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DECEMBER 1991

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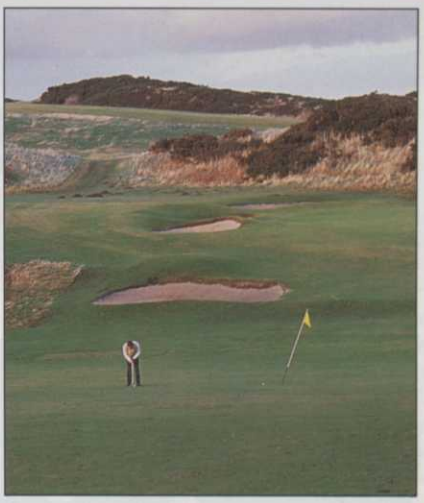
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Walter Woods, left, Lord Elgin, Lord Lieutenant for Fife and George Malcolm. Story on Page 5



On course for better greenkeeping

Join us

If you're reading this magazine and you've a vested interest in greenkeeping – but you're not a member of BIGGA, now's the time to join. Details are listed on this page and membership application cards are inserted into the magazine, opposite

The Board of Management has approved the subscriptions for 1992 as indicated below:

	New members in 1992	Current members if paying before 31st January 1992
Course Manager/ Head Greenkeeper	£50.00	£45.00
Deputy Course Manager/ Deputy Head Greenkeeper	£45.00	£40.00
First Assistant/ Assistant Greenkeeper	£39.00	£36.00
20 years of age or under	£26.00	£23.00
International – all greenkeeping staff	£48.00	
Associate/Company (including one year's subscription to Greenkeeper International)	£45.00	
Associate/Company without magazine	£20.00	
Corporate	£525.00	

Corporate members will receive an annual plaque in recognition of their support of BIGGA and the greenkeeping profession.

NB. The First Assistant is a post designed to recognise a third-in-charge where appropriate to the size of the club. In cases where the First Assistant is the recognised Deputy, the Deputy Course Manager/Deputy Head Greenkeeper subscription rate should apply.

1991 members will be invoiced for subscriptions due prior to 1st January 1992. If you have not received your renewal notice by the end of December, please contact Headquarters.

Those enrolling in the Associate/Company membership category will be encouraged to play a full part in the Association's affairs. Associate members will be those having a close

interest in greenkeeping without being specifically employed as greenkeepers. As such this category of membership will be of interest to Chairmen of Green Committees, Club Secretaries, Golf Course Architects and Constructors and many others with a close affinity to greenkeeping. Company membership is available on an individual or corporate basis and will be of interest to those employed within the fine turf industries.

Individual membership cards will be issued and will entitle the member to participate in all national, regional and section events authorised by the Association.

Holders of Associate and Company membership cards are not entitled to use their cards to seek courtesy of the golf course.

Delegate fees at both the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition and National Education Conference, as well as at Regional seminars, will be offered to Associate and Company members at a discounted rate. Whilst many members may wish to identify with a particular local section or region, members are able to participate nationally if they so wish. They will be allocated to the section covering the geographical area in which they reside.

All Associate/Company members (with the exception of those Associate members in the £20 category) will receive each month a copy of Greenkeeper International, the Association's official publication and essential reading for those involved with or interested in greenkeeping.

A special Corporate rate is available for those companies wishing to enrol an unlimited number of their staff as members of the Association and individual membership cards will be issued. In recognition of their support of the greenkeeping profession, BIGGA will be presenting an annual plaque.

IMPORTANT – All greenkeeper members will be required to obtain a passport size photograph to validate their 1992 membership cards. The design of the new card allows for the photograph to be sealed, thereby giving proof of identity. BIGGA's Board of Management considers this innovation to be essential in preventing any possible misuse of membership cards particularly in relation to seeking courtesy of the golf course. Photographs are to be affixed by members personally on receipt of their membership card and should not be sent to Headquarters office.



An appreciation of what is not always appreciated

Don't drive into trouble

■ **The ever vigilant** Jon Allbutt, never one to miss loopholes in the law or keep silent about inconsistencies in their application, has been looking into the tangled web of The Law as it applies to driving greenkeeping machinery upon the highway. At first sight it appears you can drive straight across a highway without taxation or insurance cover (though this seems foolhardy, as an accident might occur) but should you need to turn left or right – even for a few yards – a different ruling comes into play. Jon is discussing the matter with New Scotland Yard and will be reporting via Greenkeeper International. In the meantime, if you are in any doubt regarding legality, you are advised to contact your local police station.

■ **Vandalism on the nation's courses** has reached such frightening proportions that plans are afoot to cover the subject in depth during 1992. However, one isolated piece of information received is too good (or too bad) to let pass without immediate comment. Last spring, to 'celebrate' the privatisation of a municipal course in the Midlands, a number of the greens were sprayed by 'persons unknown' with a total herbicide, necessitating removal of the poisoned soil and subsequent returfing. Such senseless vandalism of excellent bent/fescue greens was bad enough but worse was to follow.

The work was put out to tender and an inexperienced firm put in the lowest bid. Instead of working largely by hand, earth moving equipment was brought in – several machines on a green at one time – creating severe compaction and soil destructuring. Despite a sensible specification, which included raking and heeling to ensure correct establishment of a firm but unconsolidated turf bed, the good quality turf was laid direct on to a rotavated and rolled turf bed, with inevitable subsequent local subsidence. One report told of a dog walking over one of the returfed greens and sinking to its belly! Here was a classic case of the contractor failing to understand the importance of maintaining soil structure or taking note of the standard specification: 'no wheeled or tracked vehicles shall be permitted on the area of the green and immediate surround once the basal formation has been constructed'. An avoidable tragedy, but little doubt remains as to which was the greater vandalism!



■ It is appropriate that our final front cover for 1991 should acknowledge the recognition shown to Walter Woods, on the occasion of his British Empire Medal presentation at St Andrews.

A prime motivator in the formation of BIGGA and its first ever chairman, Walter was the man to whom the Association so often turned in those formative years. Walter's key role in raising greenkeeping standards is readily acknowledged and we add our congratulations to his richly deserved award.

• **Picture shows** Walter sharing his glory with two year old granddaughter, Leah.

■ **As a Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper** member of BIGGA, you will recently have received a survey for completion and return to HQ. When analysis of returned surveys is completed, vital information will be available of lasting benefit to you, your golf club and the industry. If you have not already done so, please take time to complete the survey and return without delay.

Each greenkeeper completing the survey will receive a synopsis of the report; a similar survey conducted in the USA positively revolutionised the industry in that country.

■ **Reports from the recent** International Golf Trade Exhibition suggest that Tony Jacklin, yet one more professional golfer who has formed his own golf course design company, Golfscape, is in serious discussion with the PGA, who are considering leaving their base at The Belfry and purchasing Deer Park in Stoneleigh. If the deal reaches fruition the PGA would not only have new national headquarters but three 18 hole golf courses. One would be a 'championship' course designed by Jacklin, the idea being that it could host the Ryder Cup in 2001!

■ **Absolute clarity** in reporting is something which Greenkeeper International seeks always to achieve. My attention has been brought to a Flying Divot comment in October which was perhaps not entirely clear, that of the edict issued concerning Open Championship courses and of the R&A's insistence that Championship Clubs follow the advice of their appointed agronomists to the letter. This was, of course, not directed specifically at Royal Birkdale and certainly not at the Club's head greenkeeper, Tom O'Brien, but at all seven Clubs on the Championship roster. To quote our Executive Director, Neil Thomas, "the problems of this particular Championship course (Royal Birkdale) have been well known and documented over a number of years. As such, criticism of the present head greenkeeper is not justified – he worked within established guide-lines in presenting the course for The Open, but in terms of preparing the greens he was clearly not working from an ideal base". Greenkeeper International offers an unqualified apology to Tom O'Brien for any misunderstanding in the interpretation of this comment that may have been caused.

The BIGGA recommended minimum salary/wages scale

The Association has updated its recommended minimum salary/wages scale, although actual figures remain the subject of negotiation between the Golf Club and Greenkeeping staff. The quoted rates apply from 1st January 1992.

	18 Holes	27 Holes	36 Holes
Course Manager/ Head Greenkeeper	£17,440 pa	£19,020 pa	£21,290 pa
Deputy Course Manager/ Deputy Head Greenkeeper	£12,590 pa	£13,715 pa	£15,345 pa
First Assistant	£209.30 pw	£209.30 pw	£209.30 pw
Assistant Greenkeeper	£196.70 pw	£196.70 pw	£196.70 pw
Apprentice Greenkeeper (All Courses)	Age 16/17 – £98.35 pw; Age 18 – £122.95 pw; Age 19 – £147.55 pw; Age 20 – £172.15 pw; Age 21+ – £196.70 pw.		

NB: Where appropriate these rates should be increased to reflect Regional variations up to a maximum of 24% in the South East region.

The First Assistant is a post designed to recognise a third-in-charge where appropriate to the size of the Club. In cases where the First Assistant is the recognised Deputy,

the appropriate Deputy Course Manager/Deputy Head Greenkeeper salary scale should apply.

NB: Staff in possession of recognised qualifications should have this reflected in an addition to basic salary.

■ **Basic conditions of employment should include:**

1. Where accommodation is provided by the Club, it should be rent free with heating/lighting costs borne by the Club. The Club should compensate for Poll Tax liability.
2. Where accommodation is not provided by the Club, a suitable remuneration in addition to the above salary should be paid.
3. 40 hour week.
4. Retirement Pension Scheme.
5. Telephone costs on Club business.
6. Mileage allowance.
7. Time off to attend lectures, demonstrations, BIGGA functions and tournaments.
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GREENKEEPER

International

Editorial Comment

'Way Forward' hits a major obstacle

This month's issue was to have included a light-hearted seasonal chiding addressed at green committee men, under the title 'twenty things for your green committee to consider in 1992'. Whilst I was indeed feeling in a sufficiently frivolous mood at the beginning of November to make the selection from the dozens of ideas that had filtered through during the year, my heart sank rapidly on learning (from a show of hands) at the excellent seminar at Cannington College that only a handful of the 120 delegates gathered had ever heard of the discussion document 'The Way Forward', and that only three had actually read it! What made Eric Shiel, who posed the question, and me even more incensed was the suggestion offered by one delegate that this was easily explained. The document, he opined, being critical in its comment of archaic committee practices, especially that of lack of continuity, had been effectively suppressed by Club secretaries and green chairmen.

To quote directly from the R&A document: 'An interest in gardening or farming is deemed sufficient expertise to enable members to dabble in the running of the course... lack of continuity is an inherent problem, though in many Clubs there is often one brave soul who will battle on as chairman/convener until he tires of the yearly abuse thrown in his direction from impatient golfers. His thankless task includes attempting to protect his green staff from the more belligerent members, and fighting in general committee for sufficient funds with which to manage the course. All in all, it cannot be said that the mechanisms of general or green committees are even remotely satisfactory as a way of running a golf course. Whatever else may be wrong with the many forces impinging on course management, there is no doubt that the committee structure (and the fact that those taking bad decisions will not even be faced with their consequences in the longer term,) represents a most serious obstacle to meaningful progress. Perhaps the most serious'.

With a liking for figures, I calculated there were about 100 greenkeepers at Cannington and in taking the insignificant figure of those who were aware of 'The Way Forward' - generously, say 5% - and computing this nationally, the likelihood is that less than 200 greenkeepers from our membership of 4,000-plus have read the document. Taken a step further, from that 200 perhaps less than half are head greenkeepers, this from a total of over 2,000 British Golf Clubs!

Where does all this lead, you may ask? Instead of listing 20 considerations, I put it to Club secretaries, all save the few that are part of a more enlightened structure, ie. with a green committee consisting only of chairman, head green-



keeper and secretary, and having clearly defined long term policy documents on course management, (Letchworth and Wishaw spring to mind as examples), to make Xerox copies of all 33 pages of 'The Way Forward' available to both their head greenkeeper and to all incumbents, both long standing and newly elected, who serve on committee. Further, I urge all Clubs to discuss and continuously act upon the implications of the document, and the national golfing media to broadcast the essentials which golfers really need to know in relation to golf course management. Acting upon the recommendations of 'The Way Forward', they will discover true salvation for Club, golf course and greenkeeper.

I am thankful to have this editorial column as a 'soapbox', for not only does it give me the opportunity to sound off on such matters as 'The Way Forward', but also to thank those who have made 1991 an exciting and eventful year in publishing. In particular my gratitude to the talented contributors, the BIGGA section reporters for splendid input to Around The Green, the staff at Aldwark Manor for valuable support; especially when I seem to have lost my way with the word-hungry computer; and most of all to the rank and file BIGGA members, dedicated folks all! May Christmas bring great joy to you all and the new year herald peace and prosperity throughout your world.

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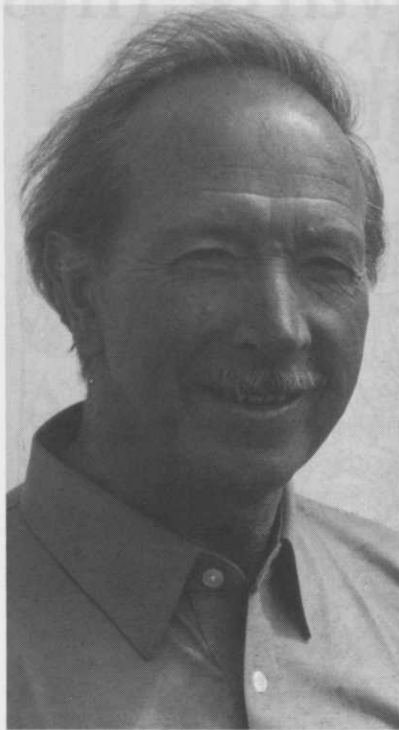
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ELLIOTT SMALL pays tribute to **CECIL GEORGE**, 'a man o' many pairts' who's now retiring



BIGGA's valuable ambassador

As we say in Scotland, Cecil George is 'a man o' many pairts': greenkeeper; educator; committee member; secretary; chairman; president; editor; poet and sometime singer of 'auld Scottish songs'.

Cecil began his greenkeeping career in 1943 at Whitecraigs Golf Club, a war intervening and taking him into the Parachute Regiment (if you can get him to relate stories of that time, don't miss them, they're as good as some of his old greenkeeper memoirs) before returning him to Whitecraigs, from which he moved to Fereneze and Cathcart Castle. Finally settling at Lenzie Golf Club, Cecil has remained true and loyal to the Club and only after 37 happy years is he hanging up his hat. Always renowned for preparing his course in first class order, many young greenkeepers received their own training at his capable hands.

Members of BIGGA will know Cecil from his annual participation at The Open Championship and for his many other Association activities, though what they will not know is the part he played in ensuring that greenkeepers were respected and recognised as professionals – and his gigantic contribution to the greenkeeper training cause. Greenkeeper training was and still is Cecil's passion, though in his early days there was no specific formal training for his craft and he was to attend night school at Glasgow Horticultural College for three years in order to gain his Certificate in Horticulture.

In the 1960s he was instrumental in setting up the first ever training courses for apprentice greenkeepers – at Glasgow's Woodburn House – and apart from his valuable initial impetus he also aided in the establishment of the specific

courses and with Bob Moffat both taught and examined the pupils.

Throughout his long membership of SGCA, SIGGA and now BIGGA, his enthusiasm for education has never waned. First education convenor for the West section, then education convenor for SIGGA and now Scottish Region Chairman of The Liaison Committee with the five Scottish colleges – which he was instrumental in forming, Cecil has also been the Scottish representative on the Greenkeeper Training Committee since 1986.

His contribution as speaker and chairman at our many seminars and conferences has extended over many decades, with one of his highlights being that of representing Scotland at the first European Greenkeepers Conference in Switzerland in 1972.

However, it is not only in the field of education that Cecil has made his mark, for during his long career his service to the West section as member, secretary and chairman is second to none. As a list of achievements, consider the following: SIGGA President 1960 and 1972, Vice President 1974, Editor of Turfcraft (the SIGGA Publication) 1974. Captain of Scottish Team – 1st Ransomes International 1973 (bringing the team to victory), and to mark his retirement he was invited to be Scottish Captain at Fulford in 1991. When BIGGA was first formed, Cecil was an obvious choice to represent Scotland as one of our representatives on the Board of Management.

As I began, Cecil is the essential 'man o' many pairts', though apart from this catalogue of dedication and selfless hard work, he is one who always has time to enjoy himself and can be relied upon to tell a good tale or sing a good song when the business of the day is finished.

On December 13th the Lenzie Golf Club are staging a dinner in honour of Cecil's years of service to the Club, a measure of the esteem in which he is held indicated by the event being a total sell-out! He may be retiring from greenkeeping but he is as keen as ever to continue the good work begun so many years ago and will continue to be BIGGA's most valuable ambassador.

To Cecil George, may you enjoy a long and happy retirement and may your dear wife Margaret enjoy sharing in your new found freedom and enjoy seeing a little more of you! All members of BIGGA echo our good wishes, none more than those college trained greenkeepers, who have every reason to thank you for their success.

● Elliott R Small is Scottish Region Administrator.

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THE WORM KEEPS

TURNING

Who would have thought that the demise of chlordane would have caused so many problems for the greenkeeper?

Chlordane's only crime was to be a persistent organochlorine compound and as such was part of MAFF determination to phase out such substances. No evidence was presented that it was more harmful than was already known and, when handled according to directions, it gave excellent control of worms in fine turf. Its persistence was such that operator contact was limited to once per year and on heavy soils this could be extended to a span of once every three years. In COSHH terms this would have made chlordane the preferred substance as 'an engineering control'.

Not to worry, they said, now we have Carbaryl in a flowable formulation, which gives good control and is not so persistent in the soil. Carbaryl has the same broad classification as chlordane (both are listed 'Harmful'), but to give the equivalent degree of control as chlordane it needs annual applications and on some soils more than one application was needed. This means a higher degree of exposure to an organo-phosphorus compound for which there is an HSE Guidance Note MS17 - 'Biological Monitoring of Workers Exposed to Organo-phosphorus Compounds'.

The flowable formulations worked well enough providing they were applied in the right conditions and at the right water volume - eg. a minimum of 1,000 litres per hectare, (more than 100 gallons per acre in old money!). We were resigned to the fact that this was to become the standard treatment for worms: after all, this is in line with the current thinking on changing to the use of less persistent substances in general.

The new products have hardly touched the shelves of our stores when we learn that the supply of flowable formulations are to cease due to 'supply difficulties' from the EC manufacturer, who it seems has been recently acquired by Rhone Poulenc. And... surprise, surprise, a new wormkiller product is launched at IOG by Rhone Poulenc! Not a flowable formulation but a wettable powder, taking us back more than 20 years to the days of handling those nasty, awkward materials. Why, you may ask, has this been allowed to happen? The new formulation is MAFF Approved, so presumably all those distinguished (and expensive) people gave careful consideration to the safety of the operator when they granted the Approval. But wait - that is not all - for my bleary eyes read that the new powder formulation is "semi-persistent" for up to two months! Not quite the claims made for the flowable formulation. It now seems that we will have to apply this product, now the only available 'effective' wormkiller on the market, at least twice a year.

The operator must now handle a product that is classified as 'Harmful If Swallowed', in dusty powder formulation, pre-mixing it in a bucket before putting it in the spray tank. Then there are the problems of cleaning the scales (yes - you must go out and buy some scales!) and the mixing vessel, and then worry about effective mixing in the tank.

Is this the best that can be done in this age of enlightenment and concern about health and safety at work? Is the greenkeeper the butt end of some marketing joke by the manufacturers and an off-day by some Ministry scientist?

Not good enough, say I. Even a child can see that using the new wettable powder formulation is not just a

regressive step, it is a mighty plunge backwards to the bad old days.

In COSHH terms, if we were given a free choice, the powder formulation would be discarded in favour of the liquid; but we must not look back. Is this progress?

Jon Allbutt

No-one can accuse Greenkeeper International of blindly taking sides, although we are certainly not above taking a firm stand on issues that concern the well-being of the greenkeeper or his golf course. Thus we invited the manufacturers mentioned in Jon Allbutt's article, Rhone Poulenc, to offer their side of the equation. Here is their reply:

We believe there are a number of factual errors in the material. Our response, however, will be restricted to the main ones relating to our products.

It was surprising for us to read that 'Twister' is the sole worm control product available. This is totally incorrect, as Rhone-Poulenc market three products for worm control in turf.

'Castaway Plus', the original formulation of which was launched as far back as 1984, is as readily available today as it has been for some years. It is a flowable formulation and is held in high esteem by a large number of turf care professionals, offering as it does long term control of worms and leatherjackets.

Rhone-Poulenc launched 'Twister' as a wettable powder to increase the available choice of products. To help minimise handling a specially designed measuring beaker is included with each box of the product. Rhone-Poulenc think it is important that they give turf care professionals the option of being able to use a contact acting product and 'Twister's' contact action gives quick control of problem worms on playing surfaces ranging from sports fields to greens.

To round off this response, Rhone-Poulenc would like to point out that a third worm control product was launched at the IOG exhibition in September. 'CDA Castaway Plus', a flowable product, gives worm control at an application rate of 10 litres per hectare and when applied with a Lancelot CDA lance fitted with the new Rhone-Poulenc bleed valve, requires no mixing, is used straight from the bottle, and can be applied directly to the problem area. It reduces handling, saves time and is a major advance in terms of novel application technique.

In conclusion, Rhone-Poulenc feel it is important that greenkeepers are provided with a wide range of products in order that they may select the best application for their situation.

**Austin Davies, Product Manager,
Rhone Poulenc**

■ As the British greenkeeper struggles to keep down the nuisance of the earthworm, and to illustrate the difference in greenkeeping methods and principles between the USA and the UK, an article in the most recent issue of the USGA Green Section Record, written by a Professor of Entomology in Kentucky, offers an alternative viewpoint by extolling the virtues of the earthworm and suggesting they should be encouraged, as they reduce thatch. Aeration and sensible management to ensure thatch-free turf is not mentioned.

Now we read (Daily Telegraph, November 13th) that 1.5 million earthworms are to be imported at a cost of £70,000 from Holland (no-one it seems was prepared to harvest worms in Britain, though in Holland there appears to be a thriving night-time worm catching industry) to improve the top soil over what was once a rubbish tip, on the Stockley Park golf course adjacent to Heathrow Airport designed by Robert Trent Jones.

Within three years the worms are expected to have multiplied 30-fold and when the course is handed over to Hillingdon council for public use in 1993, the worms will be turning thick and fast. Then, no doubt, the greenkeeper will find the worms and their wretched casts a damned nuisance and find the task of elimination made doubly difficult by the aforementioned restrictions on chlordane.



NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

27-29 March 1992

The Royal Agricultural College
 Cirencester

For the fourth consecutive year, BIGGA's National Education Conference next spring will feature a programme of international speakers. The event is to be sponsored, once again, by **Lindum Turf and Associates**. The Conference programme will be available at the BTME from either the BIGGA or Lindum Turf stands.

Some of the speakers and their topics are:

Tom Cook, Associate Professor, Dept of Horticulture, Oregon State University: Maintaining Pure Bentgrass Greens: Is it possible in cool temperate climates?

Neil Baldwin, STRI: Green Pest and Disease Control

Derek Green, Course Manager, Royal Liverpool Golf Club: Dry Patch

Tor Senstadt, Secretary, Norwegian Greenkeepers Association: Greenkeeping in Norway

Patrick O'Brien, South Eastern Director, USGA Green Section: Bentgrass Management in the South Eastern USA

Jon Allbutt: Using Chemicals on the Golf Course and Complying with the Law

William R Roberts, President, Golf Course Superintendents Association of America: The Development of Education Programmes for the Greenkeeping Profession

Carol Borthwick, Senior Lecturer in Greenkeeping, Elmwood College: Where do we go from Here?

Laurence Pithie, Master Greenkeeper, Course Manager, Minchinhampton Golf Club: Golf Course Development – a Greenkeeper's Viewpoint

Barry Cooper: Golf Course Drainage Consultant: Golf Course Drainage – Before and After Construction

Jonathan Gaunt, Golf Course Architect: Project Management – How does it compare to normal Golf Course Construction Contracts?

Jim Arthur, Golf Course Agronomist: Sound Traditional Greenkeeping Practices versus Gimmicks

Gordon Jaaback, Agronomist, Conservation and Land Development Specialist: Limitations in Rootzone Design

Bernard Findlay, Course Manager, Portstewart Golf Club: Can you Build a Seaside Links or is that Nature's Job?

**The programme including application form will be available soon from BIGGA Headquarters
Telephone 03473 581/2 • Fax 03473 8864**

■ Solving the height of confusion

■ I feel I must respond to the Autumn Turf Maintenance programme employed at Ham Manor Golf Club (October), and would make three points:

1) **Height of cut.** Mr George Barr comments that he "raises the height of cut from 1/8" to 3/16" on his greens gradually over a period of three weeks". I presume from this that he regularly cuts at 1/8" during the summer. This would seem to contradict Mr Jim Arthur's article on Page 9, where the regular cutting of greens at 1/8" is thought harmful to turf. It is also contrary to STRI opinion and that of many experienced greenkeepers, who have seen the results of such treatment. Does Mr Barr advocate regular (more than a few days) cutting at 1/8", and if so, does he not agree that there could be serious long-term problems?

2) **Cutting height of adjustment.** Might it not be time to change to the metric scale, specifically millimetres? After all, we deal with hectares, metres, kilos and litres as a matter of course and I believe much confusion could be eliminated by adopting a millimetre scale dealing in whole numbers and not fractions. The metric scale appears to be eminently more practical and understandable and therefore less prone to error.

Also, is it not time for a more accurate method of measuring height of cut, especially below 6mm (1/4")? Even a small error can adversely affect the accuracy on the putting surface, exacerbated by the fact that cylinder mowers (and units) are set up in the sheds, where both front and back rollers and the height of cut setter are all rigid and unyielding, whereas the surface they relate to is anything but!

3) **Hollow tining.** Mr Barr states that he not only hollow tines in eight hours, but clears as well. This claim must be totally unrealistic unless his greens are only 100m² and all close to his sheds. He states that only one Ryan GA30 is used at 50mm (2") centres. My Club owns an Iseki Coremaster which we attach to a John Deere 885 compact tractor, both being less than three years old and in good working order. The speed needed to core at 50mm centres is so slow that our digital speedometer is incapable of consistently giving a read-out. The time taken to core our greens (average 500m²) at 50mm centres is approx. 50/60 minutes or more per green. If one adds non-coring time, such as essential maintenance on corer and tractor, breaks for the operator, travel to and from each green, plus stops for golfing play (to eliminate noise, if nothing else), the job takes two and a half days – this just for coring! Remember also that the job is done in October, when daylight hours are short and subsequently restricting any overtime that could be worked to finish the job. Mr Barr's statement could give the wrong impression to inexperienced greenkeepers, Club members and green committees.

If agreement on basic course maintenance cannot be reached, how can we achieve consistently high standards nationwide?

PAUL BERTINSHAW Head Greenkeeper, Royal Norwich Golf Club, Norfolk

■ After reading the October issue there are several points that require further discussion. Jim Arthur's article, "The Quick and the Dead", was full of useful and sensible ideas concerning the 'headless chicken' quest for speed. Common sense tells us that higher cuts are healthier cuts, whilst shaving to 1/8" leads to a thinning sward and increased weed and poa invasion. This is especially so when accompanied by the increased wear and traffic of 1,000 playing members, as at my Club. Add this to the dry summers and water shortages of recent years and we have a situation where our priorities have to be those of maintaining 100% grass cover. I am forever telling our members that it is better to have grass you can work with than no grass at all.

If one needs to increase putting speeds for that big event, it is surely better to top dress monthly, followed by verti-cutting, grooming and double cutting the day prior to the event. This would be preferable to keeping these speeds for long periods. The average 10-28 handicapper cannot cope with stimpmeter readings of ten feet anyway, never mind the lady members.

Yet further in the magazine we read of George Barr and his successful management techniques, including cutting at 1/8th for the whole season – what is the young greenkeeper to believe? Surely the magazine should be looking for some kind of continuity in its articles.

M JONES Head Greenkeeper, Ely City Golf Course Ltd. Cambridge

We asked George Barr for further comments, which are printed below:

Both Mr Bertinshaw and Mr Jones seek uniformity of advice, or perhaps more accurately, advice with which they can personally agree. At the same time, surely they must concede that the practice of greenkeeping is by no means an exact science. It is the very fact that different management practices are followed – at different locations on different swards and in different circumstances – that makes greenkeeping such a fascinating and infinite subject. In replying to the specific comments, it is my considered opinion that height of cut should be the decision of the head greenkeeper alone – the one who is in control of the course – and not based on rules written in slabs of stone. Granted there are general rules to observe, but there will always be those who break new barriers, repeatedly obtain successful results and feel no pain. Such actions are based on personal experience and are called free choice. The greenkeeper is dealing with a multi-faceted living area and should alone be the arbiter, based on the many factors (soil, grass species, growth patterns, root qualities etc.) he is capable of evaluating. I can state categorically that the management programme outlined works remarkably and consistently well at Ham Manor.