship, as communication in a club this size is very important. Then we will go to the council and put our case forward."

It took six years for the team to get the course back up to a standard that they were happy with, now they could finally move forward and it was this new enlightened thinking from the club which would dramatically aid Kevin, Mark and Andrew's job. 1994 saw the greenkeeping team enjoying a budget of £36,000 plus, since then this has been radically reduced, in the past Kevin has had no more than around a £20,000 budget to play with and typically he is limited to £18,000, which is now on the increase.

Despite this, the club, which is essentially run by a six man panel consisting Captain, Vice Captain, Greens Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer and Bar Convenor, has done everything in its power to provide Kevin with the equipment and materials he requires to complete his and the club's aim of making Thornhill one of the top courses in the south of Scotland.

"The club has come a long way in recent years. I now feel that I can go to the Committee and tell them what I would like to do and what I need to do it and they will support me fully. I remember when I first started here I was sent out to cut the rough with a scythe and used hand shears to cut around the base of trees. It is changed days now, we have a replacement programme in place and we get most of the equipment we want," stated a delighted Kevin, who was promoted to the position of Course Manager in February, another sign that Thornhill is moving on.

"The club now realise that we have to try and take some pressure off the greenkeeping team. We just can't afford to employ another member of staff, so we have to find ways of easing the workload and freeing up their time as best we can so they can focus on improving the course rather than spending all their time just keeping it ticking over. If that means spending money on a certain bit of kit or rebuilding a tee so we don't have to come back to it time and again then so be it. In many cases we are spending money to save money in the long run," added Robert, a man clearly focused on bringing Thornhill into the 21st century and building up the club's reputation once again.

Kevin has learnt to be patient at Thornhill, special projects that he wishes to undertake to improve the course have to wait until time and finances allow and for the majority it is a case of prioritising tasks and being flexible.

"You have to be sensible and understand the club's position. You have to give and take, for instance, do you spend £10,000 a year on rebuilding one green or do you spend £15,000 on a verti-drainer which can improve all the greens year in year out? We chose to do the later. This is when you have to balance things out and wait to do those special projects when time allows. If we have a machine breakdown and need money to repair it the first thing to cut from the budget is a special project, that is just how we have to work. It is hard to run an 18 hole course on a £18,000 budget," concluded the Headman.

During his time in charge at Thornhill Kevin has overseen the rebuilding of 15 tees in total, including the medal tees at the 1st, 4th, 6th, 11th and 12th. Again Kevin has had to watch the accounts carefully. When rebuilding the 17th tee the club could not afford to fit real sleepers, so Kevin used scrap wood instead, the skill of the installation by the team ensuring that the golfer could not tell between the two.



▲ The old 16th tee



▲ Construction of the new 16th tee



▲ The 16th tee as it looks today

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Course Feature

This winter's developments have been concentrated on the 16th hole, the main project of rebuilding the tee taking 14 days to do. Originally it was decided to build a new tee for yellow boxes. As the season wound down, the winter golfers came out and, as the three men prepared to start the work, Kevin placed a mat further back from the original tee in place of a winter tee. The result was that the members liked the new tee position of the mat so much that it was decided to add in a 180 square yard medal tee 20 yards further back. The outcome was a 450sq yd yellow tee, a medal tee sitting comfortably behind this, and a handsome red stone path running through the middle of them both.

"It looks great and we are very, very pleased with it. The thing with projects like new tees is that when the golfer comes back from their winter break they can actually see what work has been done and where the money has been spent, so this helps them appreciate it all. The problems come and more questions are asked when you spend the winter dealing with massive work that isn't as clear to see, like digging up and replacing drainage pipes," said Kevin.

Undertaking work of this magnitude, while still successfully managing and maintaining the rest of the 6102 yards, par 71, course, requires a strong staff dynamic between the three greenkeepers. Kevin is a self confessed perfectionist, a man who refuses to cut corners and makes sure all work that is done to the Thornhill course is completed to the highest of standards, using the best materials possible. Luckily for both Kevin and Thornhill, Mark, who has been at the club for four years, and Andrew, who has had two stints at Thornhill cumulating in nine years, are equally as obsessive about the course's health and presentation.

"Like in any other job, when I got promoted I found it hard to go from one of the boys to being the boss. It took me a while to find my feet and initially I had some problems," confessed Kevin, who has also found time to reinstate lost heather and gorse throughout the course during his time in charge.

"Changes were made, I developed into the role and we have a great team now. I like to think that we have a good respect for each other and it helps that we have a lot in common, that makes a big difference. We are all perfectionists and we all aim to produce a high level of workmanship.

"With just two guys under you it is difficult, you do have to manage time so well. It is hard but I am very lucky that Mark and Andrew are so good. I have full confidence to send them out on the course and I know that they will do what I have asked them to do to an excellent standard. They know what I want and I know what they can do, it makes things a hell of a lot easier."

The end result of all this hard work is a golf course described by the locals as a 'hidden jewel', the course is fully booked for May by visiting parties, something that is a first for Thornhill. The club also warmly welcomes any visitors to come and play the course and see for themselves just how far it has developed.

The course is the home to Ryder Cup golfer Andrew Coltart, who commented recently: "Every year when I return to Thornhill there is a marked improvement in the course, its condition, the presentation and the setup. I'm really proud of the work that Kevin has done, I can talk about my club with pride now and know that anyone who plays the course will enjoy the challenge and the ride."

Thanks to the efforts of Kevin and his team Thornhill has a course that is moving up to the next step. Kevin has planned to have all the greens and tees standardised within the next five years, with the 10th being the next on his list.

If Kevin and his team's future developments match the level of their previous nine years' work, forget the tiny budgets, overlook the undersized staff and ignore the limited equipment, because Thornhill Golf Club will grow into a great oak, it is already well on its way.



▲ The new 15th tee



▲ The 9th

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▲ A new bunker thanks to the handy work of Mark Campbell

Ice Cover: Its Role in Winter Injury

Intermittent ice formation on golf greens and fairways is a common event for the northern areas of Europe and the United States. However over the last few years ice formation has increasingly been singled out as the cause of, or strongly associated with, winter injury. Ice cover injury occurs either directly from continuous ice cover or as part of freeze injury - low temperature kill.



▲ Ice injury is a function of continuous ice cover. *Poa annua* compared to creeping bentgrass is susceptible to injury when continuous ice cover exceeds 45 to 60 days

CONTINUOUS ICE COVER INJURY

The first type of ice injury is the direct result of a continuous ice cover. In the early to mid 1960's Dr Jim Beard conducted a controlled laboratory study where he looked at the survival rate of three cool season turfgrasses under a continuous ice cover and two turfgrasses under field conditions (Ref 1, 2). He found that creeping bentgrass could survive 120 days of continuous ice cover, however annual bluegrass - *Poa annua* - loss occurred after 60 days, with substantial loss around 75 days.

In a recent Canadian field study, both annual bluegrass and creeping bentgrass were subjected to 45 days of continuous ice cover and then the ice was removed. 75 days after initiating the study, and 30 days after removing the ice cover, creeping bentgrass still maintained its cold hardiness, while annual bluegrass was dead (Ref 3). From that Canadian study it might appear that ice needs to be removed from an annual bluegrass turf once 45 days of continuous cover versus 60 days. From these two studies I would suspect the critical time where annual bluegrass begins to suffer from ice cover is between 45 and 60 days of continuous ice cover.

The reasons commonly proposed for ice injury are the build up of toxic gases and/or the development of anoxic conditions, and the loss of cold hardiness. With herbaceous plants, carbon dioxide (CO₂) accumulation under ice cover is a major contributor to plant death (4). Interestingly, intermittent thawing helped eliminate the CO₂ build up and injury to the plants in this study did not occur (4).

The loss of cold hardiness occurs under ice cover but varies among turfgrass species. Under continuous ice cover annual bluegrass loses its cold hardiness, while creeping bentgrass is not affected (3). The loss of cold hardiness in annual bluegrass is likely due to the anoxia - lack of oxygen - conditions that develop under an ice cover (3).

Although ice injury to creeping bentgrass is remote, and certainly not an issue in most of the world, I wonder about its role in winter injury to creeping bentgrass on golf courses in the Rocky Mountains or Scandinavia where ice cover may exceed 120 days. It is not uncommon to observe creeping bentgrass greens in these areas that have suffered winter injury believed to be caused by a combination of ice and freeze injury. It might be possible that prolonged anoxia conditions in areas where ice cover is excessive may reduce creeping bentgrass cold hardiness, making it more susceptible to freeze injury.

Beard (5) reported differences among creeping bentgrass cultivars to ice cover. He found that seeded creeping bentgrasses, especially 'Seaside', are less tolerant of ice coverage than the vegetative cultivars like 'Toronto'. In addition, the colonial bentgrasses were considerably less tolerant than the creeping bentgrasses. Although published over 39 years ago - and the creeping bentgrass cultivars used may not be relevant at this time - the idea that variability among cultivars to ice coverage exists may make it difficult in extreme situations of ice cover to say "creeping bentgrass is not affected by ice covers".

ICE IN ASSOCIATION WITH FREEZE INJURY

In most of the Midwest and Northeastern United States, a continuous ice cover exceeding 45 days is unlikely. The winter weather pattern is generally broken with intermittent periods of thawing that melts the ice. Where 'ice injury' plays a more likely role is as a component of freeze injury. In this role the freezing of water that would occur with a rapid drop of temperature in or around the growing point during or after dehardening of annual bluegrass.

The critical precursor to freeze injury is the loss of cold hardiness through dehardening and subsequent rehydration of the annual bluegrass crown region. Rehydration of the crown region initiates in late winter or early spring. Between creeping bentgrass and annual bluegrass, annual bluegrass has a relatively high crown hydration level. Thus making it more susceptible to freezing.

Although ice covers contribute to the decline in cold hardiness, the most important factor in dehardening is temperature (6). In the case of annual bluegrass the dehardening process can occur quickly when soil temperatures exceed 8degC (46degF) for 48 hours (7).

As we move out of winter into spring Dr Karl Danneberger helps you to assess the damage that ice can cause.

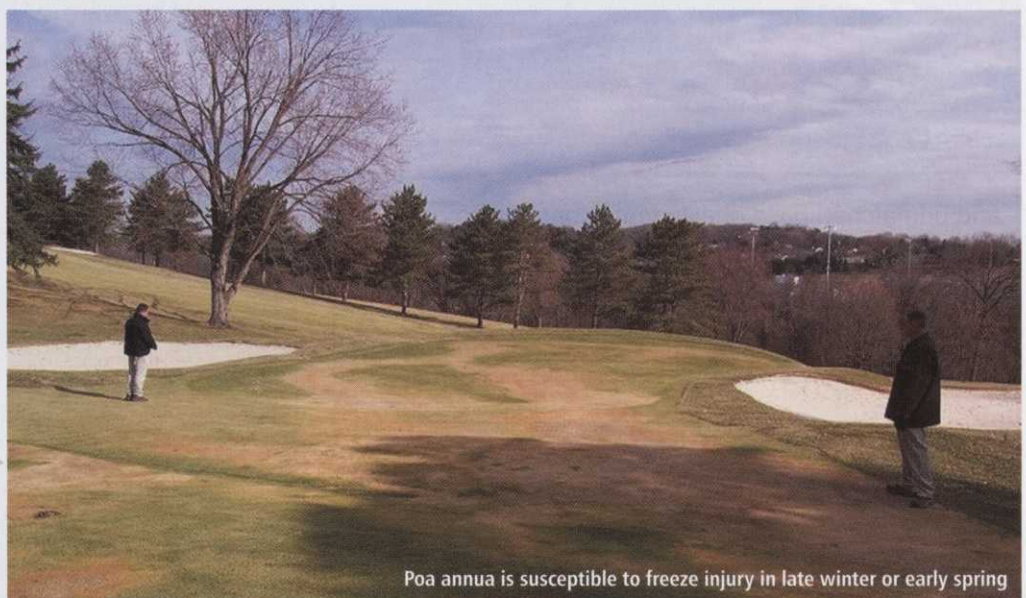


▲ Although creeping bentgrass rarely suffers injury from ice cover or freeze injury, in extreme situations like the Rocky Mountains or possibly in Scandinavia it might occur

It is at this point during late winter, when annual bluegrass begins to rehydrate, that it is most susceptible to a rapid drop in temperature and water freezing. The ice that is produced in and around the crown can cause death. With annual bluegrass, it is usually the lower portion of the crown where root initiation occurs that is highly susceptible to freezing. A common occurrence in freeze injury is to observe an initial green-up of the annual bluegrass followed by a rapid death. The green-up usually lasts three days followed by death due to a desiccating process resulting from lack of root production.

What cultural practices can be instituted to minimise ice injury and/or freeze injury? Numerous articles have been written that discuss management programmes for reducing freeze and/or ice injury (8). A few key points in developing a management programme for reducing injury should centre on:

1. Produce a healthy plant going into the winter. A weak annual bluegrass plant with low carbohydrate storage is not going to tolerate ice cover or be resistant to freeze injury as a healthy plant. Shaded areas are more prone to freeze injury than sunny areas, probably due to the carbohydrate status of annual bluegrass (9).
2. Eliminate poorly drained areas. Annual bluegrass growing in areas where water accumulates is at high risk to rapid freezing during freeze/thaw cycles (10).



Poa annua is susceptible to freeze injury in late winter or early spring

In conclusion, winter injury is normally a combination of several factors, one of which is ice cover. A continuous ice cover alone is not a common event for most northern golf courses. However, freeze/thaw cycles in late winter can create a situation where excessive water in and around annual bluegrass crowns can create freeze injury from the ice formed from the freezing of water.

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Time for a Trim

James de Havilland measures his angles and investigates the best ways to trim tricky banks and hills.

Anyone who has spent a substantial amount of time operating a brush cutter to mow a bank will no doubt agree that these machines can be tiring to use. Combine a hot day, safety kit and a large heavy-duty model, and the word tiring upgrades to exhausting. So what are the alternatives?



The latest Kawasaki brushcutter. There is nothing 'wrong' with this type of equipment but this cannot hide the fact that even the best units are tiring to use for extended periods, particularly when working on a slope. So what are the alternatives?

On any golf course, there will be areas that are difficult to access with ride-on equipment yet still need to be kept trimmed. Typical examples will be around trees and shrubs and on banks. When it comes to controlling growth on the latter, the most typical solution is to carry out a periodic cut with a hand held brush cutter; either with a blade or nylon line cutting head.

Using a brushcutter to keep a modest area under control is no problem. Combine a steep slope and heavy growth in need of a full day's work and the job may still be manageable. When this job needs repeating perhaps three or more times a year, or when there are several long days of work in hand, it may be time to think of an alternative.

One item of bank mowing kit that is worth looking at is a pedestrian power scythe. Widely used on the continent, this type of mower was largely displaced by large pedestrian rotaries in the UK for long grass mowing, the latter having the advantage of arguably greater tolerance to debris and rough ground. On banks, however, a large rotary mower can be something of a handful.

The cutter bar of a power scythe, in contrast, is relatively light. The design also lends itself to working on a bank as the width of the cutting unit adds stability. Of equal importance, the 'pedestrian tractor' element of modern designs are far better balanced and easy to operate than some older generation machines. The much loved, but often cursed, Allen power scythe comes to mind as an example.



◀ Although a machine like the Etesia Atilla AV 95 ride-on brush cutter is not designed to work on really steep ground, it can work safely on a slope of up to 30 degrees. This 18hp machine retails for a shade over £6,300 plus VAT, with hire rates of around £100 a day or £400 a week.



▲ A flail mower attachment on the front of a two-wheel tractor will deal with heavier growth, but will not be as effective as a cutter bar in long grass. A 0.60m flail for a Tracmaster unit sells for £880 plus VAT



▲ The Toro Z500D ride-on mower has a 27hp Briggs & Stratton Daihatsu Diesel engine with a cutting width of 60"



▲ Hover mowers are by no means new, but they are now starting to find a new generation of users. Lloyds of Letchworth offers models it claims are particularly good at coping with longer grass thanks to a deeper deck design. The latest models are offered with extra long handles to make it easier to mow down slopes such as bunker sides. Prices around £450 plus VAT.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of power scythe to consider; dedicated bank units that have a power unit able to work on steep sidling ground and two-wheel tractors to which a cutter bar can be fitted. The ability of the latter to work on a slope will be determined by the angle at which the power unit can operate before becoming starved of lubricating oil.

For most golf courses, a two-wheel tractor and cutter bar combination will have obvious appeal, the power unit having the ability to drive other equipment that can include a cultivator or rotary brush. Cutter bars do have limitations. Ideally suited to longer grass and upright vegetation, cutter bars are less than ideal when it comes to dealing with matted material, uneven ground and heavier vegetation.

An alternative could be a flail mower attachment for the same power unit. Pro-rata, a flail will take more power to drive than a cutter bar, so its working width may be modest, but it could prove viable to consider both on certain courses.

Pedestrian rotary mowers should not be dismissed for bank work, assuming their power units can operate at the desired angles. It is of course possible to attach a rotary to the front end of a two-wheel tractor. This route may work well where the banks to be mown are firstly not overly steep and secondly limited in height. A heavy mower on the front of any pedestrian machine will always want to head down hill, making their extended operation on a tall and steep slope tiring or possibly hazardous.

A possible rotary alternative is a rotary hover mower. Light, relatively inexpensive and simple, hover mowers were once considered the ideal way to mow a bank; tied to the end of a length of rope, these units were commonly lowered down long steep slopes to cut them. Modern operator control systems, and possible risk assessment issues, may rule this out now, but where a hover mower can be used it could well be a faster alternative to a brushcutter.

There is then the choice of a ride-on brush cutter. There are an ever increasing number of these units on the market, and it is tempting to assume that because of this they are a familiar tool. For those that have not seen one, imagine a ride-on domestic rotary mower with much stronger build, typically hydrostatic drive and a mid-mount rotary brushcutter of up to 0.95m cutting width. Power will come from a petrol engine of at least 12hp plus.



▲ Remote controlled mowing comes of age with the Ransomes Spider. Designed to operate on slopes of up to 40 degrees, the machine has a light footprint as it has no operator and related controls. Remote technology at present is costly, but this type of equipment may become more affordable if the concept takes off.

The deck of these machines is designed to tackle heavy material, hence the term brushcutter, but they will also cope with grass. Of equal importance, they have a low centre of gravity that enables them to work safely across slopes of up to about 30 degrees. Some courses could well justify one of these units for brush control, but they are not designed as a specific bank mower.

What is purposely designed for this particular job is the Ransomes Spider radio controlled slope mower. Designed to operate on terrain as steep as 40 degrees, the 180kg unit has a 0.8m cutting width and is powered by a 494cc Kawasaki four-stroke V-twin petrol engine pumping out 18hp.

Each of the four steerable wheels is hydrostatically driven, the operator being able to control the machine from up to 50m away. The downside is that the Spider has a £15,500 sticker price. That is a lot of money for what is essentially a small rotary mower, but it is still considerably less expensive than a nasty accident. If your course is blessed with steep banks that need keeping in trim, this machine could well be an answer.

DO YOU HAVE TO MOW YOUR BANKS?

It is a hard enough job to keep roughs, fairways, tees, greens and other areas of turf looking good without the added consideration of looking after hard to access areas. For some clubs, the simple answer is to let these parts of the course look after themselves. With thoughtful use of shrubs, trees and varieties of slow growing grass, a difficult to mow bank can be transformed into a feature.

It is worth remembering that a golf course can be a sterile environment for beneficial wildlife. A sympathetically managed area of un-mown grass, perhaps planted with shrubs, has to be better than a problem bank of difficult to mow grass; assuming that this change of use does not interfere with play. So before getting out the new machinery leaflets, why not think through an alternative way of dealing with the area.



With a reach of 3.47m, a compact tractor mounted McConnell Swingtrim power arm can be used to cut a steep bank with the tractor running on the flat. This particular model can be fitted with a 1.2 or 1.5m cutter bar or 0.85m flail head. Suitable for compacts weighing over 550kg and developing 15 hp plus, a complete unit is priced from around £5,500 plus VAT.

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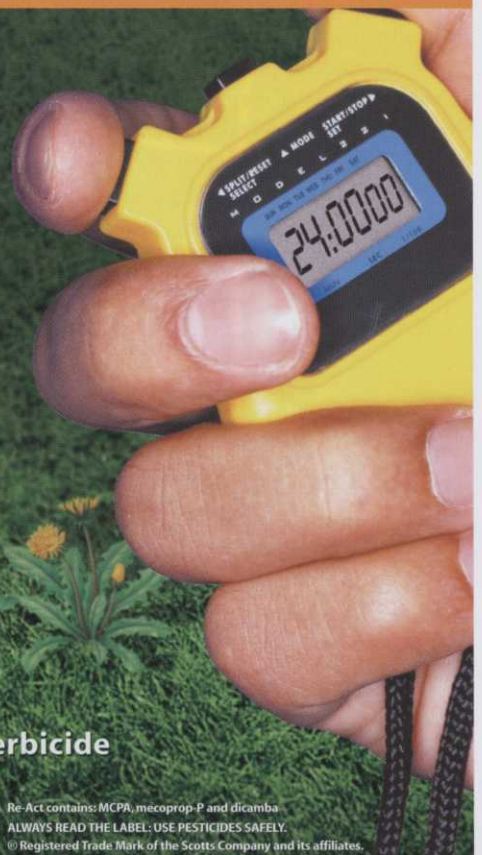
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Seeing is Believing

In the first of a two part series Steve Isaac, Assistant Director - Golf Course Management, The R&A, looks at how the Danish are managing fescue.

A FUTURE FOR FESCUE?

An article in the March 2003 issue of Greenkeeper International intrigued me. According to its author, Chris Haspell, there are courses in Denmark being managed to encourage fescues, not just new courses but older ones where recovery programmes from *Poa annua* dominated swards were proving successful.

This was music to the ears of our Golf Course Committee, who were looking for exemplar sites to demonstrate the principles of sustainability, as per our definition of the term: "Optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound management".

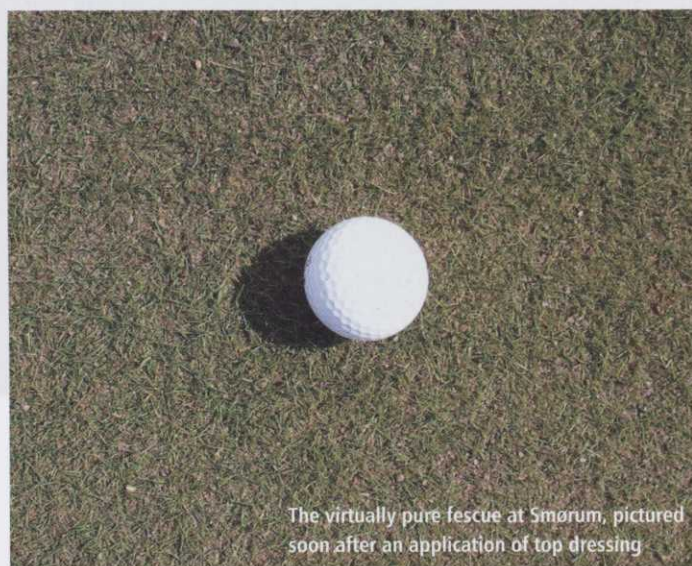
In our view, there can be no more sustainable a grass species for the northern European climate than fescue. The R&A has a long history of promoting traditional greenkeeping, the very cornerstone of which is species selection and, for temperate climates, the implementation of management that favours the fine leaved fescue and bent grasses. The 1997 R&A publication, "A Course for All Seasons", focussed on this approach, as does much of our best practice website, www.bestcourseforgolf.org. Could this be an opportunity to see the best of best practice being achieved?

However, the accumulated experience of working with UK courses available to our Committee brought a few sceptical thoughts as well! Our links and heathland courses should be the home for fescues, as they are indigenous to such landscapes, yet how many of them support fescue dominated swards today?

Depressingly few. Think of all those new course constructions that have sprung up over the last 20 years, the vast majority sown out with fescue/bent. How many of their greens have been converted to *Poa annua*? Depressingly many!

We seem to have lost the ability to manage this grass species, with many in the industry claiming it to have as much relevance to modern golf as Latin has to language. The demand for colour and pace has seen off most of the fescue on golf greens within our shores, so why believe that a country such as Denmark should be at the forefront of a fescue revival? It was with some caution that we contacted Chris and arranged a few days in Denmark to see the results of their labours.

This was music to the ears of our Golf Course Committee, who were looking for exemplar sites to demonstrate the principles of sustainability, as per our definition of the term: "Optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound management".



The virtually pure fescue at Smørum, pictured soon after an application of top dressing

DENMARK BOUND

In May 2004, Nick Park, Vice Chairman of our Committee, and I flew to Copenhagen and spent two days touring Danish courses. Our first port of call was the Smørum Golf Centre and this proved to be the jewel in the crown. The course opened in 1993 on a pay and play basis. Some may argue that having decent greens only 11 years on from opening is no great achievement. Nonsense!

How many greens to 11 year old courses in the UK still retain the grass species they were sown out with? The majority will be, at best, a mix of bent and *Poa annua*.

What about being sustainable? In our view, if you can retain the same species, which fulfil our definition, for five years or more then we believe it is justifiable to hang this tag on the sward - and only inappropriate management is then likely to cause a radical change in composition.

If God ever built a putting surface, then it would surely not be too far removed from what we saw at Smørum! The dense, fescue dominated swards had just been top dressed so were not looking at their very best, but even so they were superb. With a putter in his hand, Nick rolled the ball towards the hole... and it just kept running. The surfaces to all 54 greens on the complex were consistently good from one to another; they were true and they were fast, and all this at a 6mm height of cut.



A well presented hole in the open landscape of Smørum

Fertiliser input to the greens is exceptionally low, hovering around 35 kg/ha per year, and no pesticides are used. The main 18 hole course takes 40,000 rounds a year, which is more than most private member clubs in the UK. What a great start to our trip! Here is the epitome of the sustainable golf green. A top quality playing surface being produced with minimal environmental impact and at an extremely affordable cost.

Visits to Furesø Golf Club, Hørsholm Golf Club and Rungsted Golf Club followed, where we saw fescue introduction into creeping bent and Poa swards to varying degrees of development and success. The message from all the greenkeepers we met, though, was the same - fescue is the future of sustainable greens management, and this is why...

THE MAINTENANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION FACTORS

The key maintenance requirements to promote fescue rather than other species, including browntop bent, are:

- A height of cut no lower than 5mm.
- Fertiliser rates at 50 kg/ha of nitrogen per annum or lower.
- Dry surfaces, with irrigation at an absolute minimum, merely to keep the grass alive.
- Regular, light top dressing to dilute organic matter accumulation.
- Overseeding with fescue at least twice a year to maintain density and purity of the sward.
- As open an environment as possible for free air movement across the green.

This programme can be handled by the seven staff at Smørum over the 54 holes, working with a range of machines commonly found at UK clubs. The results are a well presented and tidy looking course, and superb playing quality to green and fairway.

Smørum also provides evidence to disprove the contention that fescue cannot take wear. The main 18 hole course takes over 40,000 rounds a

year, through a nine month playing season. The natural disease resistance and winter hardiness of the species also extends the playing season compared to other courses in the vicinity, where winter kill and fusarium damage to Poa and creeping bent swards takes weeks off the potential season.

The driving force behind this approach is a group of Danish greenkeepers, ably led by Chris Haspell and Bente Mortensen, respectively former course and environmental consultants with the Danish Golf Union. Their focus on fescues stems from a desire to produce the best for their clients/employers in terms of quality at a realistic cost, and a wish to manage golf courses in an environmentally friendly way, in so far as this is practically possible. The latter has added significance in Denmark where there are, currently, severe restrictions on pesticide use, controls on water use and a tax on fertiliser.

The management inputs for those promoting fescue meet the environmental demands in Denmark. This is true of much of northern Europe - indeed, the former exceed the latter in many EU Member States.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Nick and I flew out of Copenhagen following our courses tour in a state of disbelief. Had we actually seen what we had been close to thinking was impossible under the constraints of the modern game? Was this a significant movement or just a few maverick greenkeepers living in the past? Could the Danish experience be transported to other countries in northern Europe facing similar environmental regulations which make Poa annua wholly unsustainable?

Could this be the spur needed to rekindle the fortunes of fescue turf to its natural home on the links and heathland courses of the UK? So many questions, so much excitement and such a need to find out more about the Danish experience.

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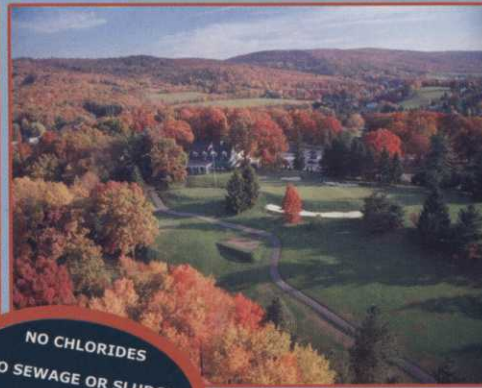
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Too Wet, Too Dry

- Soil Moisture and Your Greens



Peter Winter, STRI Agronomist for the South West and South Wales, highlights the importance of total soil moisture management in the preparation of excellent putting surfaces

The demands of golf and periods of extreme weather together make management of soil moisture an underestimated element in producing a dominance of bentgrass and/or fescue grasses in greens that will then support the consistency and quality required in putting surfaces.



THE IDEAL

Much could be written on the theory of soil moisture relations. The often stated ideal is the 50:50 balance of air : water in the soil pore space. In controlled glasshouse conditions it can be difficult to achieve consistently over a crop, even with sophisticated environmental controls. Small wonder it is difficult to achieve within an undulating green in the open, let alone across 18 greens in different environments, possibly with differing rooting environments.

I would suggest the effort needed to achieve this uniform condition is more often than not underestimated and the demands of it are unlikely to be understood by many golfers. Of course, not only is the soil moisture important for optimal growth but it is also critical in producing the desired putting surface characteristics.

CLIMATE CHANGE?

Whether this is occurring or not seems to remain under debate. Various elements of the weather records continue to be broken and most greenkeepers comment on 'un-seasonal' weather in recent years. This is supported by national weather records, but we would recommend all clubs keep their own weather records to be able to make comparisons. Importantly, it is then possible to identify how often and under what rainfall conditions a green may become inundated and out of play but in addition it is possible to monitor irrigation needs.

I believe a change seems to be occurring and the periods of wet or dry are more severe. This places greater demands on the quality of the turf and the rootzone apart from the expertise of the greenkeeper. This change in weather pattern and demands from golfers for consistent conditions over the full 12 months makes it worthwhile to look at each green from a soil moisture perspective - many older greens were constructed for a spring to autumn golfing season.

INFILTRATION RATES

These will probably vary across individual green surfaces as well as between individual greens, as a result of variation in rootzone depth, compaction and thatch accumulation as examples. The amount of moisture that penetrates the surface will depend on elevation within the green and the gradient or slope of the surface. Thus in heavy or persistent rainfall, surface moisture, which does not readily penetrate the surface, will gather, migrate and collect into the lowest area. If sub-surface drainage is inadequate this water may persist for a long time. In some circumstances evaporation alone will remove it and dry the surface, hence the importance of good air movement across the green and freedom from shading.





DRYING OUT

Water falling on the surface will accumulate in the soil/rootzone to the point of 'field capacity', after which excess moisture should be lost into the subsoil or drainage. The microclimate of the green will affect how much moisture can be lost by evaporation from the grass surface and transpiration from the plant. Thus, aspect, slope, exposure, shading and elevation are the types of factors that will influence the loss of moisture and possibly the amount of water which naturally lands on the surface.

The effect is invariably different in winter and summer. Factors such as exposure and a south or southwest facing slope would be advantageous on a poorly drained site with high rainfall, whereas such attributes might present problems of excessive drying in summer on a well-drained site. Thus the features which can be helpful in winter may lead to a reduced tolerance to lower soil moisture in summer and a greater need for irrigation water.

SOIL MOISTURE DEFICIT

As a measure of the 'dryness' of the soil, this will vary at a particular time of year according to soil type and pore size distribution, apart from locality and elevation. We can expect differing soil moisture conditions across individual greens, and between greens, as the soil dries within the rooting depth as well as at the surface. These differences potentially become exaggerated as the growing season progresses unless skillfully corrected. Depending on the locality and the soil or rootzone, this soil deficit may start to develop as early as April and persist until late summer if the losses of moisture through evapo-transpiration exceed that which falls as rain or from irrigation.

WATERING

Over the last couple of years, and especially this year, according to the locality, dry soil moisture deficit has appeared earlier in terms of its effect on the surface and early growth. In preparing a good surface this cannot be ignored. Two points become paramount if problems are not to develop in the summer when higher soil temperatures are expected:

Get to the bottom of Dry Patch problems

COMPLETE IMMERSION TECHNOLOGY

RT
rigby taylor

When standard wetting agents are applied to turf they infiltrate the ground through the force of gravity. Inevitably dry spots are left within the rootzone that will continue to be water repellent.

But that's now all in the past.

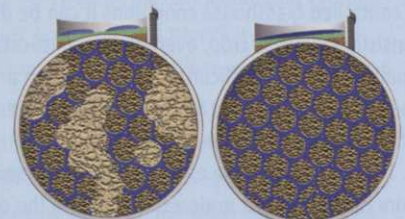
Complete Immersion Technology

Breaker Triple is the latest advance in wetting agents, incorporating Complete Immersion Technology. It contains three advanced components to prevent and cure Dry Patch:

1. A wetting and spreading agent
2. A soil penetrant
3. A re-wetting agent

This powerful combination ensures a strong attraction between the applied product and the water-repellent particles.

The unique spreading action moves the wetting agent both downwards and sideways, effectively treating the whole of the soil profile.



Partial immersion from a standard wetter – many soil particles remain untreated

Complete immersion from Breaker Triple – every soil particle becomes treated

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1. Elevated and sloping areas, especially on south facing or exposed areas need to be watered as soon as the turf layer, i.e. the top 30-50mm, loses its moisture or the grass shows the first signs of stress. A dry soil will not be cooled by evapo-transpiration and on a hot day the grass can be damaged through heat stress.
2. The soil moisture needs to be monitored regularly throughout the growing season to ensure moisture is maintained to a depth of 100-150mm minimum. Check the moisture on elevated or sloping areas with a soil auger.

Selective and thoughtful watering allows the pop-up irrigation input to be kept to the minimum. This in turn allows for the overall preparation of more consistent putting surfaces, especially after summer rainfall. Such practice will support better root development and allow the greenkeeper to present drier surfaces over the growing season. Hand watering is time consuming but essential in achieving these aims, even more so if the pop-up irrigation is inefficient or affected adversely by wind.

SOIL MOISTURE UNIFORMITY

This in essence is another way of looking at the soil moisture in the greens, in that the aim is to balance this out by aeration and drainage techniques in low-lying parts of the green in the autumn and winter to remove excess moisture; and through selective watering of elevated and sloping areas in spring and summer. Take account of day length and average temperatures, holding back on overall irrigation in late summer,

i.e. from August, to leave some soil moisture deficit to 'mop up' increased rainfall in the autumn.

Keeping a soil moisture surplus and deficit chart for each green, backed up by observations noted as to when stress symptoms in relation to deficit occurs, is a useful, simple start point when considering soil moisture levels and their repercussions. Your soil moisture surplus/deficit chart will record precise 'moisture inputs' from rainfall and irrigation and the 'moisture outputs' from evapo-transpiration - the latter can be obtained from local agricultural centres.

KILL OR CURE

Horticulturists and gardeners recognise the problems of over or under use of water, as must golfers and greenkeepers. It has been said before, but it will not hurt to repeat the sequence, that poor surface drainage and over irrigation will lead to thatch ridden turf, dominated by annual meadow grass, and this turf will present a poor, slow putting surface but also will demand more irrigation due to poor root development. This starts the greens on a slippery slope to major problems.

Given the extremes of weather and demands of the golfer, balancing moisture levels near to the ideal across each green, over the 18 greens and through the year will place a large demand on expertise in maintenance on all courses, a need to improve drainage where this is inadequate, and to achieve critically effective watering practice - it is total 'soil moisture management' which has the greatest potential to facilitate the preparation of the best putting surfaces.

Your Letters...

Recycling for Comic Relief

As a representative of the recycling company Eurosource, I was delighted to be part of the recent Red Nose Day Recycling Appeal. Eurosource has pledged to recycle old mobile phones and empty inkjet printer cartridges to raise funds for Comic Relief - for everything recycled, we give money to this excellent charity.

I'd like to sincerely thank the readers who have already generously donated to the appeal - although it was only launched recently, there has been a great response. This innovative appeal doesn't ask anyone to part with their cash. They can simply donate something that would probably have ended up in the bin!

Unlike many fundraisers, it's not just the charity that gains - the benefits are far wider. Our environment is being damaged more and more by pollution and mobiles and cartridges contribute to this when they are binned because they end up in landfill sites. Recycling them allows them to be refurbished or refilled, and most importantly reused - many even end up in developing countries where landline infrastructure is scarce.

So readers, search your cupboards for your old mobiles, and please stop binning your inkjet cartridges! Instead, post them to Red Nose Day Recycling Appeal, FREEPOST NAT 1990, Falkirk, FK2 9BR.

Address labels can be downloaded at www.recyclingappeal.com/rednoseday where you can also find out exactly how much will go to Comic Relief for your old mobiles and inkjet cartridges - please note that we can't recycle Epson cartridges.

If you have an office at your club that has large toner cartridges please donate them too, but do not send them to the address above. Once you have 10 or more, give us a call on 08712 50 50 50 and we'll send a courier to collect them FREE.

Please post anything you wish to donate by April 15 so we can get the proceeds to Comic Relief on time - and thanks again to readers who have already shown their support.

Rob Morton, Eurosource

A Tribute to John Moffatt

John Moffatt passed away recently, aged 66, after a short illness and he will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Born in Edinburgh, John moved to St. Andrews as a boy in 1947. Naturally, John took up the games of golf and rugby while at school and this is where his love for the outdoors and wildlife blossomed. After leaving school John headed back to Edinburgh to study Veterinary Science at the Royal (Dick) School before joining the Black Watch Regiment for the duration of his National Service. Again he was at times stationed in Edinburgh and one of his duties was to guard the main gates at Edinburgh Castle where on one day no one got through John without a proper pass!

Eventually his love for the outdoors took him back to St. Andrews, working for the town council and this is where the foundations were laid for a career in greenkeeping. Further moves to Stoke Poges, Lanark and Arbroath followed, all as Head Greenkeeper and since 1979 to Scotsraig, in North Fife, where John had prepared and presented four Final Open Qualifying events for St. Andrews. John served on the committee for the North Section of the then SIGGA also.

John's retirement from greenkeeping came about in early 2002 and he had spent much of his time walking the links courses with his dog, Mac, and playing golf with his companions. John's knowledge of wildlife, especially birds, butterflies and flowers, was always evident. He was also a long time member of the St. Andrews Golf Club and last year, after 50 years, he was presented with a gold medal from the Club to commemorate this.

His late claims to fame were that he won the family foursomes with three different family members, in 1998 he won the local and hotly contested Bing Crosby Tournament, the JK Wilson Trophy, his wife was St. Regulus Ladies Captain and his daughter won the Scottish Ladies Amateur in that same year.

We pass on our condolences and best wishes to his wife, Ann, and his daughter, Elaine.

George Paterson, Course Manager,
Scotsraig Golf Club

What makes a Consultant a Consultant?

I would like to offer a response to the recent letter in February's GKI, name and Club withheld, in answer to the above question.

"There is no doubt that the level of professionalism and qualification within the greenkeeping industry has never been higher, encouraged along the way by BIGGA and the Greenkeepers' Training Committee. I was therefore disappointed to read a recent letter, suggesting that: "We do not have specific standards for Consultants".

In January 2002, a Register of Independent Turfgrass Agronomists (RIPTA) was compiled to clarify the position of those Consultants in the industry able to supply independent advice and who meet the Registers' criteria. The criteria were carefully considered to ensure the client would receive advice from an appropriately qualified and experienced advisor in the field.

They include the need for applicants to hold a recognised plant or earth sciences first degree; recent experience must include at least four years' post qualification, acting as an Independent Consultant in the Turfgrass industry and have no association with any commercial organisation. Consultants, or their employer, must also have and maintain insurance, including Professional Indemnity insurance that satisfies the requirements of the Register Administrator.

There are many other Consultants in the field, including some associated with particular suppliers and manufacturers and the omission from the Register of any consultancy is no indication that it does not provide an excellent service."

Andy Cole BSc (Hons), MBPR, Keeper of the Register

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Aline, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk

My Week as a BIGGA Delegate

Mike Gash reviews his trip to America and the GCSAA Show through the BIGGA Delegation, sponsored by Bernhard.



The journey started back in August 2004 with the wrap round on the magazine. Thinking this is only for Course Managers, Master Greenkeepers (MG's) and members of Regional and National Board Members/Committees, I still thought: "If your not in it, you can't win a place on it," and sent it back. I received a form back with five questions plus a request for a little personal information. I filled it out and sent it back, then, towards the end of October, I received a letter telling me I had been short listed and asking if I would attend an interview. A week after the interview I received another letter to say I was off to Orlando Florida. Game on!



I attended a ceremony at BTME to pick up the tickets and to meet the other nine guys who'd also been selected and meet other lucky attendees that had gone in previous years. They were there to talk of their experiences.

On a cold Sunday morning, the first week in February, we all met up at Gatwick Airport ready to jump on a Virgin flight bound for Orlando, Florida. With five hours time difference, on landing, it was a very nice sunny and warm 70 degree Sunday mid afternoon, the English weather was a distant memory.

After getting settled into the excellent hotel, which was to be home for the next seven nights, we were given details of the courses to which we will all visit first thing Monday morning.

MONDAY

Eagle Creek Golf Club

The first course was Eagle Creek Golf Club, a new 18 hole course, measuring 7,198, par 73 Championship public course. Designed by Howard Swan and Ron Garl, their concept was to design a course that had a European and American feel about it, this was an interesting concept and worked fairly well. The course had a nice open feel about it but, as American courses go, the obligatory homes on the boundaries are being developed as I write. This will also include two schools, a shopping mall and will virtually become another small town.

Buck, the Superintendent, had a budget of \$800,000 - nearly £500,000 - and spent \$135,000 - £75,000 - just on fertilisers. They had 45,000 rounds a year.

The one thing that made this course stand out from the rest was it had been sown with Mini-Verde, a high shoot density, ultra dwarf Bermuda grass, for production of high quality golf greens. It tolerates continuous

close mowing, about 2mm, has a dark green genetic colour and excellent low temperature colour retention. Mini-Verde will tolerate relatively high amounts of sodium and therefore is adapted for use with reclaimed water, it also tolerates soil pH levels from 5.5 to 9.0, but will perform best at pH 6.0 to 6.5, it also has few pest problems, which is useful in the US.

The club is also proud of its five par 5's, to this it has five tees per hole, all square.

It had over 90 bunkers, some resembling Scottish reverted bunkers, which didn't quite look at their best, something to do with the temperature and construction I think.

The clubhouse was equally as good, designed to mimic a vintage New England manor with a European feel. The complex has already received five accolades within 12 months of opening, quite an achievement, especially as there are about 200 courses within a 45 minute drive of Orlando. Our thanks to Buckner Marlon, the Superintendent, for taking the time to answer all are questions and to Howard Swan for the guided tour.

Grande Pines Golf Club

This was the second course of the day, redesigned by Steve Smyers and Nick Faldo, within the last couple of years. This undulating course with very sloping greens was challenging, especially with six large lakes, the course measured 6776 from the back, par 72. This course has also received numerous accolades from Golf Week's 100 Greatest Modern Courses.

TUESDAY

We were scheduled to attend a Communication Seminar at the Convention Centre, this ran from 8am until 5pm. Presented by Mike Jousan, this seminar covered Philosophy and Principles of Communication, Specific Communication Skills, Negotiating and Selling Your Ideas and Handling Difficult Questions. This was an excellent day and I am glad to say seven out of the ten strong contingent stood up and held their ground. These Americans aren't that keen on coming forward and we flew the flag. It was also nice to see a fellow Brit, not part of the BIGGA Delegation, though Murray Long, from Coombe Hill Golf Club, who also joined in.

WEDNESDAY

This bought another seminar, a Field Trip visiting three Florida Courses and a wetland project.

Hawk's Landing Golf Club

The first course of the day was Hawk's Landing Golf Club, reputed to be the Marriott's flagship course. Director of Grounds was John Kopack and this course was built in 1986 by Jo Lee, but was redesigned with the whole course being dug up and re-laid in 1998 by Robert E Cupp. It's now standing at 6800 yards, par 72, with water being in play for 15 of those holes. All of the greens were seeded with Tiff Dwarf during the winter.

The course had been heavily over seeded, except the rough, throughout the year they sprayed virtually every week with a cocktail of liquid fertiliser, fungicide, herbicide or wetting agent, the fertiliser was mainly fed through the irrigation system, which is reclaimed water.

They had 40,000 rounds a year, one year the club let it increase to 50,000 and found the course couldn't cope with the amount of play, even with a crew of 55 staff. This course was unique because they had a plant holding area where they grow their own plants, mainly bedding. They also prepared their own hanging baskets, 300 of them, which got replaced quarterly and sold the replaced plants to the locals as a side line business.

Championsgate Golf Club

This was the second course we visited and the Superintendent was Bobby Ellis, a former GCSAA President. Championsgate GC is home to two unique 18 hole Championship golf courses, designed by Greg Norman, this is also the David Leadbetter Academy.

The first course, the National, is a typical American style, standing at 7128, par 72, off the backs.

The second, the International, course was designed to resemble the coastal wind swept dune courses of Australian and the British Isles, also standing at 7363, par 72. The whole resort is set in about 1500 acres plus. The courses are designed to collect all of the excess water from the Kissimmee area. This water was pumped into rectangular percolation basins called Rapid Infiltration Basins - RIBS - one rib was five acres in size, the whole site can cope with 12 million gallons, about seven days of continuous water. That's 1.8 million gallons a day, during summer and one million per day during winter.

The percolation rate in these Ribs was 100mm per hour, water testing is done quarterly, it still costs the club \$70,000 - £40,000 - a year to extract for irrigation, tissue testing is done monthly due to high salt content. The course has 44 staff and with an annual budget of \$1.8 million dollars. They have projected 90,000 rounds a year but are only up to 65,000 at a cost of \$215 - £120 - a round. Out of the 65,000 rounds, 40,000 are played in the first three months of the year, the other 25,000 in the remaining nine months.



The BIGGA Delegation

Bobby also does a lot of testing with different grasses, by overseeding about 14 different greens: mainly the par 3 course, this enables him to experiment and see which grasses are for their course, he also has a 26-acre practice area.

This is another course earmarked for development with condos and homes dotted in and a round the course this will only boost the already \$6.8million dollars a year turnover.

Wetland Mitigation

This was an area of wetland about 3.4 acres, it did actually connect to a river down stream somewhere. The idea was to set up a planting area of native wetland grasses and trees on the edge of this wetland, if they did that it could be protected by a conservation order and no one was allowed to fill it in and build on it, as like the surrounding area, which was actually earmarked for major development.

The people involved with this conservation project were Kelly Peterman, Senior Ecologist, and Mike Green, Natural Resource Professional.

Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort

The Superintendent at the course was Thomas J Schlick. This tour mainly concentrated on the ornamental planting and the grasslands in and around the hotel grounds, this included the flowers, bedding and pot plants.

Because of the sheer expanse of the resort the planting, i.e. bedding and pot plants, were changed five times a year, which is a hell of a task especially with 100,000sqft of flower borders and over a hundred pot plants not quite the 8in size either.

They had 30 staff just to maintain the interior and exterior planting and half of that number looked after the St Augustine grass and the trees around the hotel grounds. The operation budget for just the landscaping, i.e. exterior planting, was \$1.565,000 and the interior planting was \$118,000 and that's not including the golf course budget, which incidentally was \$1.400,000. What a dream to have a running budget of just over \$3million dollars!

But the main item we all wanted to see was the course and maintenance facilities. Well, what could I say about the maintenance sheds apart from absolutely fantastic.



The locker room for the staff was better than most member locker rooms in the UK. There was not a speck of dirt anywhere, and I mean anywhere, from the chemical store to the Superintendent's office, which looked like a DFS lounge mock up. All the machines were spotless, unbelievable if I hadn't seen it for myself.

THURSDAY

The first day of the official show, we all went to the opening session. Apart from the usual thank you's for those few stepping down and the new ones coming on board the opening session was slightly overshadowed by one man.

He was being honoured by receiving the converted Old Tom Morris Award that was the Golden Bear himself Jack Nicklaus. He gave a talk and did an interview for the Golf Channel, which was being recorded for a later date. He also gave a question and answer session. That was one of the highlights of the day.

After that was over we went to the show. Yet again another very impressive setting, there was about 830 exhibitors showing of their latest products, they had 270,360sqft of exhibition hall to cover, bearing in mind that is all in one room.

They were expecting 25,000 to 28,000 people to visit the show, before that there was already 7,329 people who attend the education seminars and I don't know how many entered the golf tournament that was played over five top Orlando courses over three days.

The show was categorised into seven main areas; the building of a green, agronomic solutions, clubhouse solutions, driving range, electric vehicle test track, equipment and maintenance, and water solutions. This was the first ever building of a green in the middle of an exhibition, it was built to full USGA spec, probably about 300m2 with all the surrounds. Turfing could have been better, though.

That evening bought one of our first big engagements, the President's Dinner, hosted and sponsored by Stephen Bernhard. This involved meeting and dining with some of America's top 100 Superintendents and some of the GCSAA hierarchy.

This was an evening not to forget, the networking potential was enormous, we all met so many inspirational people and by the end of the evening we had made some new friends.



FRIDAY

This was another day at the show, meeting up with reps and fellow UK greenkeepers and college lecturers, including a certain Wayne Roberts, from Myerscough. That evening we were to attend another reception to see the old President, Mark Woodward, handing over to Tim O'Neill, the new GCSAA President. By the way, congratulations to Mark on his new appointment in San Diego. Good luck.

SATURDAY

We had finished off at the show because it closed at 2pm, so just time to pick up a few bargains at the GCSAA retail shop, after the show a little retail therapy at one of the many retail outlets. That night most of us went to downtown Orlando to see a free open air concert by Bruce Hornsby and the Range, an 80's group if your wondering from around '86 with a number one hit "The way it is" and many others. Thanks to Sami, from BIGGA, for hearing where they were playing.

SPECIAL THANKS

I would like to thank Stephen Bernhard for his support in sponsoring us all, also Sam, Kim and all of the Bernhard crew, thanks everyone for making it a great trip.

Also, to all the fellow cricketers who travelled with me. You all made it an unforgettable week, also thanks to John Pemberton, Sami, and Rosie. Nice to see you all in action; Howard Swan for making the first day so enjoyable. Finally congratulations to Chris Maynard for his new appointment at Pirates Cove.

My personal thanks to all of you.



◀ Chris Maynard, of The London Golf Club, one of the ten BIGGA Delegates tries out some of the new technology and equipment at the GCSAA Show in Orlando, Florida

With its bright green course and colourful flourishing backdrop Augusta National is the bane of most greenkeepers' lives



A Word with Alliss

With April heralding the annual outbreak of Augusta Syndrome Scott MacCallum speaks with a man who has been a feature of Augusta for nearly 40 years.

So here we are again. April, and the Masters will be filling the television screens with spectacular golf on a course which fits every club member's vision of what a golf course should be.

Augusta National is perfection personified. Very few of us have ever been lucky enough to visit but we all know the course, particularly the back nine, as if it were our own.

A little draw to get the big bounce down the 10th fairway; a deep breath for Amen Corner - avoid the lake to the left of the 11th; vital club selection on the 12th and hitting a perfect right to left drive on 13 to give a chance of making the green in two - Amen to that; but then there is the terrifyingly slopy 14th green; the 15th where you can find water both in front or behind the green; up comes the 16th where every well struck tee shot feeds down to the hole and looks a dead cert to go in; the 17th with a well positioned tee shot giving a chance to just clear the bunker guarding the green and leave a birdie putt; then a deep breath before attempting the claustrophobic drive up the last, hopefully missing the bunkers, gives a chance to leave a makeable putt on the famous last green.

The colours are amazing. The caddies' white overalls setting off the vivid green of the fairways and greens; the stunning rhododendrons and azaleas; the carpeted bridges, the pure white sand in the bunkers and the blue water of Rae's Creek and the many lakes.

Then there's the greens themselves. Is there anything more extraordinary than watching a player strike a putt away from the hole and then waiting 40 seconds for it to find its way all around the green to the hole side or sometimes, miraculously, in?

Now, if you just spent a little more time preparing your own course properly, surely you could come up with something nearly as good. I'm not so stupid as to expect something exactly the same, after all I know the weather's always better in America and from what I see there are a few more staff at Augusta than at your place, but how much sun or people does it need to get greens to stimp at 14?

It's the same every year. The US Masters is the bane of greenkeepers' lives but you do have a champion out there and he comes from an unlikely source.

"For people to think that their own courses should be like Augusta is like dreaming of living in Buckingham Palace. It is completely unobtainable."



"For people to think that their own courses should be like Augusta is like dreaming of living in Buckingham Palace. It is completely unobtainable."

There speaks a man who has been attending the Masters for over 40 years and whose voice is synonymous not just with the Masters but every top golfing event of the last 30 years - Peter Alliss.

Yes, the man who has provided the soundtrack to our golfing history knows that there can be no comparison between what he commentates upon in Georgia every April and what the rest of us are involved with.

In other words at Augusta - It's golf, Jim, but not as we know it.

"There is a lot of falseness about Augusta. It's a bit like preparing for the Chelsea Flower Show, where plants are forced on and arrive in buckets and everyone is desperate to keep the plants alive for a week. A lot of that happens at Augusta where they do supply the rhododendrons and azaleas in pots if the weather hasn't been conducive to bringing them on, just so that it looks wonderful," explained Peter.

And if your members get a little depressed, as they gaze out of your clubhouse window onto a deserted putting green and a fourball trudging towards the 18th green, at the thought of Augusta members sitting in their colonial style clubhouse perched high above the course taking in a view that is golf's equivalent of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, listen to Peter.

"When you look out from the Augusta clubhouse all you can see are acres of mown grass without a feature on it. Put all the people there, though, and it looks completely different."

Peter has been the voice of BBC Television Golf for many years, taking over the mantle from the great Henry Longhurst, and he has described many of the finest Masters' moments.

He was there in 1980 when Seve burst on to the scene and became the youngest ever champion. In '86, he described Jack Nicklaus' incredible back nine to become the oldest man to win the title. He was the man who, in '88, coaxed Sandy Lyle's amazing

fairway bunker shot down the green towards the hole to give him the birdie chance that made him the first ever British winner. The very next year he peered through the gloom to see Nick Faldo win the first of his two



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play-offs. He revelled in Ian Woosnam's bended knee celebration in '91 and looked on in astonished fashion as Tiger Woods rewrote the record book six years later. Peter Alliss has been there and, in modern parlance, talked the talk. As a result he knows Augusta National better than virtually any visitor from these shores.

"What people don't understand, and I'm talking about single figure players, is just how fast the Augusta greens are. Regular club golfers just couldn't conceive of it," spoken with the air of a man who knows that if we faced such pacy greens every week the country's psychiatrists would be coining it in.

"The money they spend at Augusta is extraordinary yet they only have 280 members and the course is closed for five months every year. I did see their greenkeeping budget once and it was several million dollars a year, every year," said Peter, adding that he knew they overseeded the entire course every year.

"From a greenkeeping point of view when you get members at home who ask why can't our course be like Augusta, all I can say is that they have no concept of the money that is poured into Augusta every year. They have no concept of the climate, which is awful for the five months the course is closed - the temperature and humidity are unbearable and they actually install fans in the trees to circulate the air."

In his 40 years of visiting Augusta Peter has been on a mission, although in recent years lack of success has curbed his enthusiasm somewhat.

"I have never found a weed, even in the rough. I used to go looking for them but I've given up now. I'm sure you'd have to go 100 yards of the property to find a weed. It is just magnificent."

Peter is well aware of the idealistic and unrealistic expectations of golf club members.

"I've said this many times but at least 85% of all members want to arrive at the club when it suits them and walk onto the 1st tee with nobody there. They want 18 holes of golf and then drop into the clubhouse for a quick pint or just go straight back into the car and home. They want the course in good order with nice flags fluttering; nice soapy water in the ball cleaners and all for £400 or £500 a year.

"Then they'll come up to the greenkeeper and ask why the hollow coring must be done the very week when he's got a week's holiday. The average member has no conception of being a supporter."

He is also an advocate of traditional golf and is left open mouthed by some of the new style courses which are being built, particularly in the States.

"Some of the courses in the States are like ornamental gardens. For example, I went to see the new Donald Trump course last year and it had some wonderful, but ridiculous, waterfalls. Great feats of engineering and silliness. It's like playing golf in an artificial world."

He also feels that there are a lot of golf developers who live in a fantasy world with every new golf course supposed to be a par-72.

"You produce a wonderful golf course with a par of 70 and people think it's Mickey Mouse, because it's only par-70 - God forbid if it were to be par-68. But I maintain the most difficult course in the world would be four par-3s between 190 and 225 yards and 14 par-4s at 470 yards long. It would be a par-68 but you could bring Tiger Woods over and he'd go round all day long and not break par."

So here's a chance for Peter, with the ear of the greenkeeping profession, to get anything of his own off his chest.

"Sand in the bunker! I would like to start a campaign at every golf course in the country to have bunkers forked over on April 1. Everywhere I go I see bunkers with no sand in them, probably because of the raking system. I don't want a foot of sand but you could tickle the sand to loosen up a couple of inches. That's the one criticism I'd make," he said.



Warming to his theme he laid out his blueprint for a well run golf club.

"I'd try to get the very best greenkeeper I could, but also the best steward; the best cook - you don't want a chef; a good Secretary; a good pro and a good assistant. If you've got all those ingredients it will work. The course can be very ordinary but if you keep it neat and tidy with a good attention to detail people will say how nice it looks and keep coming back. It's like having a cheap pair of

shoes, if they are clean and looked after they will be fine but if they are dirty and neglected they look awful," said Peter, who has great respect for greenkeepers.

"It's a hell of a job for greenkeepers. It's not a thankless task as it is very rewarding but I don't think in all honesty enough good greenkeepers get enough praise. They are the hub of any club.

"As for the Augusta Syndrome. It's silly and unobtainable."

Photographs supplied by Getty Images and Brian Morgan



TALKING HEADS

Compiled by Gareth Jones

1

Does Augusta National or other courses which appear on television influence your members'/clients' perceptions on how a course should look?



Name: Robert Hogarth
Region: Scottish
Years as a Greenkeeper: 19
Club: Cardrona Hotel Golf & Country Club, 18 holes
Course Type: Mature Woodland
Staff: Course Manager, plus seven

To be honest, not since I moved to Cardrona. I have experienced that in the past, but here it has been different. Having a small membership helps in that and it is important to have good communication to tell them why the course looks and plays like it does.



Name: Stuart Boyce
Region: Northern
Years as a Greenkeeper: 22
Club: Mere Golf & Country Club
Course Type: Parkland, 18 holes
Staff: Course Manager, plus 12

It is hard to say. On the one hand the American courses on TV don't do us Brits any favours as members see them and want our course to look the same in the middle of winter, which just isn't possible. On the other hand they are just happy to see the course looking and playing well.



Name: Kenny MacKay
Region: Midland
Years as a Greenkeeper: 18
Club: Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel
Course Type: Parkland, 18 holes
Staff: Course Manager, plus 18 full time and six casual

There is an influence, but I wouldn't just put it down to Augusta. In the past that might have been true, but with so much TV golf nowadays the golfer sees so many courses that they will be influenced. I also think that today's golfer travels a lot more and sees courses across the globe in different climates and that influences their opinions.



Name: Edward McCabe
Region: South West/Wales
Years as a Greenkeeper: 30
Club: Brockenhurst Manor Golf Club
Course Type: Heathland/Maturing Forest, 18 holes
Staff: Course Manager, plus six

It certainly does have an influence on our membership, but I don't let it influence how I manage my course. Satellite TV has a lot to answer for as the majority of golfers judge the course's quality on its colour, which is wrong. Personally I don't like these bright green courses that you see on TV, they look too artificial.



Name: Chris Lomas
Region: South East
Years as a Greenkeeper: 14
Club: The Berkshire
Course Type: Heathland, 36 holes
Staff: Course Manager, plus 17

Fortunately I have a very well travelled membership, who are fully aware of the climatic differences let alone the financial ones. I pity anyone who has members who feel their course should resemble Augusta in any way. It would break my members' hearts to have manicured gardens on their golf course.



Name: Kyle Irwin
Region: Ireland
Years as a Greenkeeper: 14
Club: Lurgan Golf Club
Course Type: Parkland, 18 holes
Staff: Head Greenkeeper, plus four

I definitely think so. You get the fair weather golfers coming out around this time of year and they expect to see the course looking exactly how they see courses on TV. They forget that this club doesn't have the huge budgets that other clubs have and that it is just not possible to meet those unrealistic standards.



Name: Jon Wiggett
Region: International
Years as a Greenkeeper: 11
Club: Leuk Golf Club, Valais, Switzerland
Course Type: Inland Links
Staff: Course Manager, plus four

Yes, especially here in Switzerland where there is little or no knowledge of links style courses. The course is built on a sandy soil with wall-to-wall fescue. In the early morning it looks very green but with the Mediterranean climate we have here its usually looking very brown by midday.

2

Is there pressure to make your course greener in colour and inline with many of the courses seen on TV?

We don't have a huge problem with that. I am lucky in the fact that I am clearly in charge and we have total responsibility of the course. We are a business and we do have to think along those lines, but that doesn't put pressure on us to change the course.

It used to be like that, but attitudes are changing. My Chairman travels around the world and plays a lot of high profile courses. He picks things up which he wants to see on ours. We used to fertilise just to make the grass greener, but this also increased the amount of thatch we had, so we don't fertilise as much now.

Our course appears on television so the pressure comes from having the course up to the high standards required by the European Tour. So the pressure is on us to get the course right. We have ours set up similar to the US Open, so the focus is on developing the course into that type of state and standard.

There is no pressure applied to me by the club. I have been here 18 years and I have a course policy in place that the members respect. I focus my attention on the playing characteristics of the course, as that is the most important thing. Obviously we make the course as presentable as possible, but how the course actually plays is crucial.

Not at all. A luminous green heathland course is the last thing anyone wants here. In contrast they love to see it really brown off in the summer. The pressure comes from corporate/visitor golf, they often relate to what they see on TV. When you visit courses on TV you realise that producers can make anywhere look good with filters and camera work.

To a certain extent yes. The problem is that golfers don't know about grass types and the health of grass, they just like to see good colour. We installed a new putting green and we got complaints that it wasn't green enough in colour and looked unhealthy, while it actually was in great condition and very healthy.

The biggest gripe is about the lack of definition compared to the American style courses but I am fortunate that the Architect, John Chilver-Stainer, lives locally and spends a considerable amount of time at the club explaining his concept to the players. It is a sad reality, but his word carries a lot more clout than mine, except among the regular players.

3

What do you do to meet your members'/clients' demands but at the same time keeping the course in a realistic and healthy state?

It is difficult to get that balance, but crucial to do so. We have Q&A sessions with the membership, which helps a lot. Some suggestions we get just won't work, and you have to be very careful to explain why it wouldn't work. We have to treat everyone, including members, as clients and you can't afford to upset or lose them.

We just try to keep the course on an even keel. There are certain things we are asked to do by the Chairman, particularly when holding events, such as speeding up greens etc. But we don't do anything that will stretch the course and put it under too much pressure.

You definitely have to have a balance. We don't go over the top on the fine turf, instead we concentrate on the rough. We fertilise the rough to get it up to the height and standard demanded, but on the fine turf we just continue to look after it how we feel fit.

We have an excellent maintenance programme in place and we concentrate on producing quality turf and fast firm greens, which is what the members notice. I like to keep the grass looking natural, I really only use our irrigation system to keep the grasses ticking over until the wet season comes instead of watering to make the grass greener.

Emphasis here is in keeping things realistic. I will cut the greens at 3mm for the summer and 5mm in the winter, which some might question, however, with judicious watering and fertiliser usage we are seeing an improvement in the indigenous grasses. We have limited fairway irrigation, which helps keep things natural, but I think we'll need to change this to keep the visitors happy.

You do try and listen to members' needs. The only thing we try to do is cosmetic improvements. This means that we are meeting members' ideas as to how the course should look and the colour the grass should be, but at the same time by doing that we are being very careful as to not damage the course.

With temperatures in the high 90's °F, free draining soil and a constant wind affecting the irrigation it is a losing battle trying to keep the grass green, so I don't try. I insure the course is always in a neat and tidy state. I have regular discussions with the members, put up pictures of links courses and have the support of the Pro.

4

What is the biggest tournament you have held at the Club and how did you set up your course differently for it?

We hosted the 2004 PGA European Pro Tour Cardrona Classic. Over the last 10 years, as BIGGA has become more respected, the PGA's attitude has changed, they now ask you to change things, rather than tell you. We had the greens faster, stimping at 11 feet. We also narrowed the fairways and changed the par from 72 to 73, having five par-5's on the course.

We hold the NSPCC Charity Tournament, which many celebrities play in. We do the normal things such as lowering the cut height on the greens and we also verti-cut as much of the course as we can. We just make the course and the whole club's grounds look as presentable as possible so everyone enjoys the Tournament.

We hold the British Masters. We are given European Tour guidelines explaining how the course is to be setup, so we follow that. This doesn't really vary from what we do during the rest of the year. We grow the rough to about four inches and tighten the fairways.

The club holds major and senior country events and Pro-Am's. For these we speed up the greens slightly and cross cut the fairways, it all depends on the standard of golfer we are hosting. We like to think that we produce a high standard of course all year round, so we don't need to change too much when we do hold competitions.

Last year we held The British Men's Senior Open. With my staffing and resources we find one course tournaments straightforward, the difficulty with this was that it was staged over both courses amid heavy thunderstorms. You work your aeration and fertiliser programme around the main tournaments and we increase our cutting frequencies to whatever is required.

We don't hold any major events here, mainly club competitions. We just try and keep the course at its best for as long as we can. It allows us the time to make adjustments as and when needed, without causing big problems or disruptions.

The course is still very young but we did have the County Strokeplay here in 2003. I did not alter the course that much except for double cutting the greens and a few difficult pin placements. We had midday temperatures of 110°F and strong winds which kept the scoring high.

5

Did the course take time to recover after peaking for these events?

After the PGA Tournament we have no problems. We also hosted the Bunkered Match Play in October and we were unlucky with the weather. We had so much rain that the final day had to be cancelled. What caused the problems was that the officials, TV crews, etc insisted on still using golf buggies and this really damaged the course.

It does take time to recover. We normally don't touch the course for a week after major events, we just let it rest. It depends on the weather and what that has taken out of the course. Typically we use balanced fertilisers to wake the course up and we bring the cut height up so the turf is less stressed.

After last year's event we had a lot of problems, which were mainly caused because of the large amount of rainfall we had. The course can cope with the extra play, however it is the spectator damage that hurts the course. Having that extra traffic around the place and having things like tents and marquees put up takes it toll.

We speed up our greens by top dressing, verti-cutting and maybe lightly rolling, rather than dramatically dropping our cut height. This allows the course to recover quicker. We also use stress relieving methods when needed.

Not really. It is club policy to only host amateur tournaments and they bring very little public interest so there is very little damage. We decrease the mowing frequency back to normal, usually aerate, as we try to do every few weeks anyway, and maybe give them a small tonic because we will have been keeping them very lean for obvious reasons.

Recovery is fine after these club events during the season. The biggest challenge is the recovery time in the winter, as there is now becoming a high demand for golf here during this time. We are lucky that the course holds up well during this time.

Not really, as we maintained our normal maintenance program throughout the Tournament. But at a previous club the Captain insisted on shaving the greens down below 3mm for a tournament week, which all but killed them. Afterwards we had to paint them, to the delight of most of the golfers who had never seen the putting surfaces looking so lovely and green.

Just the Tonic

Nick Harden looks at the causes of poor health in fine turf and some of the treatments and corrective measures greenkeepers can apply.

Like those who play on it, golf course turf can sometimes get run down and in need of a tonic, particularly following the depressing cold and wet months of winter. This is when greenkeepers have to take on the role of turf doctors, looking at all the possible causes of the turf's depression and establishing the best forms of treatment. Turf's requirement for a tonic may be diagnosed as needing a change of 'diet' or 'environment', or the application of a 'medicine'.



Fusarium patch

DIET AND ENVIRONMENT

In order to maintain turf in a healthy condition, and therefore reduce the need for treatment, particular attention needs to be given to four particular areas, one relating to 'diet' and three to the turf's 'environment'.

1. Correct feeding

Left to its own devices, grass will survive on soils with widely ranging nutritional value. However, to provide the optimal growing conditions needed for fine turf, feeding needs to be carefully managed. The main nutrients that grasses need are nitrogen, phosphate and potassium.

The precise requirements for nutrition depend on the grass species, time of year and the type of soil. Some diseases are encouraged by lack of soil fertility, e.g. Red Thread, while too much nitrogen in the soil can encourage other diseases such as Fusarium Patch. Again like its players, turf's diet may need a helping hand in the form of supplements, in this case fertilisers.

When using granular fertilisers on golf course turf, a compound, although more expensive, offers distinct benefits over blended forms which often contain large proportions of grit. Grit has no nutritive value and can damage expensive mowing machinery. Additionally blends can create lush week growth and can increase the risk of scorching.

Compound fertilisers are made up of individual prills containing the vital components Nitrogen, Phosphate and Potassium. This allows a far more even supply of nutrients to create uniform strong growth of turf type grasses. Compounds also incorporate sulphur, a component lacking in blends as well as in the atmosphere, but which is a trace element essential for healthy grass development.

2. Soil pH

The optimum pH for grass growth is between pH 5.5 and 6.5, although grass can survive a much wider range than this. Outside this range, the pH will reduce plant vigour and in some cases, an alkaline pH - greater than 7 - can encourage the disease Take-all Patch.

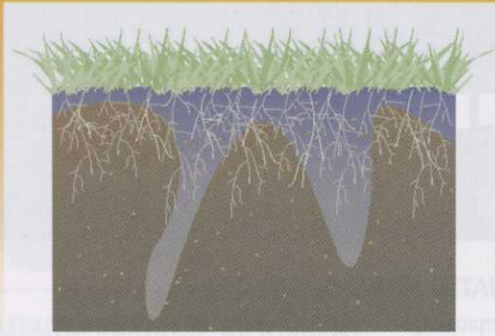
3. Root systems

Poor drainage, compaction and the build up of thatch can cut down air supply to the grass roots, reducing plant vigour. This renders the turf more susceptible to disease attack. Turf soils need to be kept aerated by regular spiking or hollow tining, and the thatch controlled by routine scarification. Optimum moisture access in the rootzone, air to water ratios, and the ability to produce chlorophyll, thereby encouraging more efficient photosynthesis and better production of carbohydrate energy reserves, all contribute to keeping the turf healthy.

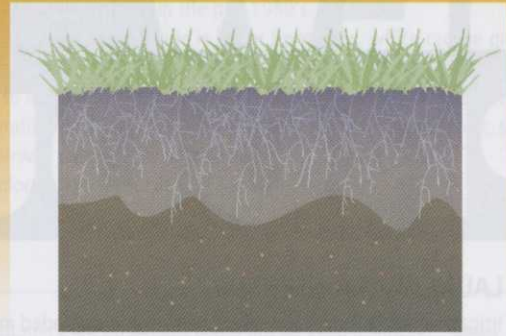


Leatherjacket

WATER FLOW BEFORE



WATER FLOW AFTER



4. Shade

Plants need sufficient light to promote healthy growth. Where grass is shaded by trees, hedges and other obstructions, vigour may be reduced and grass becomes prone to disease attack. Where possible, excessive shade should be controlled by pruning.

5. Water

As in humans, water is arguably the most essential part of the equation when it comes to turf survival. Your turf can survive longer without proper nutrition and optimum environmental conditions than it can without access to water.

The physical structure of the turf plant is comprised of 75 - 85% water, and adequate levels are needed to be maintained for basic metabolic functions, tissue formation, cooling, and food manufacturing to continue. It also acts as the transport system through which the turf takes up nutrients and 'medicines' through its roots and carries it through the plant.

Turf loses the greatest amount of water under stressful conditions such as high light intensity, high temperature, low atmospheric water vapor content, and windy conditions. To make sure that your turf is getting the water it needs to survive, especially during these stress periods, it is recommended that a quality soil surfactant be used.

Surfactants have been proven to reduce fingered flow and other water related problems, such as dry patch, wet spots, and uneven wetting. They help to establish and maintain a 'matrix flow' - a consistent downward and lateral water movement pattern that ensures uniform movement of water and turf chemicals through the soil profile. This promotes healthy turfgrass since water and water soluble chemicals penetrate deeper into the rootzone, encouraging a deeper root structure for healthier, denser and more uniform turf surfaces.

With surfactants you can use less water overall and still maintain the levels needed in the soil, since little is lost to run-off, channelling or surface evaporation.

THE 'MEDICINES'

If it is not in peak condition, turf becomes more susceptible to pests and diseases. For the treatment of diseases, pests and weeds in golf turf most greenkeepers will agree that, like it or not, the 'tonic' will often involve some form of chemical control.

TREATMENT OF PESTS

There are four main pests that are the bane of the greenkeeper's life: worms, although beneficial in helping to aerate the subsoil, their casts cause problems particularly on greens; leatherjackets, the larval stage of the crane fly; the frit fly, particularly for newly-sown turf, and the infamous chafer grub. A new product for the control of chafer grubs is due to be launched in the UK during April.

Application of pesticides will usually be in the form of spraying affected areas, at rates and frequencies recommended by the manufacturers. Some products have tank-mix compatibility for treating two or more pests at the same time, reducing both labour involvement and chemical usage.



Chafer Grub

TREATMENT OF DISEASES

Intensively managed turf is often more prone to attacks of turf disease. In many cases, development of disease problems can be attributed to cultural causes, i.e. a failure to provide optimum conditions for plant growth.

The long-term remedy will usually involve changes in the cultural techniques employed, e.g. by increasing scarification. In the short term however, the use of fungicides may prove necessary to halt the disease and protect the grass from further damage. Turf diseases are disorders that are usually caused by parasitic fungi invading plant tissues and robbing the grass of vital nutrients.

Alternatively, they can be caused by the indirect effects of fungi inhabiting the soil in the rootzone and altering the availability of water and nutrients to the grass, as in the case of the fairy ring fungi. In either case they present a problem to the greenkeeper, who needs to take some form of remedial action in order to restore the turf to full health.

Thanks to Bayer Environmental Science, British Seed Houses and Supaturf Products for help in compiling this article.

NEW PRODUCTS

TORO LAUNCHES RAINSENSOR

Toro Irrigation has launched a wireless version and upgraded models of its two wired RainSensor Series.

The RainSensor works in conjunction with an irrigation controller to automatically shut off water when it rains. The three models in the new, enlarged series will give golf, sport and landscaping users even greater control of their irrigation programmes.

Toro's first wireless RainSensor brings with it the flexibility to install the sensor in the most suitable operating location, and has a 100m line-of-sight transmission range to a receiver. The receiver features a user-friendly LCD for simple programming and an easy to read icon display. It is also fitted with a rain/freeze sensor. This shuts off irrigation if the temperature falls below a level that is pre-set by the user.

The two wired RainSensor models are fitted with a sensor that features the option to select either 'normally closed' or 'normally open' for compatibility with older controllers. This ensures that irrigation still goes ahead, even in the unlikely event that the RainSensor fails.

Also included are four system shut-off points that can be adjusted to allow for different levels of rainfall depending on soil type. These units additionally come with an 8m pre-wired cable and a gutter- or eaves-mounted bracket for easy installation.

For further information Tel: 01480 226800.



THE WATER STORAGE ANSWER

Waterproofing Services design and install a system that diverts rain from guttering and downpipes at golf courses to lakes that store the water until it is needed for irrigation. The created lakes then become an attractive and intrinsic part of the golf course, while also acting as a practical water store.

Clubhouses and outbuildings mean that most golf courses have a massive surface area of roofs. Rain that falls on these roofs normally just goes to ground and is wasted. This system makes full use of this important water by diverting and storing rain water, with the lakes being any size a club wants, from a few square metres to a whole football pitch.

With weather pundits predicting a hot summer and the Environment Agency's 'Water Resources Strategy' kicking in, golf courses are being urged to get their water recycling procedures in order, this system aims to help with this.

Waterproofing Services designs and installs lakes at golf clubs across the UK. Recent projects have included London & Hatfield Country Club, London Golf Club and Hanbury Manor.

For further information Tel: 07984 551374.



A TURF TO WITHSTAND WEATHER EXTREMES

Available for the first time in the UK, Rhizomatous Tall Fescue Turf, produced by Tillers Turf, tolerates both drought and shade. It has a very deep and robust root system, enabling it to withstand the extremes of the weather.

This is the ideal turf to make a difference to areas of the course that suffer regularly from die-back due to drought and if you find it difficult to maintain grass cover on a shaded tee.

RTF, bred by Barenbrug, is a new generation of tall fescue, which is unlike other tall fescues produces rhizomes. The rhizome sends a shoot up to the soil surface while extending new roots downward, forming new plant growth. This rhizomatous growth habit produces high tensile strength, fast establishment of turf and rapid recovery.

RTF turf has excellent wear tolerance, similar to perennial ryegrass. It is shade, salt and frost tolerant and will withstand both water logging and drought conditions. It has consistent colour throughout the summer and winter and flourished in all soil types.

With a rooting depth capability of 1.5 metres RTF turf is a choice for soil stabilisation. With low water and nutrient requirements, coupled with rhizomatous recovery, it is ideal for use in environmentally sustainable situations.

The Turf is suitable for close mowing down to 12mm and has a low build up of thatch. The hard leaf of RTF turf encourages the ball to sit up making it ideal for golf course fairways and semi-roughs.

For further information Tel: 01652 678000.

LATEST ROTADAIRON EQUIPMENT

The Rotadairon range of specialist soil renovators, stone buriers, de-thatchers and seeders for the amenity and sports sector has been expanded in recent months, including specialised turf de-thatchers and seeder units.

The soil renovators are available in several sizes and specifications for different requirements and tractor power ratings. When used in combination with a seeder unit, ground can be prepared and seeded in a single pass, which speeds up the process and avoids ground drying out between operations.

The machines incorporate a cutting rotor that spins against the direction of travel, minimising compaction and panning. Soil is screened and separated so that coarse material is covered by fine soil, producing a structure with good drainage and aeration that is easy for roots to penetrate.

For de-thatching work, Rotadairon offers the CR140 general-purpose model,



which can also be used with a seeder unit, and the ED130 model for fine turf, such as golf greens, where a high degree of accuracy is required. This machine has over 150 specially designed blades closely spaced on a 1.3 metre wide rotor, and working depth can be set very accurately. Blade-changing is particularly quick and easy. With the PTO disconnected, the ED130 can also be used as a slitter/aerator.

Rotadairon seeder units are available either to fit behind a soil

renovator, so ground can be prepared and seeded in a single pass, or as separate tractor-mounted units for use on already prepared ground.

For further information Tel: 01480 455151.



NEW FM524

Showcased recently by Hayter was the latest version of the FM524. The Hayter FM524 fairway mower has undergone a number of developments since its introduction in the mid 1990's.

The main change is the new styling. Another change is larger front tyres, which reduce ground pressure and the risk of marking in difficult conditions. Features like hinged or removable panels, allowing easy access to all components for easy cleaning, maintenance and service have remained. The operating position, providing excellent visibility and comfort, so important for prolonged fairway cutting, has also remained exactly the same.

For more information Tel: 01279 723444.

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIC ABSORBENT

Sphag Sorb, the Environmental Organic Absorbent, supplied by Eco-spill.com, is an all natural product manufactured from sphagnum peat moss originating in the bogs of Canada and has been approved by the Environment Agency as a peat based oil absorbent.

Sprinkled on the oil spill as soon as it happens Sphag Sorb gets to work quickly, its powerful wicking action absorbs hydrocarbons and solvents, encapsulating these liquids on contact and because Sphag Sorb will not absorb water it can be used on wet grass.

Removal of the contaminated absorbent could not be easier. Simply brush as much as can be picked up and then mow the affected area collecting the absorbent into the grass box, any absorbent left on the grass will not harm the environment as the Sphag Sorb will, overtime, breakdown the captured oil before breaking down the Sphag Sorb which safely contains it.

Save the contaminated Sphag Sorb and after 90 days the bio remedial process should be complete and the Sphag Sorb can be safely disposed of back to the environment.

For further information Tel: 01934 514648.



SMALL BUT POWERFUL

Claas has worked with Bartram Mowers, their specialist groundcare dealer for East Anglia, to create a specialist low profile mowing combination, using the new Nectis tractor range fitted with Ransomes MK 4 5/7 mowers.

A total of four Nectis models are available which, although they only have an overall cab height as low as 2.32 metres, depending on tyres, still pack quite a punch as power outputs from the naturally aspirated or turbo charged 3- and 4-cylinder engines range from 68hp up to 101hp.

In standard format, the Nectis comes with a 30kph mechanical 12 forward/12 reverse speed transmission, but it is recommended that for maximum output when using mowers such as the Ransomes, the tractor is better fitted with the optional twinshift and revershift 40kph transmission. This has a two-speed electro-hydraulic clutchless splitter within each mechanical gear, giving a total of 24 forward and 12 reverse speeds, plus a clutchless reverser, to avoid repeated use of the clutch.

Both two- and four-wheel drive models are available. On four-wheel drive versions, drive to the front axle is engaged using a rocker switch on the dashboard and they have the facility to be used in automatic or permanent modes. In automatic, four-wheel drive is disengaged above 14kph and re-activated below this speed, and will also be engaged when the engine is switched off, when the brakes are applied or when the differential lock is used. In permanent drive remains engaged regardless of speed.



A wide range of agricultural or turf tyres are available and due to the cut-away design of the engine chassis, all two- or four-wheel drive models have a steering angle of 55 degrees and a minimum turning circle of just 3.45 metres.

For operations such as vertidrainage or slitting, the rear mechanically controlled three-point linkage has a maximum lift capacity of 3,138kg and allows both the draft sensitivity and speed of linkage drop to be adjusted. The Claas TCE six Electronic Linkage control is available as an option that uses dials to set the main draft, position and height settings, with a press button for raise, neutralise and to lower the linkage.

Nectis is fitted with a six-spline PTO with groundspeed, 540 and 540 ECO speeds gradually engaged using a hydraulically assisted clutch to avoid overload.

As standard, the Nectis range comes with a two-pump hydraulic system, with a 48 l/min pump serving the braking, hydraulics and spool valve systems, while the second 27 l/min pump serves the steering and clutch systems.

The cab on the Nectis has an extremely low transmission tunnel, which is only 14cm high. The cab is ISO mounted to eliminate vibration and is

fitted with a pneumatic seat. The dashboard incorporates an LCD display, which in addition to a constant readout of forward speed, can also provide information on the total or temporary working hours, a clock or the rear PTO speed.

For Further information Tel: 01284 763100.



KIOTI EXPAND RANGE

The latest models to join the Kioti range of compact tractors have been unveiled by their UK distributor, Rustons Engineering. There are now seven engine sizes in the range with a choice of specifications and attachments.

Designed specifically for the amenity market, the new models have 25hp or 30hp three-cylinder engines and are fully EU homologated. They are available with hydrostatic transmission or a manual gearbox with eight forward and eight reverse gears, including synchromesh forward/reverse shuttle. Hydrostatic power steering is standard, and options include a second double acting spool valve and mid-PTO.

The lifting capacity of the three-point hitch is 800kg. A front hitch, backhoes and front-end loaders with a quick fit attachment system are available as optional equipment.

The tractors are built in South Korea by Daedong and this modern plant, near Seoul, meets ISO9001 quality management standards and ISO 14001 environmental management standards.

For further information Tel: 01480 455151.



News from the Chief Executive

Congratulations to Rachael (Membership) and her husband Stuart on the safe arrival of their son Adam. Rachael is now on Maternity Leave and in the meanwhile Gemma is looking after the Membership Office with help from our other Rachael (Reception), Sarah (my PA) and others as time allows.

A 'Well done' must also go to Stephen (Accounts) who, not only recently passed another module in the final stage of his accountancy exams, but also managed to win a shiny new Peugeot 206 in a competition run by the local radio station. I have banned him from taking over the office lottery syndicate since as a non-member I cannot afford for them to scoop a jackpot and leave me on my own!

Staff wise we are still under Establishment as they say in the golf club world. We have a vacancy in our Sales Office for someone to sell the classified advertising, a situation that originally arose some while ago with the departure of Cheryl, who emigrated to Australia. Until recently the position has been covered by temporary staff from an agency, however that has now come to an end due to the incumbent's personal situation. The scenic but somewhat isolated location of BIGGA HQ often works against us when recruiting which, together with very low unemployment locally, results in a shortage of suitable candidates. Things have not been made any easier by a bout of illness that has moved through the office.

There appears to be continued confusion and concern over the Recommended Salaries and Conditions of Employment for Greenkeepers as published by the current Committee. I would firstly point out that the BIGGA Pay Rates have not existed since 1997 and members and their employers should refrain from using this terminology as it only adds to the confusion. Historically it was always felt inappropriate that greenkeepers (through BIGGA) should determine their own remuneration recommendations and so a totally independent Committee was formed comprising representatives from golf club owners, golf club secretaries, the R&A and greenkeeping (again through BIGGA).

The Committee, which meets twice a year, established a completely new scale based on a survey and research and for the first time also linked remuneration to qualifications. This scale has been reviewed annually and is adjusted in line with the Average Earnings Index, this is an official government index and is Great Britain's key indicator of how fast earnings are growing. In using this index the Standing Committee ensures that the recommended scale for greenkeepers does not fall out of sync with the rest of industry.

I would comment that the scale is only a recommendation and employers can choose to either be guided by it or ignore it. For ease of administration, queries are normally routed through BIGGA Headquarters but I would stress that this is only to try to provide a quick response and NOT because BIGGA controls the Committee. A booklet containing the scales for 2005 may be obtained free of charge by contacting BIGGA Headquarters.

While on the subject of confusion may I take the opportunity to clarify the scope of and access to the Member's Legal Helpline. This is a 24hour/365 days of the year service to BIGGA subscribers and is for the use of and benefit of members and ANY of their family living in their household. The service is operated by a specialist company and is manned by suitably qualified staff who, in most cases, will be able to give you instant advice but who may on occasions need to ring you back with an answer. The person answering the call cannot be expected to know every point of law!

Advice can be sought on any legal matter and is not restricted just to employment. If any insured person has been wrongfully dismissed from their employment then the company will, at the company's discretion, pursue a claim through the appropriate channels at no cost to the individual.

The service is operated through a free-phone number that is 0800 068 1893. If you, or your family, are unfortunate enough to have need to use this facility and feel that it does not provide the level of service that you expected then please inform a member of Headquarters staff as soon as possible. My only additional comment is that you will be advised on 'What the law says' and this might not always coincide with your own feelings on the matter.

As the days and the grass grow longer I wish you all a successful season and hope that neither you nor your course is put under stress that you cannot cope with. Headquarters' staff are always on hand to help where they can, please do not hesitate to contact someone if you feel the need - full details can be found inside the front cover of this magazine.

John Pemberton

SECTION NOTES INFORMATION

In order to improve the sending and receiving of Section Notes, where possible can all future notes be emailed to gareth@bigga.co.uk by no later than the 5th of the month prior to publication please.

You will receive an email back to confirm receipt of your notes. If you do not receive this confirmation please get in touch with BIGGA Headquarters.

SCOTTISH REGION

Ayrshire

Hello all! I hope you've had a good off season and managed to get your courses repaired for the upcoming season. Although I was away for a few weeks the weather seems to have been pretty decent this past winter. At the time of writing however its maybe been a bit too good, with the past few weeks staying quite dry.

Three new members have joined us and they are Russell Adams, Lamlash GC, Paul Smith, Lochmaben GC and Michael Byrne, West Kilbride GC. Mick began his career at West Kilbride and returns with experience gained from Wentworth and Turnberry. So, well done to Mr Paton on his dealings in the transfer window. I'm sure Mick won't miss the commuting distance from Saltcoats!

Other members on the move include Alistair Storrie, to Beith GC from Largs GC, and John Mair, who continues his missionary work in the west by joining Hamilton GC from Bellshill GC. Keep spreading the word Johnny Boy! John's brethren in Ayrshire would like to wish him all the best as he begins his journey into matrimony on April 30.

The Scottish National Conference, in Dunfermline, was a success once again with over a 100 in attendance. It was reported however that a couple of Ayrshire delegates may have dispersed a little early, so an inquiry will be conducted and any sanctions meted out in due course.

Okay, the football match verses the west is now set to be played in the latter half of April. Anyone interested can get in touch with Marshall, at Beith, or myself on 07939 104701.

Wait! There's still more, with the spring outing, which is to be played over the Kintyre Course at Turnberry, on Tuesday April 12. The day starts with coffee and a bacon roll on arrival followed by golf and an evening meal at only £20. Tee time is reserved from 1.30pm.

As some of you know I was lucky enough to travel to Florida with the Bernhard's Delegation. One night while sitting in the local watering hole I happened to get talking to a greenkeeper from Aspen, Colorado, who after hearing that I worked in Scotland stated that his club were going to make their course more Scottish in nature. Intrigued at this I inquired how would this be achieved? To which he replied: "By raking the bunkers just twice a week!"

Denis Tweddell

Central

We begin this month's news by sending our heartiest congratulations to Section Committee member, Ian MacMillan, Course Manager at Murrayshall Hotel and Golf Courses, on his achievement in becoming a qualified Fellow of the Society of Specialist Paralegals. Ian set out to gain this degree in order that he could be of assistance to fellow greenkeepers who are having difficulties in their employment.

What makes his achievement more remarkable is that he gained his degree six months within his allotted time and that out of a class of 38 sitting the exams he was the only person who was not practising law as a profession. Well done Ian!

Another two new members join us this month and they are Craig Hempseed, who is an apprentice at Aberdour Golf Club, and Stuart Muir, a greenkeeper on the Eden course at St. Andrews Links, as always we extend a warm welcome to them from everyone in the Section and hope to see them at some of our future events.

Along with the entry forms for the Spring Tournament at Elie, on April 27, you will receive a list of the educational programme that is available to you and the number of delegates required to hold the course. If you are interested in attending any one of them please return the form to me and we will endeavour to organise them on your behalf. The courses are there, we just need your support!

Personally I would like to thank everyone who has sent their best wishes to Ailsa during the past few weeks, it is very much appreciated by us both, thanks again.

John Crawford

East

Well we're back after an absence of a few months and it's now down to business, so here goes. Since I last wrote in this column we have had a few changes on the Committee and they are as follows: The Committee now reads: Chairman, G. Wood; Vice Chairman, Stuart Greenwood; Past Chairman, Chris Yeaman; Secretary, S. Dixon; and messrs F. Forrest, I. Watson, I. Bell, J. Neilson and K. Hodges. So I would like to wish Graham all the best for the next two years and Stuart for his two years as Vice Chairman.

I would also like to welcome Ian Bell back to the Committee after a few years away and Kevin Hodges, Longniddry GC, who has joined the Committee, so welcome and we hope you enjoy your time with us. I would like to thank the Section and all the members for allowing my time as Chairman over the last years and I look forward to continuing on the Committee for the considerable future, so thanks to you all.

There are a number of people on the move at the moment. Firstly, Mark Barrie has left Ratho Park GC to become First Assistant at Gogarburn GC and Paul Armour has left Dora GC (Fife) to become an Assistant at Ratho Park GC. Also Danny Murray, son of Tom Murray, Ratho Park GC, is moving from Archerfield Links GC to the USA to Pinehurst Golf Resort on a year placement in association with Ohio State University. This may be longer but initially it is for one year.

He will be working on Pinehurst's number eight course, but will be also doing some work on course number two in the run up to the US Open, being held there in June this year. Danny flew out on this opportunity of a lifetime on March 21 and we would all like to wish him all the best on this amazing trip.

I believe Robert Hogarth, Cardrona G&CC, has been in hospital having an operation on his damaged ankle and we all hope it has been a success, Robert, and we wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you out on the course very soon.

I hope anyone who attended BTME 2005 had a great time, as once again everyone at HQ did a superb job and gave us a Show to be proud of. Every year it just keeps getting better and better. I know the two East Section Patron Awards Winners, Steve Dixon and Kenny Mail, had a great time and hopefully they will write an article for the magazine very soon, so come on lads we're waiting! So roll on BTME 2006 and another great Show, workshops, etc, well done to everyone concerned, and it was good to meet up with old friends and new!

There are a few dates for your diary, they are the Spring Tournament, at Royal Musselburgh GC, where we haven't been for a while, on April 20, and you should have received your entry form by now, so get them back ASAP with the correct entry fee. You'll notice different entry fee categories this year, as no late entries after the closing date will be accepted and that's final!

The Annual Dance has been booked for Saturday December 3, at the Kilspindie House Hotel, Aberlady, for another great night as it was last December. So if you haven't been before get yourself along for a good night out as there is room for a few more for the social event to finish of the year.

Frank Forrest has put together a Section questionnaire, so please take some time, fill it in and send it back, as the Committee want to find out what the membership of the Section want, so we can put on events that you all want, i.e. golf, social, education. So fill it out and lets get this Section working, because it's your Section and this is your opportunity to tell us what you want.

The Autumn Tournament will be at Bruntisfield links GC, in September, and the date will be announced shortly. The Willie Woods Invitational returns this year, hopefully in August, with the venue to be announced later. Lets see a big turnout at all these events please!

If anyone has any news or views please get in contact, as I would like to hear from you and we will get it into this column throughout the year! The contact numbers and address are: Chris Yeaman, Westwyn, West Linton Golf Club, West Linton, Peeblesshire, EH47 7HN. Phone: office 01968 661721; home 01968 661313; mobile 07719 580449.

So come on, lets hear from you! I'm waiting by the letterbox and the phone. Well that's it for this month and apologies for being away for a while but normal service is now resumed and I look forward to next month with news and views around the Section.

See you then.

Chris Yeaman

North

There are quite a few new members to report this month. Michael Thomson, Assistant Greenkeeper at Longside GC; David Nicolson, Greenkeeper at Old Meldrum GC; Andrew Stables, Greenkeeper at Forres GC; Joanne O'Neil, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Newmachar GC; David Merchant, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Kings Links; Jordan Main, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Elgin GC; Brian Patterson, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Shetland GC; Scot Davidson, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Hazlehead GC. Our apologies to Scot as his membership was paid a few months back but did not come through to me to print.

Also a welcome back to the Section to Ross Macrae, formerly of Old Meldrum GC, who is now Assistant Greenkeeper at Newmachar GC. I hope all the new members enjoy their membership of the Association.

The Scottish Conference at Dunfermline was badly hit by the weather, with the roads difficult due to the snow. However 116 hardy souls were at the Conference and it is to their credit that they were able to get through. The Conference went well and our thanks go to Peter Boyd and the speakers.

The 200 club still has tickets left and if anyone is in possession of tickets and has no intention of renewing them could you please send them back to Hughie Mclatchie at 24 Whitehill Place, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, AB42 2YF or please phone him on 01779 470173. The club is our main source of revenue so we need to sell as many tickets as possible.

The spring outing is at Murcar GC, on May 12, and we hope there is a good turnout. Hopefully the weather will take care of itself. The National Tournament will be at Mcdonald GC, Ellon, on June 23, and that is a date for your diary. Brian Anderson and John Geddes are the respective Course Managers so a good turnout would be greatly appreciated by these guys.

Our Secretary, Dale Robertson, has been in touch with Gareth at BIGGA HQ and we hope the draw will be put on the events page of the BIGGA website before the tournament, so try the website if you can access a computer.

A former member of our Section, Stuart Hogg, formerly of Fortrose GC and now of St Annes GC, in England, was presented with his Master Greenkeeper award at Harrogate this year. This is quite an achievement as a lot of work is required to get through the exam, so congratulations go to Stuart and his family. As Stuart is a growing lad he needed a bigger BIGGA blazer, allegedly.

As I write this report the snow is piling down again and our season has actually started, seems to be more snow showers in March these days than during the main winter months.

Iain Gunn

NORTHERN REGION

North East

Recently Hexham Golf Club has been the recipient of an award for good environmental practices. Hexham has worked towards this over the last two years in a scheme ran in conjunction between the EGU and STRI. Following inspections, the STRI were delighted with the work carried out.

Matfen Hall Golf Club have been granted planning permission for a 10 bay driving range, work has started and should be completed and ready between May and June, it will have a small eating and drinking area which will act as a Clubhouse for the par 3 course.

Please note that BIGGA card holders will not get balls for free, but on showing their cards will get a discount, this will be sorted out nearer the opening time.

They have also recently applied for planning permission for an extra nine holes, this will not be a third or weaker nine, but will link the existing 18 to make a 27 hole layout, approximately 3500yds, par 36, with the traditional two par 3's and the course has been designed in house by Course Manager, Craig Parkinson, and Head Professional, John Harrison, Craig will be the appointed Project Manager.

Just to let you know that they are looking for an Assistant Greenkeeper who has the necessary skills and been or is still going to college who will start work April/May. They are also looking to employ a further two staff in the year 2006, so if anyone is interested drop Craig a line. Just as a little temptation they are offering 95% of BIGGA rates, plus overtime and membership of the new leisure club.

A question from Craig, he wants to know if anyone in our Section has had their wash bays fitted with a grass filter/clean water system? He would be grateful for any information, he can be contacted on 01661 886586.

Our spring competition is at Ponteland GC, April 14, and the autumn competition is at Foxton Hall GC, September 29.

Jimmy Richardson

North West

The main news this month in the Section has been the Mere Seminar, which took place on February 22. The seminar was a joint venture between the N/W and the N/Wales Sections. Every member of both Sections received an application form, 700 in all, and the seminar was attended by 75 people, which included the six speakers. This means that 10 percent of the membership attended which is about average for seminars.

We are lucky that our seminar was able to go ahead as the weather in some parts of the surrounding area was under snow and ice, making travel dodgy, but almost everybody made it. As you can all see from the application forms sent out, we had some great speakers covering the environmental issues, which the whole world is talking and worrying about.

I would like to thank all the speakers who gave us their time and expert advice, which made this a seminar worth attending. I mentioned the weather, and how the seasons are changing, in March we seemed to be getting the December weather, and now in April, with the Masters in Augusta shortly to be on TV, I wonder how long it will be before the members will be happy with our late to develop courses.

Upcoming events are as follows: North West v North Wales, Wilmslow GC, April 5; Spring Tournament, Whitefield GC, May 25; Summer Tournament, Childwall GC, July 27; Autumn Tournament, Prestbury GC, September 1;

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Whitelaw Bowl, Penrith GC, September 14; Presidents Day and AGM; Wilmslow GC, December 5.

That's it for now, any queries or suggestions ring 0151 724 5412 or 07761 583387.

Bert Cross

Northern

Can I please remind you all that the Spring Tournament is being held at Northcliffe Golf Club on April 20. Teeing off commences at 10am. Please let me know if you wish to play and let me have a cheque to cover entrance fee at least one week before the day. Don't forget the fee is £17 for the entire day, which includes coffee and bacon bap on arrival, your golf and a three course meal. How's that for excellent value! As I mentioned last month, anybody who wishes to pay on the day will have to pay £20, so do make sure to get your cheques in as early as possible.

Hopefully next month I will be able to bring you the details of the summer barbecue, which we are hoping to arrange for the first time this year, and maybe also the result of the first five-a-side match between Moor Allerton GC and my boys at Otley. There is just the one problem, we at Otley haven't got five members of staff at the moment, but I'm confident that we can still win with four men!

I'm afraid that's about all I have to say this month, hopefully I'll see you at Northcliffe. If anyone has any news they would like to share with the Section, then please do get in touch, my details are as follows: 16a Hodgson Fold, Myers Lane, Bradford, BD2 4EB. Tel: 01274 638366 Mobile: 07739 319060

Adam Speight

Sheffield

Firstly, I would, on behalf of the Section, like to thank Steve Pickering for his work on the Committee. Steve resigned last year and since that day he has become a bit of a celebrity. Recently on his stag do he decided to, or was forced to, have a go on a bucking bronco, he wasn't very successful as he fell off and slipped a disc.

Hope you are OK now Steve, by the way Dave Chappell says: "Ride them cowboy!" Then further more he has had his picture printed in the Greenkeeper Magazine with Dave. Fame at last Steve, all the best mate.

On Thursday February 3 we held one of our winter lectures, at Rotherham Golf Club. Our thanks go to Jonathon Hamer, of Farmura Ltd, for giving us a very interesting lecture on organics. Unfortunately there wasn't a great turn out which the Committee is in the process of addressing.

Well done to Chris Astle, our Section Secretary, who has just been promoted to Deputy Course Manager at Wheatley Golf Club, following the retirement of Neil Maltby. Good luck Chris.

Just a reminder that our first golf of the year is on May 10, at Bondhay Golf Club, with a tee off time of 10.30. We hope to have a big turn out from greenkeepers and trade alike, look forward to seeing you all there.

Once again if anyone has any news feel free to get in touch with me either by phone on 07793111845 or via email jv.lax@tesco.net

John Lax

MIDLAND REGION

East Midlands

The annual Go-Kart evening was held once again at The Wymeswold Industrial Estate on Wednesday February 16. The format for the evening consisted of four qualifying races for each competitor, with the top eight then contesting the final.

After several keenly contested races, 21 of the competitors were eliminated, leaving the rest to do battle in the Grand Final. This was won by Danny Brown, of Lingdale GC, with Adi Porter and Stuart Raybould, both of Greetham Valley,

finishing second and third respectively. Stuart Raybould won the fastest lap.

On behalf of the Section I would like to thank Toro/Lely and The Mowershop for sponsoring the evening and also a special thank you should go to every member who took part in supporting the evening.

Our golf fixtures for this year are as follows: Spring Tournament, Melton Mowbray, Wednesday May 18; Summer Tournament, Cosby, Thursday July 7; AGM, Norwood Park, Wednesday November 2; Christmas, Chamwood Forest, Thursday December 15. The spring and summer combined will be a National Tournament Qualifier.

The Committee do hope to see as many members as possible supporting these days. If you require an entry form please give me a ring or email me about a month before the competition, as no forms will be posted.

Anthony Bindley

BB&O

Farewell to Happy Valley! Jack Evans will be taking some happy memories away with him when he leaves the Conway's Bridge Estate and Happy Valley after 34 years of taking care of what is probably the most under played golf course in the country, with no more than a couple of dozen rounds played on the course in the last ten years.

Ill health has forced Jack, 62, into retirement as ambitious plans have been announced to create a high quality country club and golfing complex on the Park Place Estate, giving a new lease of life to the 68 acres of golf course, woodland and boathouse.

During Jack's time at Henley on Thames he has rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous, with George Cole (Arthur Daly), Mary Hopkins, Comedian Charlie Drake and a host of international actors and footballers. In addition to this, Jack persuaded the artist John Piper to paint Conway's Bridge, and the painting now adorns the Mayor's parlour at Henley Town Hall. On one occasion when the estate was on the market, a red Mercedes with a number plate SC1 pulled up in the drive and out stepped Sean Connery, who joined Jack for a cuppa and a guided tour of Happy Valley. Unfortunately, the great actor decided the house was too small and not for him.

Jack has a very special memory of the time when a golfing superstar turned up to discuss redesigning the six hole course - Jack Nicklaus was standing by Conway's Bridge with a group of managers and Jack, with tongue in cheek, introduced himself and after talking to one of the greatest golfers in the world he was presented with a Happy Valley scorecard signed "To Jack from Jack".

Jack will be moving into a bungalow in Twyford and will have a lot more time on his hands and he is starting to think about what will keep him busy in his retirement. "I have been promising myself to take a golf lesson since 1963. Maybe now I will find time for it," he said. So if you're passing Twyford pop in and see Jack, he will be only too pleased to see you. From all the BB&O, we wish Jack the very best in his retirement.

Remember that your news and views are always welcome and if you require further information on Section events planned for 2005 contact the Secretary, John Scones, on 0788 550380. PS. It's just started snowing, welcome to spring!

Mark Day

Mid Anglia

Welcome to the Mid Anglia Section news. There is not a lot to report this month. One important item is that the spring event this year will only be an 18 hole event and not a 36 as of previous years. Those of you who know Royston Golf Club will understand why, it has several "heart attack hills" and we didn't want to kill off the whole Section in one event!

The plan is for an afternoon round of golf, plus all the usual stuff, I believe that more information will be posted to our members with the entry forms. By the way, get your entry forms in early this year to make life easier for Richard.

That's about it, hopefully spring will have sprung by now and we'll all need a holiday soon!

Bob Butfoy



Peter Boyd
SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND
 Tel/Fax: 0141 616 3440



Peter Larter
NORTHERN & MIDLAND
 Tel: 01476 550115

SOUTH EAST

The South East Region's annual Gentleman's Dinner was held at Walton Heath as the magazine was going to press. A full report will appear in May's issue of Greenkeeper International.

Kent

I don't suppose I'm going to be the only one mentioning the weather in this month's 'Around the Green' section but as I look out across the snowy landscape that used to be a golf course summer seems a far distant memory. Indeed, this very morning I went to one of the high points of my course where a number of winter sports enthusiasts had gathered. I said to one: "How's the snow for skiing?" "Dunno," he replied, "I'm a tobogganist." "Oh," I said, "Can I have 20 Bensons then!" The old ones are the best! I'm sure this scenario will soon be a gone and we'll all be rushed off our feet trying to cope with the arrival of spring and the associated flush of growth. Happy days!

On the subject of arrivals, many congratulations to my Deputy, Richard Burgess, and his wife, Helen, on the birth of their second son, Henry. Another new member to welcome this month is David Tomlin, from The London Club.

With the help of our many trade supporters, who shall all get plenty of publicity for their efforts throughout the year, we have been able to compile a full fixture list for the coming season. This will begin with an educational afternoon at Wildernesse Golf Club, in Sevenoaks. This will start at 2pm and include

seminars and a course walk. This is a great opportunity to learn at a great venue for golfers and non-golfers alike.

Our first golfing adventure will be hosted by Broome Park Golf Club, near Canterbury, on June 9. We then visit Southern Valley Golf Club, on September 29. Finally we shall return to Birchwood Park Golf Centre, on November 24, for the annual turkey trot and AGM. We shall be producing a printed fixture list for all members in due course, but at least now you all have a basic agenda for the year in Kent and can plan to be at as many occasions as possible.

Please remember, BIGGA golf days are not just open to Course Managers and other regulars. All greenkeepers, at all levels of work and golfing ability, are welcome to join us.

If you have any news or gossip for this column please contact me. Even if it's the result of your staff snowball fight! I can be contacted on 07843 410755 or by email at grassyars@hotmail.com.

Rob Holland

Sussex

Hello again. Believe it or not, with the weather being very mild, we have just been promised a couple of weeks of Siberian winds and for a change I think they might have got it right, as there is snow on the ground and biting winds. Roll on the summer!

I did put my email address in last month's magazine, roberthudson77@btinternet.com, just in case anyone had any news they would like me to include, and just to clarify this is not an agony aunt column! I did actually get some feedback from a member and I think it was in response to my dig at members that were not attending any golf days through the year.

All I can add is that the golf days consist of 18 holes with a meal, for a very

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reasonable cost. I know we used to have 27 or 36 hole days, but that has not been the case for quite a while. Also it has been stressed that we are maybe starting too early and not giving you guys enough time to prepare your courses and then travel to the event. If this is the case than we can try and put those guys at the back of the field, although we are now trying to get a later kick off anyway.

If you would like to attend a golf day here are the fixtures and dates: May 5, Pycombe GC, Qualifier for the National Tournament; July 14, Haywards Heath GC, Team Challenge; August 31, Dyke GC, Sussex v Surrey - hiss boo; September/October, yet to be arranged.

Just a little in reference to the Sussex v Surrey match. Not only is it at the Dyke, where the Fixtures Secretary is Course Manager, it is also his birthday. Not too much pressure to put on oneself at 50 is it. Let's hope his game lives up to it.

As you can see there is no set fixture for September/October, so if any one feels their club would kindly hold an event then, or for the forthcoming year please let me know. Please support your Section!

That's the lot for now, look forward to seeing you at the next golf day.

Rob Hudson

East Anglia

Spring is here and I am sure everyone is flat out with their spring renovation. It has been a winter of mild weather for most of us with only a few course closures, and just a handful of days with temporary greens in use. The 'must play everyday member' has been happy throughout, so let us hope he shows some understanding as we tirelessly bring our courses round for the summer onslaught.

The Section's 2005 fixtures are now confirmed and the fixture cards are going to press as I write. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the first golf meeting of the year has had to be arranged later in Spring than normal, the meeting at Diss Golf Club is to be held on Tuesday May 17, the entry forms and fixture cards will be sent to all members of our Section shortly. If any member has any queries then Ian Willet, our Section Secretary, can be contacted on 01728 452759 and he will be pleased to deal with your call.

Congratulations must go to our Section Treasurer, Martin Mison, and his wife, Tracey, on the birth of their fourth child. Matthew weighing in at 91b 2oz, and was born on January 3.

Hope to see you all at Diss on May 17, for our qualifier of the BIGGA National Tournament. So for you serious golfers get some practice in, and for the rest of us it's time to locate our clubs - as they are most probably still in the same place that they were dumped in after our last meeting!

Steve Millard

Essex

Well, thousands of apologies for not writing sooner, but I have no excuses. I could say the dog ate the article, I could say my children ruined the article, I could say I mowed over the article, but alas I have no excuse. Still I have been inundated with things to write about from you members... not!

Our last event of 2004 was a Texas scramble out at Orsett Golf Club. Don and the boys put on a great day and our thanks to them, the caterers and the staff of Orsett GC for allowing us to play and have a really enjoyable day. The winners were... slight problem, I cannot find the piece of paper that Dave Beale gave me and he cannot find his copy, but who ever did win well done!

Our thanks to Rigby Taylor, who sponsored the day and put up some terrific prizes. Also thanks to all our other sponsors that gave raffle prizes: Avoncrop, Scotts, Tuckwells, Ernest Doe, Collyer Turf, Banks Amenity, Vitax, CMW, Sherriffs, Tacit, Seoul Nassau, and anybody else!

The AGM was then held after a fine dinner. A complaint was heard that how disappointing it was that when the AGM was about to start many of the members who had been there for the golf disappeared. This is one complaint which I feel I totally agree with. If you did not attend the AGM do not moan about anything, it lasted just 15 minutes!

No change in offices other than Don Clark will now be organising the golf days. Our thanks to Dave Beal's effort and all his hard work over the last couple



Jane Jones
SOUTH WEST AND WALES
Tel: 01454 270850

of years and especially for the new scoring system. On behalf of the Section I would like to thank all our officers and sponsors for all the work and support they have given the Section during 2004.

Harrogate has been and gone, I did not get there myself, but I understand it was as good as ever. You should all have received your events cards for 2005. The golf days are as follows. April 12, Thorpe Hall; June 8, Abridge Golf and Country Club, which is a National Qualifier; August 4, South East Essex Golf Club; October 6, the Bentley Golf Club; December 1, the Essex Golf Club, which will be followed by the AGM.

My, what a boring article! Will write again soon.

Geoff Smith



South West

Winter finally got its own back by spectacularly mugging all the competitors with a bitter cold wind for our early spring competition, at Weston Super Mare Golf Club, on February 23. Wasn't it Adge Cutler and the Wurzels who penned some completely loopy song about Weston Super Mare? Mindless lyrics about ice cream and donkeys? They obviously didn't bother to suss it out in February, when even the seagulls were huddled morosely outside the travel agents in the middle of town. Trust me Adge, it was so cold, your Wurlitzer would have frozen solid and most probably dropped off.

Despite the freezing conditions, there was some good golf played on some absolutely superb greens. Yours truly was "off sick" with a virus and missed the day, so apologies if some of the details are not quite up to my normal standards. 1. Jamie Acton, 43 points; 2. N. Smith, 40 points; 3. P. Gibson, 37 points.

Nearest the Pin, with prizes from Tower Chemicals, were Paul Godwin and Nobby Knight. Peter Blackwell, of Bredy Irrigation, one of our new Patronage Partners, gave a short presentation of their products, and we were grateful to Richard Whyman, National Vice Chairman, for attending. He took away our very best wishes for his coming year in office. Many thanks to Weston Super Mare GC for the courtesy of the course, and thanks to all the club staff, indoors and out, for a super day.

A big welcome to the Section to Dominic Rogers, who is joining The Wiltshire Golf Club as Course Manager on April 1. Dominic has been Course Manager at the Suffolk Golf & Country Club for the past four years and is a keen golfer. He is looking forward to attending the Section meetings, and is particularly looking forward to the Section visit to The Wiltshire on May 19 for the Greenkeeper Amateur Tournament. No pressure Dominic, we like the greens at 10 on the stimpmeter, and all the rough well mown.

At Minchinhampton the staff have been very busy putting the final touches to two new tees and a long stretch of dry stone-wall is being rebuilt. A small water feature is being completed and we are installing small concrete pads to facilitate the collection of grass clippings from around the courses. The last monthly pass with the deep spiker on the greens will be in March, we then switch to shallower tining and linear aeration, spring and autumn.

I recently did a 'PowerPoint' presentation to some of the MGC members, based on the one I did for the Regional Seminar at Cannington last year. It was very well received and certainly helped to raise the awareness of members within the club. I also received the ultimate accolade by being invited to give a similar presentation to a Deputy Course Managers training day for Crown Golf, at their headquarters at the Blue Mountain Golf Centre.

Finally - I daresay everyone has his own favourite digger driver. Ours is Digger Dave Lees, who works for Robert Cole Landscapes. He is one of those devastatingly helpful types, who can make the JCB sit up and dance. What he can't do with an excavator isn't worth bothering with.

Towards the end of March we were finishing the last tee construction on the Avening course. Dave was roaring up and down with the digger carrying bucketfuls of muck and rubble, I was watching morosely from a short distance away, wondering how I was going to explain all this latest lot of mud and ruts to the Committee, when the JCB suddenly screeched to a halt and Digger Dave vaulted from the cab. "Aha," he yelled triumphantly, "I thought so" and picked something up out of the mud.

I clumped over bad-temperedly, mentally cursing that I hadn't been paying more attention, while conjuring up images of treasure-trove and Dave swapping the JCB for a Rolls Royce. When I got to him he was staring intently at a muddy, dripping object, which looked like a small stone with tattered fabric clinging to it.

"Look at that," he smirked, "A mobile phone - some poor so-and-so must have dropped it ages ago - ha! Won't be much good now I've run it over." He was just musing about how long it must have been lying there, when suddenly and unexpectedly - it rang.

"Hello?" he said slowly and suspiciously, and then much more abruptly, "How'd-you-get-this-number?" Then the penny dropped. Slapping his pockets, and then looking desperately back into the cab, his own phone-holder was empty. The call terminated abruptly with a loud sizzling noise, and Digger Dave clambered slowly back into the cab no doubt determined to take it out on the course.

Keep the news coming in guys - see you all at Forest Hills.

Home 01285 651908. Work 01453 837355. Mobile 07768 394593.

paul.worster@tesco.net.

Paul Worster

South Coast

We have at last seen some winter weather during the last couple of weeks. The weather leading up to the cold snap has been unseasonably warm and dry which has brought its own set of problems. I know there have been several courses seeing unusual heavy levels of play because they have not been closed due to the good weather. No doubt everyone is very busy trying to finish those winter programmes before spring arrives.

We have been continuing our heathland restoration work and have had a number of trees removed as well as clearing some invasive scrub. We have followed this work up with removing debris that has covered the mineral soil and seed bank and hopefully in the next couple of years these areas will again be heather stands as they were some 40 years ago.

We should have expected bad weather in February, as it always seems to arrive when we have our Section seminar. We had a record turn out for the day, which was held at Canford Magna Golf Club, and also a reserve list. We have a ceiling of 110 delegates so for those who failed to get a place this year I suggest you apply earlier next. Thankfully the weather stayed good for us and a packed clubhouse was treated to a superb day with Jim Arthur agreeing to act as Chairman.

Ian Tomlinson gave us an excellent insight into the excellent work he is carrying out at Rungsted Golf Club, in Denmark. With a pesticide ban in force Ian, like many of the golf clubs in Denmark, are turning to traditional greenkeeping and promoting fescue and bents with excellent results. Ian was followed by Gordon Irvine, who is currently working at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club as a Consultant.

Gordon is helping restore this great golf course back to its very best and his presentation showed us some of the work currently being carried out. Again it was promoting traditional greenkeeping, although Gordon also raised some issues that are concerning him within our profession and gave us some food for thought.

Malcolm Peake finished the morning session off with a presentation relating the importance of teamwork when carrying out corrective programmes. The Chairman of the Green is a very important part of that team and Malcolm worked extremely hard with Martin Gunn, at Temple Golf Club, when he was Greens Chairman. It was suggested by Brian Pierson that Malcolm should be cloned so every golf club could have him!

Lunch followed and Canford Magna again provided an excellent buffet for us.

There was a healthy buzz around the room as people discussed the morning's presentations. Billy McMillan was first up after lunch and his presentation showed us the importance of teamwork, communicating effectively, expanding our teams to include committee members, etc as well as how to motivate effectively and fulfil those dreams.

The final speaker was National Chairman Kerran Daly, our former Section Chairman. Kerran is currently implementing a corrective programme at Gog Magog Golf Club with some staggering results after only three years. The fescues that once dominated the turf at Gog Magog are returning at a very impressive rate thanks to the hard work of the team.

Kerran ended his presentation by reciting one of his own poems, which was a tribute to Jim Arthur entitled 'The Knights of King Arthur' and the day was over.

I would like to thank Canford Magna Golf Club for their hospitality and in particular Alan and Jackie for all their help in ensuring the day ran so smoothly. We could not organise such a great seminar without the support from sponsors and I would like to thank BIGGA's Gold and Silver Key holders and Farmura and Bredy Irrigation Services. Many thanks to all of the speakers who gave superb presentations and gave the captive audience much to think and talk about. Also, many thanks to Jim Arthur for ably chairing the day. It was good to see Jim enjoying the day listening to his disciples!

I would also like to thank the GTC and the R&A for all their support and help and in particular Fiona at the GTC who worked so hard in putting together the handouts. Lastly many thanks to all who attended. Our seminar continues to be a huge success and that is largely due to great support we get from those of you who attend, long may it continue! We are already looking at next year's so if you have any particular speakers you wish to hear or a topic you want covered please contact me.

Our first golf day will be the spring tournament at Highcliffe Castle Golf Club, on Tuesday May 10. The 27 hole Stableford will be a qualifier again for the National Tournament. Divisional winners will receive free entry as well as the usual prizes from our sponsors. Cost for the day will be £19 and cheques, made payable to BIGGA South Coast, should be sent to: Chris Sturgess, 40 Kinsbourne Way, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire, SO19 6HB.

That's all for this month, if you have any news then contact me at 01202 661106, 07966 386232 or a.mccombie@ntlworld.com

Until next month

Alex McCombie

Devon and Cornwall

It's just amazing what some Course Managers will get up to in order to earn some beer money! Andy Parker, the Course Manager at the Downs Golf Course at Crediton, is in the process of increasing his greenkeeping skills by becoming a marine salvage expert. Recently a member parked his car on the upper car park at the club in his usual spot, nothing wrong with that you might think, except that he neglected to put his hand brake on, oh dear.

You know what is coming next. You have guessed it; the car slowly but surely started to creep forward, through the fence, over the 10th tee, down the bank, straight into the lake constructed about a year ago, PLASH!

Well, as Andy said, it could have been a lot worse, it could have gone across the 18th green, at least it makes a change from a golf buggy entering the water.

February commenced with north and northeast winds, snow and frost, yes, we do have snow in Devon and Cornwall and freezing temperatures, that is until we arrived at Newquay Golf Club, on February 16.

The skies were a bright blue and looking down over Fistrel Beach one could have been in the South of France. In fact it was so warm that the majority of the golfers finished their round playing in short sleeves. The day's golf was kindly sponsored by Avoncrop Amenity Products, many thanks go to Rod Feltham, the Managing Director, and to our President, John Palfrey, who as Starter set all off from the first tee and was later on hand to give out the prizes.

The day commenced with a Stableford Competition, playing off the white tees, and the results were as follows: 1. Jason Brooks, Torquay Golf Club, 39 pts, Hcp 3; 2. Andy Parker, Downs Crediton, 34 pts, Hcp 5; 3. Mike Bush, from St Mellion International, 33 pts, Hcp 13.

30 members took part in the golf and Chris Pearson, the new Head Greenkeeper at Newquay, did a course walk with 20 non-golfers in glorious sunshine. A big thank you to Chris and his team for presenting the course in such excellent condition.

After the golf and course walk we sat down to a marvellous lunch thanks to Geoff, the Head Chef, which was enjoyed by all. The lunch was followed by a talk from none other than our old friend Dave Everett, Course Manager from Lyme Regis Golf Club, explaining how he copes with losing part of his course through coastal erosion, and we think we have problems! Well done Dave, your talk was appreciated by all.

Before rounding off my report for this month I have two requests, one from our President, John, who has asked that the member that won the Avoncrop Trophy, two years ago, please could he return it or contact John.

The second request is from none other than me, with the same problem. The DOH Trophy has not been returned for some time, so I would be very grateful if you could contact me in the near future and return it.

Finally, I am endeavouring to arrange our summer meeting in June at Launceston Golf Club and will hopefully give you a date in next month's edition.

That's about it. Keep well and keep fit, spring is around the corner.
Donovan O Hunt

South Wales

After a long absence the South Wales Section is back. Hopefully all winter programmes are nearly to an end and that you are looking forward to the spring and summer. Wales has been lucky to miss the recent bad weather that has been affecting the east of Britain with snow drifts of 100ft in London, although very cold, the figures tell us that February was 20% drier than last year.

Hopefully you have already applied to be apart of the Support team for this year's Open Championship at St Andrews, to those who have, we hope that you will be successful with your application, for those who have not applied, this is an amazing opportunity to be apart of the biggest golfing event in Europe, it is strongly recommended that you apply next year. Contact BIGGA Headquarters for further details.

Congratulations go to Machynys Golf Course for taking on the Ladies Welsh Open 2005, I understand that Royal Porthcawl were happy to pass this event on to the new club and ease the pressure on the staff after a run of four years. A quick note to congratulate David Ward (MBE) and his team for their excellent work during their commitment to the Welsh Open.

Darryl Jones has left Garnant Park Golf Club to return to his home club of Glynneath. Darryl, who has worked in the industry for 14 years, has worked across Britain and has finally settled down. I would like to wish him all the best for the future at Glynneath Golf Club and to ask for the £20 he owes me, which I borrowed to him on his leaving do.

Peter, from Treflooyne, has decided to go on a career change, working with his family he has set up and taken on a Catering Franchise and I know all of us in the South Wales Section wish him all the best.

Adrian Griffiths has joined Steve Mills at The Gower Golf Club. Adrian, formally of Glynabbey Golf Course, has decided to join the Gower and give advice to Steve on how to run a Golf Course!

You should have recently received your educational calendar, from Tower Chemicals, along with the fixture/seminar list, which they kindly sponsored, our thanks go out to them for their support of the 2005 season. You will see from the list that a number of top events have been organised, every effort should be made to attend these events.

I have been approached by several A1, A2 - formally D32, D33 - assessors enquiring about a recent post by Myerscough College on the website that informs these assessors that they can be paid for doing assessments, I will need to enquire into this further and report back in due course.

Paul Discombe has been in positive mood this year with the retention of the greenkeepers attending college at an all time high level. Paul, however has concerns with the level of resource that is allocated to the up keep of the college golf course, which is used as a learning tool for the student greenkeepers. If there are any companies out there that could provide the college and the future

greenkeepers with machinery then this would be excellent PR. Contact Paul on Pdiscombe@brigend.ac.uk

I would like to congratulate Garnant Park Golf Club for recently winning the Welsh Section of the BIGGA Environmental Award, the prize was a cheque for £500.

I have just recently received an application form from the SCW for a Ryder Cup Legacy Fund, which has gone to all local authorities promoting any projects that will attract golfers or enhance facilities in readiness for the Ryder Cup. Two million in total is available, keep you eyes open for this.

We are looking to automate the letters that get sent out by developing a database of email, 70% of people have access to email, so please supply your email address to Peter at the next gathering or send it to his home address which is 31 Browns Drive, Pennard, Swansea.

April 21 is the date for the Section's Seminar, to be held at Royal Porthcawl Golf Club. Entitled 'The Balanced Approach', the schedule for the day is as follows:

9am: Registration, Coffee and Biscuits; 9.25: Introduction to Seminar by Chairman Mr Angus Macloed; 9.30: Jonathan Harmer MD Farmura - The Balanced Approach - Back to the Future?; 10.30: Ian Elliott, Marketing Manager, Omex Group - The Targeted use of Plant Nutrients to improve Health and Vigour; 11.30: George Attwood-Harris, BSc Hons - The Agronomist and the Golf Course; 12.45: Lunch Break; 13.45: Who wants to be a Millionaire?; 14.14: Guest Speaker - Jim Arthur; 15.30: Coffee and Biscuits/Close of Seminar.

Diolch
Kerry

NORTHERN IRELAND

Firstly I would like to apologise for the lack of notes over the last few months. It's now early March and the weeks are just passing so quickly. The winter work programmes are nearing completion and the spring competitions are fast approaching.

At Allen Park we will soon be bringing our new bunkers into play, which should provide both members and visitors with a completely new challenge. We have rebuilt and added about 30 new bunkers to our front nine, with a similar project on our back nine to commence in September this year.

I must add that the work was expertly completed by Trevor Simpson and his team from the contractors CJ Haffey's. Trevor is very well regarded by greenkeepers throughout the province for his skill in using his mechanical digger to shape and transform any area on your golf course. Golf Course Architect, David Jones, has expertly designed our bunker reconstruction.

Our new Section Secretary, Gary Crawford, from Royal Co Down, is currently organising a number of events for this year, which will lead up to our autumn seminar in early November.

The spring golf outing will be held in the last week of April. The venue has had to be changed at short notice, so members will be informed in early April of the exact date and location, which should be North Down. Other dates for the diary will be Fortwilliam GC on May 26; Allen Park on June 30; Clandeboye GC, which is a charity day on August 5; and the National Championship Qualifier at Royal Co Down in mid September.

So members why not introduce a colleague or greenkeeping friend to the Association and come along to our golf days this year and enjoy the genuine friendship and good humour that exists within our Section.

I would like to welcome here new members to the Section this month, Patrick O'Brien, Gerrard Hughes and David McClutcheon. Well that is all my news for this month.

Ken Henderson

Safe Use of Vehicles - The Hazards

Tutorial Ten

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992/1999 and PUWER, golf clubs have a responsibility to identify all hazards and mitigate the risks.

In general terms, the Regulations require that equipment provided for use at work is: suitable for the intended use; safe for use; maintained in a safe condition and, in certain circumstances, inspected to ensure this remains the case; used only by people who have received adequate information, instruction and training and, accompanied by suitable safety measures, e.g. protective devices, markings, warnings.

Golf clubs are never flat, or very rarely, and also require complicated manoeuvres to ensure all areas of the course are safely cut. The hazards associated with course machinery activities should be identified by the club in a formal risk assessment and should cover the use of all cutting and mobile machinery. The type of equipment to consider will be:

- Use of all cutting machinery
- Use of tractors
- Use of buggies
- Use of trailers
- Use of any other vehicles

The purpose of the risk assessment is to determine the following:

- What are the particular slopes and angle of descent/ascent?
- What are the difficult areas and risks to manoeuvre?
- Identify any steep drop offs.

- Identify any ditches or holes in the ground.
- Identify any on road areas and crossings.
- Identify any interactions with golfers or the public.

Once the risk assessment is completed there should ideally be a series of findings that identify concerns with the type of vehicle utilised or the specification of the vehicle to carry out the task. In addition, some of the findings may be that the routing of the vehicles could be improved to lower the risks.

Some of the measures to eliminate or reduce the risks will be:

- Fitting of Roll Over Protection (ROP) with seat belts.
- Using a different vehicle on steep slopes or on edges of tees.
- Fitting of edges to bridges, where the bridge is narrow for the vehicle.
- Elimination of wrong types on buggies.
- Improved routings to avoid main roads and crossings.
- Fitting of better guards.
- Use vehicles with better gearings for difficult areas.
- Protection of the vehicle from golf ball impacts.

Prepared by Haztek International Golf Club Health and Safety Advisors 0208 905 7552



Tip of the Month

Terry Buchen, CGCS, MG
Golf Agronomy International



HANDS FREE!

At the Bandon Dunes and Pacific Dunes courses, on the Oregon Coast, which are "walking-only" golf courses, a greenkeeper pulls a trolley that carries his bunker rake, where all of the bunkers are raked by hand; edging tools, for edging around the sprinkler heads and tee yardage plaques; fairway soil, seed and compost/fertiliser mixture in one of the larger buckets.

A second larger bucket is used for discarded tee and fairway divots and occasional discarded paper debris left by golfers. The smaller bucket can be used for a second soil, seed and compost/fertiliser mixture for the tees or for carrying small tools.

A roll of hose can also be placed around the handle when hand watering of the turf surfaces is required.

Do you have a tip that has helped you in your day-to-day work on the golf course? If so, why not share it with other greenkeepers. Please send any tips you feel would benefit your fellow readers to us either by post at BIGGA HOUSE or by email to gareth@bigga.co.uk.

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Okay, for the time being we may not be giving you a prize to work it out, but just think of the satisfaction of getting the problem solved!



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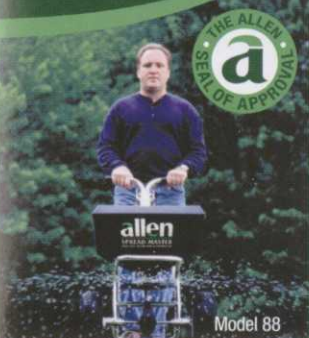
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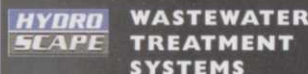
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April 2003; Oakmere Park GC; Spraying; Golf Course Security; Bernhards Delegation; Ransomes Jacobsen Profile

May 2003; Cardrona Golf & Country Club; Poa Annua; Rough Mowers; Mole Control; Rootzone; Green Construction

June 2003; Irrigation; Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarships; Fertiliser; Fairway Mowers

July 2003; Irrigation Water; Greens Mowers; Bent Grasses; Course Management; Rakes

August 2003; Aeration; Open Review; Saltex Preview; Waste Water; Toro Student of the Year

September 2003; Hanbury Manor; Irrigation; Disease; Integrated Pest Management; Communication

October 2003; Construction Machinery; Pay Recommendations; Saltex Review; Pesticide Legislation; Finance

November 2003; Temple GC; Trees; Environment Competition Results; Sandy McDivot; Drainage

December 2003; BTME & ClubHouse Preview; Downfield GC; Compact Tractors; Architecture; Bio-tech

January 2004; Ipswich GC Profile; Grass Seed; Environment Competition Awards; Utility Vehicles (sit in)

February 2004; Harrogate Review 2004; Tyneside GC; Utility Vehicles (sit on); Irrigation

March 2004; R&A Best Practice; Trentham Park GC; Drainage; Spraying

April 2004; Know your Rules; Tournament Preparation; Landmarks in Greenkeeping; Security

May 2004; Goodwood Club; Seed or Turf?; Biological Product Survey; Water Features; Recycling; BIGGA Environment Competition

June 2004; Fairy Rings; Biologicals; The Grove; Kubota Profile; Turf; Sand and Rootzone

July 2004; Royal Troon Open Preview; Mowing; Disease Analysis

August 2004; Neil Thomas Memorial Golf Day; Open review; Royal Cinque Ports; Irrigation; Mowers (2); Saltex Preview; Best Practice; Top Dressing

September 2004; Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Preview; Ravensworth Golf Club; Turf Disease; Royal Holloway College; Tractors; The Greener Approach to Greenkeeping

October 2004; STRI 75th Anniversary; Kenwick Park GC; Ecology; John Deere National Team Championship; Best Practice; Top Dressing; Saltex Review; Aeration

November 2004; Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Final; The BIGGA National Championship; Comrie GC; CV Advice; Drainage; Construction; Fences

December 2004; BTME & ClubHouse Preview; Henley GC; Grass Identification; Trees; Environmental Winner; BIGGA Delegation; Interview Advice; College Listings

January 2005; Sir Michael Bonallack; Parkstone GC; Machinery Servicing; Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship; Recycled Products; John Deere Team Championship; Tees; Negotiation Advice

February 2005; Harrogate 2005 Review; Meet the Chairman; Environmental Competition; Tyres; Coombe Hill GC

March 2005; Alwoodley GC; Difficult Areas; Drainage; Irrigation; Greens

The reduction in fungicides - a new dawn or a nail in the coffin for commercially viable golf?



Last month I talked about change and the need to embrace it. Nothing illustrates this need better than the current reduction in available fungicides. As a turf manager, one can bemoan their loss or alternatively, see this as a positive step towards sustainable swards providing economical golf played on traditional, hard wearing, dry firm surfaces based on indigenous grass species.

Having just returned from the South Coast seminar I feel very positively stimulated about the health of our profession when it can produce such high level debate to a full house. The dissertation from Ian Tomlinson about how he had converted Poa greens to fescue/bent greens after the ban on fungicides in Denmark, where he works, was inspiring and he must be congratulated on such an excellent piece of work, which he is willing to share with all.

His recipe for getting back to sustainable greens is creating much interest from the R&A, who have published their first of two articles on this in this magazine. For all Course Managers who have concerns about having Poa dominated greens with future restrictions on fungicides looming, it is well worth the read. His pictures of a Danish golf course with 100% fescue on all areas were extremely thought provoking.

It was also most encouraging to note the enthusiasm of all speakers for the current work being carried out by the R&A on their best practice website, www.bestcourseforgolf.org. The best practice now being advised encourages natural sustainable management practices based on fescue/bent swards. As an Association we very much welcome such initiatives and are happy to support the R&A in any way we can. Members can help by signing their clubs onto the site to join over 1000 clubs who have already done so. To have the leading industry body advocating sustainable environmental management of indigenous swards is of huge assistance to us as greenkeepers. We must congratulate the R&A for this positive initiative and I would recommend all to support it.

It seems to me that in this ever more increasingly commercial world there are two ways our industry can go. The one is based on single minded, autocratic leaders of the various bodies squaring up to each other like Tweedledum and Tweedledee to defend their own self interest. The other is based on leadership styles which are strong enough to allow for inclusion, cooperation and mutual support for the good of all.

This latter style is the more demanding and requires people with the conviction and determination to carry it through but it is surely the way forward. Open criticism of other bodies, whatever their perceived shortcomings, can only cause division, mistrust, suspicion and ultimately a slowing down of any progress for our own Association and the whole industry.

The GTC is a case in point. Five years ago, all interested parties were at loggerheads and it was going nowhere. Now, due to the mutual cooperation of BIGGA, the Home Unions, the R&A and with the help of the STRI we have a vibrant, thriving GTC. Under the respected leadership of David Golding, we now have secured funding, hundreds of trained assessors and have returned basic training back onto the golf

course where it belongs.

This has led to training becoming more affordable and more accessible to greenkeepers, something our own Association must strive to do more of. The GTC have even produced standardised learning materials which are solely dedicated to golf greenkeeping, totally related to the NVQ standards they are written to compliment and which extol the virtues of fescue and browntop bent as the grasses best suited for British golf courses. What a refreshing change from the mixed up confusion of previous years.

None of this would have happened without the mutual respect and cooperation between the various bodies. David Golding, Executive Director of the GTC, should be highly congratulated for achieving all of these positive outcomes. No one would claim that all is perfect at the GTC, nor at BIGGA for that matter, but we will only go forward and improve matters if we continue to support all interested parties in any way we can. We fully intend to do so.

As part of our inclusive philosophy, I recently attended the conference of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland at Limerick. Their hospitality was much appreciated and I am hopeful that we shall cooperate further to the benefit of both Associations. Our own Peter Wisbey gave two very interesting talks and Frank Ainsworth, a canny Scot working in Ireland, showed once again how fescue dominated greens can be achieved by application of the correct agronomic principles.

Frank had no worries about the removal of fungicides. On a parkland situation with lots of trees and with eight year old USGA specification greens, he has no need for them. It does beg the question about the future of our profession.

The restrictions on fungicides can be seen as an infringement of our civil liberties and freedom to choose but, much the same as 'seat belts' and 'alcohol limits', it would appear that sometimes restrictions need to be imposed upon us for the good of the nation and our own long term health.

If we do not want imposed restrictions and regulations then maybe we need to act a little more responsibly. As Robert Zimmerman ironically puts it:

'To live outside of the law you have to be honest'
Being honest, especially with oneself, is rarely a bad thing.

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