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| Ad Ref                | Page |
|-----------------------|------|
| A C & M Birch         | 58   |
| Aeration and Drainage | 43   |
| Agripower             | 262  |
| Allen Power           | 126  |
| BASF                  | 308  |
| Better Course Ltd     | 278  |
| Boughton Loam         | 113  |
| British Seed Houses   | 87   |
| Bucher-Guyer (UK) Ltd | 223  |
| CDC Group             | 142  |
| Colin Pryce           | 46   |
| Devenish Ltd          | 307  |
| Euroturfcare          | 231  |
| Fairfield Turf        | 18   |
| Farmura               | 88   |
| Fen Turf Dressings    | 168  |
| Fisons                | 102  |
| Golf Aids             | 302  |
| Heronfield Hire       | 305  |
| Howard Evans          | 29   |
| Interseeds            | 173  |
| Inturf                | 31   |
| Iseki                 | 6    |
| John Deere            | 103  |
| Lawn Tech             | 301  |
| Lely (UK) Toro        | 61   |
| Lindum                | 38   |
| Macro Services        | 309  |
| Maestro Water Coolers | 306  |
| Maxel                 | 263  |
| MRM Sandow            | 303  |
| OCM Associates        | 133  |
| Portisilo             | 146  |
| Powershift            | 121  |
| Ransomes              | 9    |
| RFE                   | 8    |
| Rhone Poulenc         | 59   |
| Rolawn                | 34   |
| Rufford               | 5    |
| S A Lacey             | 256  |
| Service Chemicals     | 304  |
| Seward                | 45   |
| Sierra                | 161  |
| SISIS                 | 176  |
| Supaturf              | 164  |
| Tillers Turf          | 292  |
| Tip Top Turf          | 293  |
| Turfland              | 170  |
| Turfmech              | 258  |
| Vitax                 | 139  |
| Watermation           | 33   |
| Wessex Farm           | 210  |
| Wessex Horticultural  | 49   |
| Colleges              | •    |
| Recruitment           | •    |
| Buyers Guide          | •    |
| Classified            | •    |



Official publication of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association

**MARCH 1991**



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# GREENKEEPER

International

## CONTENTS



### East Sussex National

The elegant courses at East Sussex continue to draw their fair share of both praise and criticism. Having seen them, played them and revelled in their charms, David White talks to Ken Siems about his overall philosophy and the success achieved with USGA spec Bentgrass Greens .....Pages 8 - 11

### That was the year, that was

BIGGA Chairman Ivor Scoones reveals that his year of office was one where fun and frustration took equal turns. 'Not so much a job,' says Ivor, 'more a way of life.' .....Page 12

### Theory and practice of wetting agents

Three years of evaluation at STRI has given Plant Biologist Neil Baldwin many of the answers to the problem of dry patch on UK golf greens. Find out what wetting agents are, and how to make them work efficiently on your course .....Pages 40, 41

### Keeping golf green

With the introduction of their new Greenkeepers Conservation Management Plane, the Nature Conservancy Council's Ian Dair explains their aims for golf course preservation .....Pages 14 - 17

### Building a new golf course?

Nothing could be more simple than to take a few fields and turn them over to golf... or so it seems. But before the first sod is turned there is a minefield of legislation to surmount, as Jonathan Gaunt reveals .....Pages 10, 11

## DEPARTMENTS

### Around the Green

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the regions .....Pages 42, 43, 44, 60, 63

### Letters to the Editor

Controversial, critical, or just a place to let off some steam .....Page 23

### Faces and Places

Like a giant merry-go-round, the movement of people continues unabated .....Pages 6, 7

### Advertising Features

Need turf for the golf course? .....Pages 14 - 21  
Spring turf maintenance .....Pages 28 - 37  
Hawtree's tips for the landscaper ....Pages 47 - 51

### COVER PICTURE:

An Oast House provides the perfect backdrop to the 12th green (West) at the East Sussex National

Advertising in Greenkeeper International works - 90% of the display advertisers in our January/February edition have had enquiries through our free Reader Reply Service. Don't let YOUR business miss out any longer! Call Bill Lynch on 091 413 7218 or Carol Dutton on 0207 570117 ... NOW!

Fresh from the trauma of completing this second issue of 'Greenkeeper International', and basking in the mild feeling of comfort it affords, I was reminded of a scrap I read somewhere by a witty writer whose name I cannot recall but whose observations on journalism are engraved indelibly in my mind. "Writing a column is easy", he wrote, "All you have to do is sit at your typewriter until small drops of blood form on your forehead".



management articles, written by the people who can properly guide those who do not presume to know it all. We will sometimes feature golf courses which perhaps bear scant resemblance to many of the tired-out affairs on which some British greenkeepers are forced to toil, but in maintaining a balance we will also look long and hard at some strife-ridden courses and aim to offer practical solutions.

We'll also hear a lot from the educators and hope that we may absorb new ideas; we'll look at thorny environmental issues or proposed legislation that may threaten our livelihood and strive always to protect and improve the well being of all greenkeepers.

There will be enjoyment in this magazine, but there will also be controversial issues honestly faced with no attempt at 'disinformation'.

We are sure there will be times when you'll want to put pen to paper, spluttering in protest at statements with which you vehemently disagree.

That is what controlling a magazine is all about.

This one is YOURS and you will be addressed seriously, without condescension or pontification.

From the warmth of my office in Sussex I'm taking pleasure in watching the snow fall, delighted that this natural blanket will give some rest and protection to courses which have been thrashed so mercilessly for so long. Just keep off those toboggans!

DAVID WHITE

Preparing the first issue was a bit like that, save that the blood ran rather more freely, but with the backing of some unsung heroes we were ready on time and judging by your generous comments we seem to have been pretty well received.

In recent times however it has become fashionable to attack almost everything that BIGGA does to improve the lot of their members, and the armchair critics of this magazine, even after a single issue, are suggesting that your editor (and by implication your Association) is guilty of pro-American views and that the magazine has failed to highlight British greenkeeping issues.

I am no apologist and will not rise to their bait, least of all after just one month, for in recognising an intelligent audience I believe that whilst issues on our doorstep are important, those happening elsewhere in the world can often have a profound influence on The Way Forward - the path we earnestly seek to tread.

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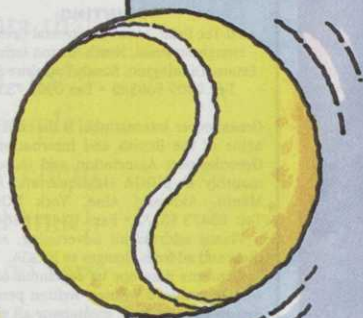


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## Hawaii sheds grass skirt mentality...

Forget the soft Hollywood image of grass-skirted hip swinging maidens – politicians in Hawaii, America's tourist-trap capital, are proving to be as hard-nosed as any when it comes to making an easy extra buck.

Hawaii's relatively close proximity to Japan has made it a target for Japanese golf course investment and the politicians recognise a good thing when they see it. Although proposed legislation has yet to be officially passed, some Japanese developments have already given a polite bow of approval to charges to be levied on golf course developers which could bring huge returns – billions rather than millions – to Hawaii, in the euphemistically titled Community Impact fees. Sums in excess of \$200 million were agreed by just one company to get approval to build two private members clubs. If we British question the thinking behind the casual acceptance of such unseemly extravagance, remember that golf-hungry Japanese are happily paying around \$100,000 for memberships, which can then be traded on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, just like shares in Sony or Toyota.

## ... but closer to home

If the smart though ever-so-slightly fishy scheme concocted by the Hawaiian parliamentarians has you wondering what skulduggery might be cooking on our own

doorsteps; consider the following:

Such is the concern regarding so called 'sweeteners' – the practice of firms paying for such as old peoples homes, wild-life parks, village by-passes, even agreeing to double-glaze a council estate in exchange for planning permissions – that the Government is to investigate this practice, which is recognised as being completely out of hand.

Typically, it seems, a council will suggest that planning permission is forthcoming only to hedge after a firm has committed labour and materials for the project. When actually confronted, the authority might suggest a project on their own 'shopping list' and a deal is then struck. The tactic, described by one eminent planning professor as "sometimes amounting to blackmail", is a festering sore.

Green-watching as we do, we are totally in favour of the trend for turning surplus farming land into golf courses but note that Department of the Environment guidelines recently issued suggest that golf courses should not now be built on SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) or AONB's (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

With opposition escalating to the growth of golf, certainly new golf, and with so many official sticky fingers in the honeypot, one wonders how long it will be before golf course developers are 'persuaded' to include little 'Extra's'? On the premise that nothing's for nothing in the business world, the poor old end user – the golfer – may well foot this final bill.

Agenda – The ITV programme which looks at political decisions affecting the South and South East – took on the role of campaigning for reasoned thinking with regard to new golf course applications when featuring our own John Millen recently. John appeared in his role of designer at the new Weald of Kent Golf Course and demonstrated in his inimitable fashion the thinking that has gone into this new and exciting pay and play complex. Viewers were treated to a brief lesson in the psychology of playing shots over water and shown an impressive image of John's swing – albeit without the benefit of club or ball!



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Perry, and Hillier

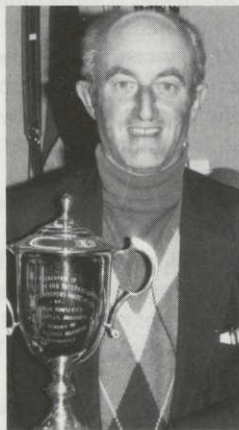


Two new appointments are announced by Maxwell Hart's, with Melanie Perry joining the Company as their Technical Sales Representative to cover the counties of Shropshire, Staffs, Derbyshire, Northants, Leicestershire, and Lincolnshire. Her sales brief will cover Maxwell Hart's range of turf maintenance products. In a similar capacity is Mark Hillier, who will cover the South-West of England.

■ David Hannam, Regional Administrator for The Northern Region and for so long a stalwart member and active supporter of BIGGA, is on the move. Soon to take up his new position as Head Greenkeeper, Golf Club Du Domaine Imperial, Switzerland, his settling on the other side of the Channel will leave a gap in the Association, which may prove a tough act to follow. We wish David well and hope he'll look in on us from time to time when visiting his beloved Yorkshire.

■ George Hampton, one of the keenest of North Scotland's members, is leaving Fortrose and Rosemarkie Golf club to take up the post of Professional to the Pitlochry Golf Club. As a keen 2 handicap amateur, George joined Burntisland Golf Club as pro/greenkeeper in '64 and remained there for 4 years before moving to a similar job at Stornoway. He remained there for 7 years before moving to Fortrose and Rosemarkie, where he has served for 16 years. Although he is leaving greenkeeping, George will remain active in BIGGA as an Associate member.

A regular prizewinner, George was at one time forced to play off plus 3 but could still win! His greatest pride and career highlight came in '85 when he managed the Scottish Team, bringing them to a fighting second (from

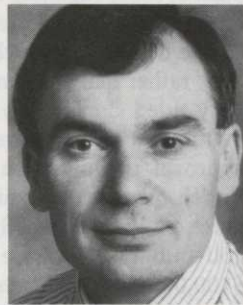


Hampton

17 teams) behind Ireland in the Ransomes International at St Andrews. He will be no stranger at Pitlochry, for he has assisted retiring pro Jimmy Wilson over many occasions during their popular golf week. Proof of his coaching skill can be found in his three sons, all of whom play scratch or single figure golf.

As George moves from Fortrose and Rosemarkie Golf Club, his place is being taken by first assistant George Paterson, a former top student at Elmwood College and a regular member of the Scottish North District Golf Team. We join with all Scottish members in wishing them both good fortune.

■ Huxleys Grass Machinery have appointed David MacKay as their Senior Development Engineer, specifically to lead a team engaged in the design and development of both new and existing models within Huxleys machinery range. David, a Chartered Engineer, has been involved in development and project engineering throughout his career.



MacKay

■ Denis Durnian, a likely prospect for 1991 Ryder Cup honours, has signed a sponsorship deal to represent Portal, the Donald Steel designed golf complex at Tarporley, Cheshire. Portal is the course where Mark Proctor, former Young Greenkeeper of the Year, is Course Manager. Proctor is no mean golfer himself, recently coaxing a wedge over water and into the cup at the 120 yard 13th.

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■ There are two schools of thought on how best to weather an economic downturn or depression, with one battle plan suggesting digging-in and holding fire – a sort of wait and see approach. At 'Greenkeeper International' we hear both gloom and doom and confident optimism and show greater inclination toward listening to the latter. We applaud 'the bottle is still half full' mentality and our day perked-up when we learned that Jacobsen's UK sales showed a dramatic increase again in 1990. Such is their confidence that a move to a new 24,500 square feet complex at Kettering, Northants, is seen as confirmation of the Company's long term commitment and optimism in the UK market.

Speaking of the move, MD Rene Orban said, 'Our increasing sales volume and ever growing machine population in the UK meant that we had simply outgrown our Kings Lynn base'.

Jacobsen's new address is Telford Way, Kettering, NN16 8UN.



**Longbottom**

■ Friendly Guy Longbottom, well known to greenkeepers and those who frequent trade exhibitions as the man with the cheerful disposition, has been rewarded for the major role he has played at Rolawn Ltd, especially in developing their depot network, with a seat on The Board. He now becomes Operations Director.

■ SISIS have announced the appointment of John Burnham as their Area Representative for the Midlands. As an ex-golf professional who comes from a farming

background, John brings to the task an added edge of expertise, together with some 16 years experience in selling horticultural machinery. We're sure both old and new SISIS customers will welcome him and, who knows, he might even have a remedy for that irritating shank!

■ Robert Brewer, the talented young greenkeeper who left Stirling a year or so back to join Sunningdale, talked to 'Greenkeeper International' recently about his own career progression since his move and of how much he is enjoying the additional opportunities afforded him at this top-notch location. He also tells us that Bob Bennett, who has been commuting by air from Glasgow to manage Sunningdale, is to relinquish his post and will shortly hand over to Lawson Bingham from Old Prestwick. From one prestige location to another, Lawson will be sure to find Sunningdale to his liking, bringing with him as he does yet more of that solid, dependable Scottish know-how. And as Lawson moves south, Murray Stuart, First Assistant Old Prestwick, takes on deserved promotion as Head Greenkeeper.

■ Murcar Golf Club, that splendid links course a mere mashie shot from Royal Aberdeen and boasting equally delicious turf, has a new Head Greenkeeper in Chris Pearson. Originally from Aberdeen, Chris has been Head at Arbroath for the past three years. Also on the move in Scotland is Craig Hildersley of Turnhouse Golf Club, who will travel a scrap further south to Longniddry Golf Club as their new Head Greenkeeper. Kenny Anderson, also from Longniddry, joins in the merry-go-round by taking up a commercial appointment with Stewarts of Edinburgh.

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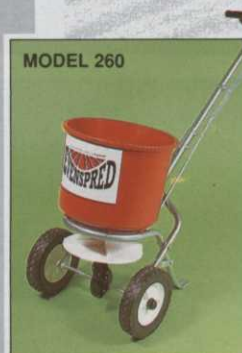
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# Nothing's i



**Above: The full splendour of nature's panorama shown to great effect here on the green and approach — 14th West.**

**Right: Pretty as a picture — the 3rd green East.**



# Impossible

Critics said the East Sussex National golf course would be impossible to achieve and impossible to maintain.

DAVID WHITE reports on a dream which became reality



A common trait amongst certain members of the British public is to 'knock' that of which they are unaware or which threatens to dislodge long-held beliefs. Working on the premise 'don't knock it 'till you've tried it', there is evidence to suggest that hordes of doubting Thomases may choke over their prejudices as the 36 holes of East Sussex National Golf club provide visual and dramatic proof that USGA spec sand greens planted with Pennlinks bentgrass can be a huge success in Britain.

The dream that became a reality began just three years ago when Brian Turner, a successful Canadian entrepreneur and self-confessed golf addict, became enamoured with a handsome tract of Sussex countryside and fired with the idea of creating a course which would stand comparison with the best in the world, perhaps – whisper it – in time becoming a mirror image of Augusta National itself, right in the heart of rural Sussex.

Designing the courses, both the tournament inspired East with its gallery mounding and the elegant and graceful West with distant views toward the rolling South Downs suggesting shades of Bonnie Scotland, was entrusted to the inspirational Bob Cupp, former senior designer for Jack Nicklaus. The results achieved may have put Cupp in the same league as MacKenzie, Colt, or Donald Ross.

The main contract was given to the Transcontinental Golf Course Construction Company, a group with a reputation for producing fine quality work. The results are truly evident at ESN.

Ken Siems, also a Canadian, was hired by Turner to nurture and train a staff capable of maintaining both courses to tournament conditions on a daily basis. Now, after three years intensive work in which the ESN courses have been built and maintained to championship standards which many said were impossible to achieve and totally impossible to maintain, the ESN team are happy to demonstrate the results.

Ken, pictured, is no braggart, yet is justifiably proud of the praise heaped upon the maintenance team by the British Walker and Curtis Cup teams, both having used the courses for intensive pre-match practice and both attributing their success in no small part to the use of ESN's Anglo / US user friendly playing characteristics.

***'There are no certain recipes for turfgrass success and the grass species and sands utilised here are but two of the ingredients in providing such quality turf. A sound management programme is an equally critical element.'***

**- KEN SIEMS**

Quizzed on why he thought most British consultant agronomists were so adamant in insisting that Bentgrass would not grow successfully in the UK climate, Ken intimated that growing Bentgrass here required a completely different management programme, different say to that which he would use in his former Toronto location. 'I think', he said, 'that people have the mistaken belief that creeping Bentgrass – or USGA spec greens – are only managed in one way, but the intensity and frequency of growth will vary considerably depending on the climate prevalent in the geographical area in which it is grown. There are no certain recipes for turfgrass success and the grass species and sands utilised here are but two of the ingredients in providing such quality turf. A sound management programme is an equally critical

element.

It is a complicated science, with improvements in the science of turfgrass moving as quickly as in any other high-tec industry. Nobody knows it all, but flexible thinking and experimentation are the keys to success for the greenkeeper.

A small turf nursery should form part of a greenkeeper's course management programme, for it is a great idea to experiment with fertility, fungicide and disease prevention programmes and can prove useful when attempting to 'sell' an idea to a green committee. If a Club wishes to rebuild their greens using the USGA spec I would strongly recommend they authorise and encourage the building of such a nursery, using the USGA method, in order that first hand experience of the different management needed for such new greens may be studied and evaluated. It is a difficult transition to move from soil based greens to those which are sand based in one fell swoop.

'We spent many months testing and indeed rejecting many specimens before hitting upon the right sand for our type of operation. The sand/peat mix drains very quickly and consequently nutrient leeching is also very rapid. From the very start our thinking has been clear. If quality greens were going to be built then the USGA spec was – for us – the only way to go. It is our considered opinion that it is a mistake to build in any other way'.

On the vexing question of overplay, Ken takes a firm stance in stating that he sees this as the biggest single problem in the industry.

He continued, 'At ESN our target is not more than 25,000 rounds on each course. More than this and the quality will diminish. Of course the number of rounds played will vary from course to course, dependant on soil types, design and drainage. We are not above closing the course when frost is prevalent and our members not only understand our reasoning but appreciate it. They know that quality has a price'.

Reflecting on his maintenance team, Ken outlined the Club's commitment regarding training. Already Ken Barber, a head greenkeeper who came to ESN from Crowborough Beacon Golf Club, has been trained for greater

● Continued overleaf

## 'Commitment to excellence'

● From previous page things and is away at this moment at the Pennsylvania State University. Their plan is for at least one green staff member to attend Penn. State's Turfgrass Programme each year. An after work lecture and maintenance 'think tank' is held each week and upwards of 20 staff attend. Although this is unpaid, it reflects the overall commitment to excellence held by every single greenkeeper.

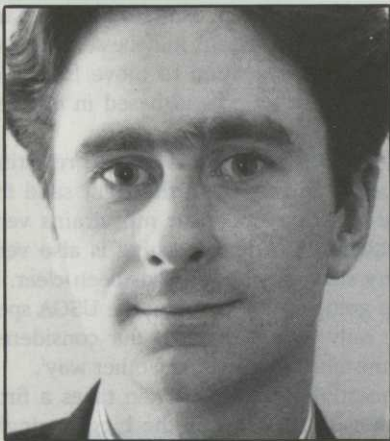
As if managing two courses and upwards of 40 staff in the peak months was not enough, Ken is also working closely with David Blackmur at Plumpton Agricultural College. Here ESN are building sand greens on Plumpton's own little course and although the concept is a new one for Blackmur he is enthusiastic about the theory and understands and endorses one vitally important fact – a good sand does not compact.

Summarising, Ken Siems is in awe of the fine job British greenkeepers do within the limitations of the equipment and budgets placed at their disposal. 'With what they have they do far better than their American counterparts' were his actual words.

'There is however one thing that we would all do well to remember', he concluded, 'practices change, technology races ahead and with a bit more of the **I can do it** approach, nothing is impossible – certainly not USGA spec sand greens that work!'



# Developing a golf course: from



by **JONATHAN GAUNT.**  
The author gained his degree in Landscape Architecture at Leeds before joining Golf Landscapes Ltd as their golf course designer. His first design was the 27 hole Jack o' Legs Golf Centre at Stevenage and he is currently contracted to design 18 holes for Magnolia Park Golf Club, Bristol. He is one of a new breed of young architects and has recently formed his own consultancy practice in London.

### **PART ONE: Feasibility Studies**

Over recent years many landowners have become increasingly attracted to the potential of selling their land for golf course development. They may not always be in a position to develop themselves, but selling land to developers with the magic words 'with planning permission for a golf course and hotel' often spells fat profits.

This however is not always wholly true, for developers are very choosy when it comes to buying a golf course site. There are a number of criteria that a site must satisfy before any decision can be made; for instance there is a world of difference between a site with full planning permission in the Norfolk Fens and a site that is just a few hundred metres from a junction of the M25. Location is so very important, for it will be the one factor above all others that will determine the success of the facility – access must be close to a major road or motorway and in addition there has to be a major conurbation within 15 or 20 minutes drive.

The wise landowner, especially one striving to be both planning seeker and developer, will want to ask many questions. How can I maximise on my available acreage? What kind of

course should be built? How can I be sure it will be successful? How much will it cost? How can I get the local environmentalists on my side? Are there enough would-be golfers who will want to play?

Quality of land is not a major problem, except when finance is severely limited, for today a golf course can be built almost anywhere – on marshland, disused gravel pits, land-fill sites, or mountain slopes. Indeed some sections have even appeared on floating pontoons in the middle of a lake! The amount of land available will determine if the course is to be 9, 18, 27 or 36 holes and this has a direct bearing upon the amount of golfers who can play at any one time – which in turn effects the profit.

The course must be able to pay for itself and above all make money, so if other profitable leisure facilities can be provided in the clubhouse or ancillary buildings this becomes less of a problem. It must never be forgotten that the overriding factor most likely to prevent development going ahead is of course finance – or the lack of it – for building a golf course is never cheap.

Landowners and developers often steam ahead with planning applications without first