



Death or glory
- The par three,
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on the West
Course

virgin site to the opening day

doing anywhere near enough research and in particular without having a feasibility study produced. Maybe in their early euphoria they are a little too keen on seeing the golf course built, but they must expect that when an application is brought before a District Council it will not reach 'committee' for at least 12 weeks, and then only if all the councillors have had an opportunity to at least read the landowners proposals.

There can be frustrating delays, perhaps caused by members of the committee being on holiday or by an applicant failing to provide enough information or simply because of bad communication.

The landowner who has the foresight to ask questions first and act later will be one who calls upon the services of a golf course or landscape architect to prepare a feasibility study, one who has experience in the preparation of such documents. The information included within the study is wide ranging in content and a number of sources are often required.

The feasibility study will identify sources of finance, a major bank possibly, or perhaps the architect will direct the

landowner towards a broker. Brokers have their own contacts of course but will expect to collect a fee for their services – sometimes as much as 2% of the borrowed amount. The study will determine where the site is in relation to the market demand, by researching population levels in the locality and taking due regard of the number of existing Golf Clubs. Equally important will be a count of the number of golfers who may care to become members, perhaps already on waiting lists, and their expected waiting period.

The Sports Council often provide help with such information and the demand level can then be made by the consultant with recommendations, for example, for the type and scale of facilities that are most suitable.

One of the most important factors within the study concerns the physical characteristics of the site. For example, it may be that only 50% of a site can be used because of extreme slopes or because the soil is so poor that a massive drainage system is required which could be prohibitively expensive to install, thus making the development an unviable

proposition.

Not only is it essential to produce a feasibility study at the outset when funds may not have been finalised but even after finances seem secure, for even some of the large and ambitious developments have come up against financial problems brought about by an uncertain economy or by insufficient planning.

Summarising, a feasibility study can save both money and worry. Making planning applications is both expensive and time consuming, especially when the whole exercise ends up being a complete waste of time. By having a study prepared at the outset a landowner will have a firm foundation upon which to establish a sound development.

He must also be prepared for other possibilities: that he may be strongly advised not to proceed at all, that he must look elsewhere for more suitable land, or indeed forget about making his fortune from golf altogether.

● Next month: When the planning application is finally approved, the real work begins...

No ordinary year

In conversation with David White, BIGGA Chairman IVOR SCOONES talks of an exceptional year in his life – when chairing Association affairs became ‘not so much a job, more a way of life!’

As my term of office draws to a close I look back on a highly charged and eventful year – certainly no ordinary one – with pride at the honour that was bestowed upon me and gratitude for the privilege of having worked with such dedicated board members. Coming into board management in the Association was no overnight affair, for I have been involved with green-keeping committees since as far back as I can remember. I was National Chairman of BGGGA back in '72, served as a section secretary for seven years and held most other offices at one time or another. I did once fancifully try to retire from committee life, but they say ‘once a committee man, always a committee man’, and I was soon dragged back – without too much pain or displeasure I might add – for it can be hugely rewarding.

I've been a greenkeeper for 31 years, 28 of them at my beloved Long Ashton and have enjoyed wonderful support from the membership. Indeed, they've shared equally in the pleasure, pride and honour that comes with my being Chairman of BIGGA. It appears the kudos rubs off on everyone – my wife, my family, my wonderfully loyal team of three green staff and my members. All have appeared to gain pleasure from my experience and though sacrifices had had to be made, especially as being chairman demands a 25 hour clock, the shared pride has made it doubly worthwhile for me.

I first learned of becoming chairman some three years ago when Jack McMillan ended his term of office. Tradition has it that the outgoing chairman names the man he considers worthy to take the vacant vice-chairman post – after a little ‘sounding out’ – with his choice then put to the board for approval. With board work taking such huge chunks of one's time, especially that of chairman, it is vital to get these soundings dealt with early on – for the year of office is such that planning must be programmed well in advance in order that the candidate, his family and his Golf Club can make the jig-saw fit together properly.

Fortune shone on me in 1989 through serving as vice-chairman alongside Paddy McCarron. His was no uneventful year either and the one sure thing that can be said about Paddy is that he would have made a marvellous politician, skilled as he is at pouring oil onto troubled waters. With every year the Association grows bigger and more ambitious, especially in the field of education, which ensures that careers in greenkeeping are better and more fulfilling for those involved. With this growth comes the revelation for board members that more and more time is demanded for official matters. If you are unaware upon joining the board, the realisation is soon thrust upon you that there is no place for the half-hearted or only slightly dedicated.

Called officially to the ‘chair’ at Egham, I was in no way under any illusion that this would be the start of a year of fun. There were rumblings – even then – with the major problem being the failure of the then magazine to serve as a proper form of communication and reflect the true voice and spirit of members.

Like any new Association, for that is what we are, we have growing pains, because we are growing at such a frightening rate. My own personal view was that we needed to slow down and consolidate. It's nice to get all these new things but unless you get them on a firm footing circumstances can change, especially on the financial side. We had done things that were complete necessities, education being our major project and priority,

but in the main the golf world was not supporting us, other than the R & A who have been and remain a most marvellous mainstay. We had to find the money and there was a degree of anguish and squealing.

George Malcolm has been my vice-chairman and we've enjoyed a good close working relationship. I guess one tends to look at situations as they arise and realise that many current things will still be ‘bubbling in the pot’ after one's term is done. I've tried to pass on my experiences and endeavoured to ensure solid continuity. Certainly the biggest task has been to attempt to keep every board member advised of all that's happening – a huge task given the continually evolving situation in relation to our magazine. Happily matters have progressed and I am delighted that these thoughts on my year in office will appear in our new magazine ‘Greenkeeper International’. The impact this magazine has already made it quite tremendous and I'm confident it will continue from strength to strength.

As a board we admit to being inspired amateurs, though by being in the deep-end we learn to become professionals PDQ. There are times when perhaps we might side against the advice offered by our Executive Director, and rather like a Golf Club committee, there is one problem that continues to beset us, namely continuity. We don't know the answer to that one, but perhaps we are not alone, since 90% of Golf Clubs have the same thorny problem.

Essentially Neil and I work closely together and he gives me a weekly report of current happenings. As chairman it is incumbent upon me to decide with Neil those things which require board attention, for clearly with so much happening if every single item was to reach the discussion table the permanent staff would be kept busy 24 hours a day just churning out relevant papers.

To redress what may appear as a picture of ‘all work and no play’, there have been many wonderful times throughout the year. At Egham, when I took over, I enjoyed a fantastic week and the atmosphere of the place

itself was quite magical. I've enjoyed visiting other sections and meeting up with old friends, I've been thrilled at The Open, and taken great delight in seeing other members enjoy themselves at our own National Tournament and at the ICI, Toro and PGA European Tour Award ceremonies.

There have been trade and industry invites, and a delightful element of wining and dining that has seen my waistline suffering along with my golf handicap!

Asked what I would like to see for the Association in an ideal world I can instantly respond by suggesting that the golf world might look to providing the finance necessary to train all greenkeepers. Training is something that industry has been doing – and paying for – for years and the time is ripe for golf to catch up. That would be a first priority, with another wish thrown in for good measure that Golf Clubs recognise they are now in the big business league and leave professional greenkeeping work to professional greenkeepers. ‘The Way Forward’ document pinpoints the inadequacies of how many Clubs are managed and yet the very essence of Golf Club committee structure continues to ensure that there are amateurs who insist on making ‘their’ mark during their term of office. Thankfully I've escaped that problem in the main, though there's always one – somewhere – who wants to change the world!



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IAN DAIR, Assistant Director with the Nature Conservancy Council, writes of the Council's aims for golf course ecological preservation, essentially as a primer to the introduction of their new Greenkeepers Conservation Management Plan...

Golf is booming. It used to be something for the privileged few (Scotland excepted). Now, millions take part in the sport and many millions more wish they could. Golf is big business and is already a major land user with the 1,800 or so courses in Great Britain covering around 100,000 hectares. If the R & A's predictions on the need for more courses are fulfilled there could be another 700 courses in England and Wales alone covering another 40,000 hectares.

If it hasn't done so already, golf has to grow up very quickly to meet this new status. It must be aware of its position in the world at large. That it is doing so, and very well, is expressed in the initiatives which the Royal and Ancient's Greenkeeping Panel have taken in issuing their two discussion documents 'The Way Forward' and 'The Demand for Golf'. 'The Way Forward' recognises in particular that 'when managing the land on which golf is played we must ensure that greenkeeping practices are beyond reproach from the rest of the community. The



Above - Sundridge Park Golf Course, Kent.
On Pages 14, 15 - Church Stretton Golf Course, Shropshire

conservation lobby grows annually in strength and a little planning now may save a lot of trouble in 10/15 years time'. My organisation, the Nature Conservancy Council, is part of the conservation lobby - the reasoned and responsible part, given that any lobby will have this part and the other (no less useful in its way) with a more than single-minded devotion to the cause. To quote again from 'The Way Forward' - 'it must therefore be in the interest of course management - and the game - to form a proper working relationship with the NCC, in order that future plans work to the benefit of both parties. And, again, to publicise the part that Golf Clubs

● Continued on Page 19

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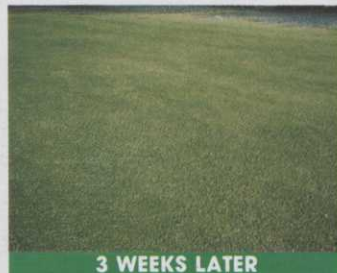
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● From Page 17

play in responsibly conserving wildlife for the benefit of the whole community'. A nature conservationist, whether reasoned or rabid, couldn't put it better.

So, what has the Nature Conservancy Council done to respond to this overture from the R & A? A lot, is the answer – but hand in glove with the R & A, the National Golf Unions and your own association, BIGGA. Our aim in so doing has been to encourage the golf world to manage its land and its activities with nature conservation, or its recreation, in mind: to assist the golf world to do this: and to achieve both these aims with a minimum call on the NCC itself since, as a Government agency, we are kept on a very tight rein by the Treasury.

How could we help the golf world to keep golf green? I happen to be the chairman of my Golf Club and Mike Schofield, the colleague who worked with me on our nature conservation and golf course project, is a keen golfer himself. So we knew that whatever we did had to

be acceptable to the golf world and to the people who control what happens on golf courses is the captain, the chairman of green and, most importantly, the greenkeepers. So we asked them what they wanted, consulted them over what we were producing and gained their support and commitment throughout. The result has been a book 'On Course Conservation – Managing Golf's Natural Heritage'. This was sponsored and fully endorsed by the R & A and launched by Michael Bonalack at the ETME Conference in Harrogate in January 1990. It was distributed free to every club in Great Britain. We are following this up with an example of a conservation management plan for your course which the greenkeeper can complete.

This is what the NCC and the golf authorities are doing. But what can you as a greenkeeper do to manage your course for conservation? Well, first of all get hold of the book from the captain or secretary. Look out for the training courses on conservation management which BIGGA conduct regularly. But, most of all, think of yourself not just as a golf greenkeeper but as a conservation manager for your course. I never cease to be impressed by the general conservation knowledge, and the specific knowledge of their own course, which comes across whenever I talk to greenkeepers. I feel confident that in looking after wildlife you are looking after the interest of the golfers who use your course, that course itself and golf in general. Michael Bonalack put this eloquently, 'In these times when so many species of plants and animals are endangered by so called progress it is good to think that golf has a tremendous opportunity to reverse this trend'.

General points for turf on the golf course

1 Management: To get greens into play in the shortest time choose turf which has been intensively maintained at a relatively low cutting height in the turf grower's nursery.

2 Disease: Should disease affect a turf containing a mixture of grasses it is likely that one of the grasses will be less susceptible and will fill in gaps created by the death of its companion grass. A single species turf (pure bent or pure fescue) cannot do this.

3 Weeds: All cultivated turf should be free of both broad-leaved weeds and weed grasses, particularly annual meadow grass.

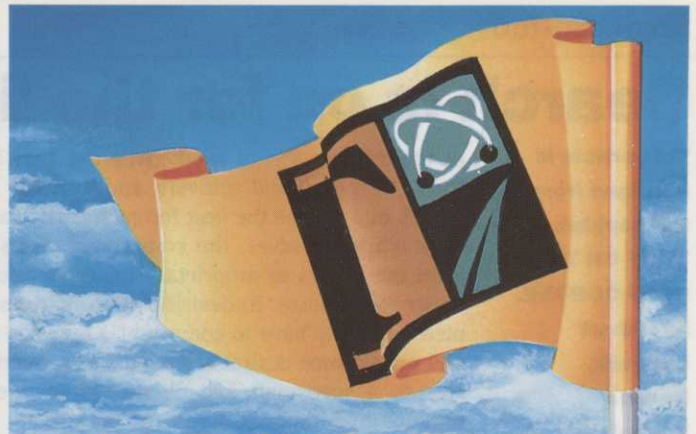
4 Soil Type: Most new golf greens are constructed with a sand/soil rootzone mix. In terms of natural soil this most closely approximates to "loamy sand" or "sandy loam". A turf supplier should be able to provide information.

5 Samples: The best way to choose turf if you are at all unsure is to inspect the field from which your order is to come, or to obtain a representative sample as close as possible to harvest date. Any reputable turf grower will welcome the opportunity to show you his fields.

6 Price: It is expensive to produce a good quality turf. If you are offered turf at a cheap price be very wary and find out what has reduced the price. As with many products, you get what you pay for.

7 Independent Advice: There are many so-called advisers jumping on the golf course bandwagon. Use only qualified agronomists for advice.

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Search is on for the 'ideal' seed mixture...

This article is abridged from the booklet: TURF ON THE GOLF COURSE, by Robert Laycock, Rolawn Technical Director. Copies free on request to BIGGA HQ.

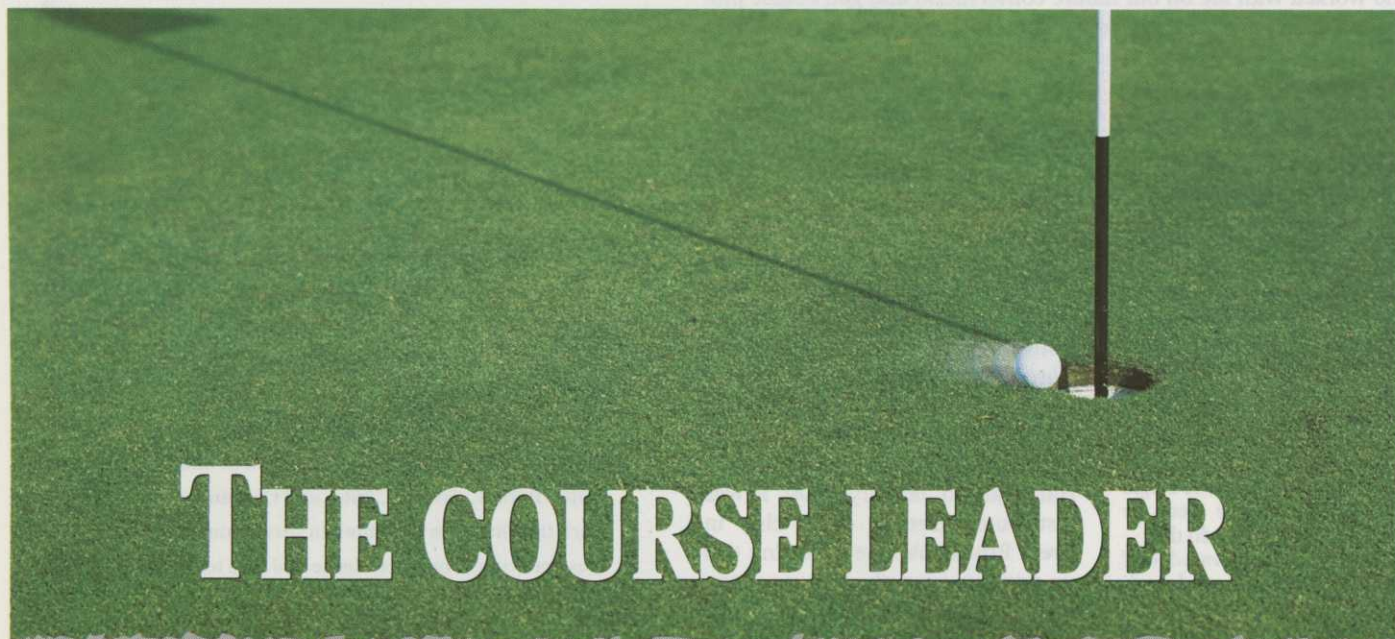
In theory, the use of seed gives the user the widest choice of species and cultivars, and it should be possible to pick and choose the best for each particular situation. In practice, however, the constructor tends to choose from the ranges of proprietary mixtures offered by the major seed houses. In devising their mixtures the seedsmen inevitably have to compromise between availability and price. Some desirable cultivars are effectively exclusive to a seedsman and so the 'ideal' seed mixture remains hypothetical. Even so, the annual STRI seed guide enables an objective comparison to be made.

Given time, seed can give a first class surface. It does not introduce any undesired soil types to the course and is by far the cheapest method. Unfortunately in the

British climate, seed is significantly slower than turf.

The use of turf speeds up the establishment time of greens – the most crucial part of the course – and it is here that turfing is becoming the conventional way of quickly obtaining an established putting surface.

Good cultivated turf is purpose-grown from different seed mixtures by suppliers who have an established reputation and should be mature, uniformly cut, weed-free and available year round. Choosing the most appropriate is the key to success. From a practical view there is less risk involved in creating a new green from turf, for seeded greens are notoriously subject to adverse weather conditions and weed invasion. Indeed there are many who in going for the immediate saving which seed



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