

# Letters

## ALAN HOLMES

I am sorry to have to write to you to inform you of the sad passing of Alan Holmes, Course Manager at Blairgowrie golf course.

I first met Alan at Gleneagles many years ago when British Rail owned it he came to work with us on the top kings as we called it and his experience helped the younger guys to learn from him.

In those days we still got our free passes on British Rail and I had the pleasure of spending a few weekends in Alan's beloved lake district with him and his family.

Alan stayed at Gleneagles for a few years then he returned to the Lake District to work there again.

Alan then returned to Gleneagles when it was privatised and worked there for a few years and his mum and dad followed him and lived in Auchterarder. He then went on to be the Course Manager at Blairgowrie golf course.

Alan touched a lot of peoples lives in his time in Scotland and beyond as he had lots of friends in the greenkeeping fraternity here and abroad and he will be sorely missed as all you had to do was pick up the phone and ask for any help and if Alan could help he would.

As an ex-colleague and friend Alan will be a sad loss to us all, including his staff at Blairgowrie and all his friends and family.

I am sure we all would like to send our condolences to Alan's partner, Ann, and her family.

*James McCormack  
Head Greenkeeper  
Kirriemuir GC*

## REFLECTING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

I was interested to read David Golding's article in the July issue of Greenkeeper International, Reflecting Back and Looking Forward.

David is far too modest of his own achievements in his article, which have been monumental over the years, as many older greenkeepers will vouch for. I remember well those early years of BGGGA and EIGGA, where David was heading a lot of the early important work, to form a better association.

We all know, or should do, how important education is to the association, where David and GTC is pushing as hard as ever for results. I last saw David at Woodhall Spa at a seminar, still as enthusiastic as ever, Greenkeeping and the Association owe David Golding a great deal - not that he would admit to it.

*Yours sincerely  
John Nudds  
Ex-Course Manager (retired)  
Gerrards Cross GC 1972/99*

## A SELECTIVE DISTURBANCE THEORY

The STRI backed disturbance theory is ok as far as it goes. However, it seems to imply that all that's disturbing the fine grasses is greenkeeper activity and avoids the obvious fact that pitch marks and foot traffic cause massive disturbance. I also note sadly that the STRI are still holding to the dangerous idea that courses should never shut. They expect us as course managers to think before we act, but are encouraging the golfing public to continue to take their courses for granted.

Sustainable golf implies thinking about the consequences of our actions on the environment. Many golfers are more concerned about their tee times than the effect that playing golf in extreme conditions will have. To make a sweeping statement that courses should never shut regardless of soil type or weather conditions appears to be a decision based on convenience and finance rather than on botany or environmental concerns and justifies golfers' carelessness.

If the actions of greenkeepers and golfers drove the fine grasses off the greens it is pure folly to allow the golfer to believe that we can return to the STRI's rosy conditions of the past by changing greenkeeping habits alone. How many golfers give themselves the blame for capped or pitchmark riddled greens and muddy worn paths? A robust disturbance theory would explain the damage golfers cause by overplaying courses especially in extreme conditions. Often the actions of golfers force us to disturb the greens purely to fix the damage they cause. Yes, courses are designed for golf, just as roads are designed for traffic however in both cases the good driver is the one who knows the impact of the weather and responds accordingly. Many a time these past winters I've been in checking the course when the police advice was not to drive unless absolutely necessary. How I wished the STRI would assist us by giving the same advice to golfers!

*Here's hoping  
David Woodbyrne  
Southernness Golf Club*

## ELSPETH COUTTS

Dear Sirs,

Cut backs at Scottish Golf Union means that the Scottish Golf Environment Group can no longer offer Golf Clubs the services of Elspeth Coutts.

Over the years Elspeth has helped Golf Clubs throughout Scotland make their courses more environmentally friendly to wildlife etc and this has become an essential part of greenkeeping.

The question is: Why can't funding continue? – if every golfer in Scotland paid 10p per annum this service could continue. Elspeth leaves the Environment Group on 28th September and will be much missed all over the country not least by us at Ratho Park.

*Tom Murray*