

# The Back Nine

A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

Stuart Yarwood MG describes how he came to create Toms Locker, which he is presenting as the new digital bookcase for the turf and amenity sector and is making its debut at BTME 2014

**It all started two years ago in my office and brew room at Lymm Golf Club. Moving from our old static caravan to new facilities didn't take long. Toasters, kettles and mugs we bought new, but paperwork, archives and records we boxed up and transferred across.**

While unpacking and organising catalogues and trade sales literature I realised most were out of date or redundant.

That was the light bulb moment!

What if every catalogue in our industry was in one place?

Stupid idea, I thought, never work, impossible!

Everyone is trying to save pennies, and more quotes are needed to satisfy the demand for budgetary transparency. I needed a personal assistant but on my budget, I couldn't see that happening.

Then my old grey matter started smoking. If all the catalogues in our trade, with technical sales contact numbers, were in one place, it would be easy to find information.

Maybe I could get quotes from guys I deal with already, without making several calls about the same bottle of Rescue or Primo. It would become our very own greenkeeping Google.

But creating it was a mammoth task. We had to design a system, not just a website.

Then we had to speak to every relevant company and dealer in the UK and ask them if they wanted to put all their catalogues in one big website. This is the hard bit – but folk seemed to get it.

So with every dealer and manufacturer in the 'Locker', finding the right product for your problem is easy.

Type 'fusarium' and it will identify every product available to treat the disease, and give details of your nearest sales agents.

With one email, you can contact them all for quotes. Toms Locker never wants to sell you anything. It's a free to use introduction site pointing you towards people who can help in one giant digital bookcase.

I'm happy to research online but prefer to deal with the great people in the trade who I have relationships with – guys who can walk my course with me, share successes and sorrows and provide great technical support.

Toms Locker needs to maintain and encourage that.

We also need to protect the guys some deem a necessary evil, those who walk half a mile onto our courses to offer us the latest deals (and steal our biscuits). We couldn't do our jobs without them and their companies.

It's important they are represented properly in the Locker, and their reputations maintained.

So, the brief was set, the concept researched and the feedback good. It was at this point I freaked out - this was my pension and my children's (small) inheritance potentially up in smoke.

I've spent the last 20 years talking about grass, soils and golf; I knew nothing about the business world.

But then a metaphorical hand guided me down the right path. Paula, my wife, took my crazy idea and made it professional.

She wrote business plans, formed the company and became my partner in Tom's Locker. If it wasn't for her, Toms Locker would still just be an idea in a crazy greenkeeper's head.



“What if every catalogue in our industry was in one place?”

## about the author



Stuart Yarwood is a Master Greenkeeper and Course Manager at Lymm Golf Club, and a founder member of the 'Gingerbread Men' who aim to raise the profile of sustainable golf course management. As well as exhibiting at BTME he will be presenting a seminar on how it can benefit turf professionals during the Continue to Learn education programme.

But we still had to fund and build the site, and we knew it was vital to be totally independent, so, after remortgaging our house, we're testing, making sure that everything works in time for launch in November.

We're proud to be supporting BTME 2014 where we'll be happy to meet and take people inside the Locker.

We hope you'll like using Toms Locker, and it becomes part of your team – your extra member of staff that helps you make time for the turf you love.

So why call it Toms Locker?

Well, we all have a locker in our lives, and have you ever met a bad Tom?

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International