

Some not-so tongue in cheek observations from JIM ARTHUR, Britain's most astute golfing observer and outspoken critic of the absurd and ridiculous

Failing is, in fact, one of the easiest of all tasks, but you will need to acquire a few specialist qualifications and obey a few rules to achieve total success, ie. failure! However, there are so many ways of achieving the desired end that if you do not initially succeed, do not despair. Just when things start going well you will find you have overlooked something.

The first prerequisite of any successful failure is that those who have to deal with the human race should actually either dislike or, better still, despise them. The management of two legged livestock is quite different in some basic respects to that of four legged ones, as many farmers, seeking without success a less exhausting and frustrating way of life than agriculture, have discovered. This in essence is that such livestock answers back, is very difficult to satisfy and can vote with its feet.

The next stage is planning, but do not waste valuable time and money on that. All the answers are in the R & A's handbook – The Demand for Golf – a publication which made it clear that 700 new courses were needed in the last decade of this century, irrespective of such trivial factors as location (and location and location), suitability of soil and terrain, and above all the proximity of the potential market. Consequently, in order to fail really dramatically there must be *no* unsatisfied need in your area.

You will need some advice on the layout of course, though for a real humdinger there is nothing to beat being your own architect. In passing, I had experience of one DIY man who produced three doglegs in a par 3 – though on reflection I have seen only very little less daunting designs of courses where vast sums have been expended on the advice of 'experts'.

Of course, to make a real success of failure you should be an enthusiastic golfer. The prospect of designing a course to suit you and you alone is something that few golfers can resist, even if they are aware – and few are – that this may prove to be a very expensive present.

Never mind all those professionally experienced architects, agronomists, drainage and irrigation consultants! Why not go to the real professional – your local Club pro – who will knock up a design for you for a modest fee. If, however, you want real success then opt for that internationally known Top Tournament Professional (always identified by capital letters) who, if he can be tempted with enough money, will design you a course fit for his peers – and only his peers. He may just possibly produce you a good design, though what is certain is that he will not only charge you ten times too much – as he has an army of *real* experts to pay behind their desk tops – but the costs of construction will be in proportion.

Having got over these trivia – and assuming you have access to untold wealth – now is the time to start the work. You are unlikely to be presented with ideal golfing country. More likely it is some flat, heavy, featureless agricultural land – a legacy of prairie farming. Never mind – we can soon alter that. Carefully watching your television set, you will see televised tournaments played over water-scapes. Nothing pleases the average

HOW TO FAIL GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT

golfer more than watching someone at the top of the leader board plop one straight into the pond in front of a steeply sloping green, surrounded by tiger country. (Nothing of course pleases him less if he suffers the same fate personally).

Therefore your design must incorporate lots of water – never mind if managing water is expensive in order to keep it clean and sparkling, instead of blooming with algal growth and evaporating (or extracted) to leave their surrounds like watering holes in the Serengeti! After all, what is money for?

Clearly the course must be challenging. (It seems no coincidence to me that this term is increasingly being used by do-gooders to describe those with serious handicaps and disabilities). Therefore, we need at least five carries of 200 metres over water. Think how much the greenkeepers could make in the sale of lost balls – you might even cut their wages accordingly.

The course must be long – length before strength is a good gambit which applies to another game, so must be right for this.

So we have a flat heavy featureless expanse? No problem! Let's bring in an army of earth moving equipment and push it about a bit. You want a hill here – certainly. A lake there – fine, no sweat. What about the existing field drainage. Oh, we ignore that because in the States we rely on surface run-off to fill our irrigation lakes – field drainage is old fashioned.

The first things to build are, of course, the greens. If they are not in the right place, no matter – we can move them later. Now you have a real decision to make. Do you build them of sand only on a well drained base, set as they are in saucers of impermeable clay? Or do you use the local soil wherever possible (which means always) and mix a bit of sand with it. Someone murmurs that sand plus clay makes bricks. Nonsense, if it works in Texas, its got to work here. What about a blinding layer over the stone carpet between it and the rootzone layer? Old fashioned USGA Green Section rubbish! With pure sand you don't need it. With soil and sand use a geotextile membrane! Nice and easy and no problems about compatible particle sizes. 'It may get silted up?'. So what, we can always put the Vertidrain over it and punch it full of holes.

When making the greens, do not waste money on hand work. What are machines for anyway? Get them in – the bigger the better – churn it up and spread it all around. It doesn't matter about working over the future approaches and surrounds – we can top the lot with sand to make a

seed bed, having rotavated up the soil.

The great day dawns – ready for seeding. What seed? Why, naturally, Penncross or the equivalent – 'because it does so well in the States'. Do not believe those, including many US Agronomists, who say it does not suit most of the States. They probably have an axe to grind with someone else's seed!

Your 'architect' will have planned your irrigation system – costing mega-bucks and so computerised that the control panel looks like the pilot's view of Concorde. What's all this nonsense about not being able to use the water? Who do the NRA think they are anyway. You have a wall-to-wall watering system and the God given right to use it. Throw some money at the problem – that should resolve it.

At last the course is green instead of brown and your thoughts turn to the grand opening ceremony. But first there is a small hurdle to face. How many staff? One per *hole*! And the machinery list costs as much as a luxury house? So now you look for members or unsuspecting punters. You are assured that there will be an insatiable demand from well-heeled golfers, all of whom will be happy to put up £30,000 a piece plus a hefty annual subscription to keep the place select. Or alternatively you can have thousands vying for membership, happy to pay through the nose to take five hours for a round, (seven if you include waiting time to get onto the first tee) and then having to use brute force to get to the bar against a throng of like-minded characters.

You now have the makings of a really spectacular failure and you ask yourself, who is this insolvency firm Cork, Gullie? How you wish you had settled for golf in a field – a no-nonsense cheapie. But then again, you would have been successful, having to pay staff for twelve months of the year but with the course closed for three, because of lack of drainage.

Of course, you could minimise your losses by pulling out halfway, leaving yet another blot on the landscape – and with your advisory team high-tailing it back to the States – or wherever they came from. There must be more exhausting ways of losing money, but I do not know of one off-hand.

♦ **Editor's note:** If this seems too far-fetched to be true, no less than five multi-million pound golf courses were advertised in an estate agency window in York last month, the developers of which had all run out of cash before the trees had shed their first autumnal leaves. Most were being offered at prices well below the cost of land and construction. All were described as 'championship' courses.

What a waste



Very Toxic



Toxic



Harmful



Irritant



Corrosive

New laws on Special Waste came into effect on April 1st in England, Scotland and Wales, known as the Duty of Care under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This requires anyone who has the responsibility for controlled waste to take all reasonable steps to ensure its correct disposal. These steps are • To prevent the illegal management of special waste by themselves or any other persons. • To prevent the escape of waste. • To ensure on the transfer of waste that the waste goes through a section 17 transfer schedule, and only through properly authorised persons. • That records are kept for at least two years

Failure to comply with the Duty of Care or with the requirements to provide and retain appropriate documentation is now a criminal offence, with no limit on the fine that may be imposed on conviction or indictment.

The dumping of waste or the treating of it without a licence may result in a fine of £2,000 (from April 1993, £20,000) in a Magistrates Court or unlimited fines and/or up to two years prison in a Crown Court. If the most poisonous waste is involved, the £2,000 Magistrates fine may also include (and/or) six months in prison, and in the Crown Court the fine could be unlimited or five years in prison. Breach of Duty of Care or its regulations are subject to a maximum of £2,000 in a Magistrates Court or an unlimited fine in a Crown Court.

Furthermore it is the greenkeeper's responsibility to ensure that the Special Waste disposal contractor is Local Authority registered. The contractor must also provide you with details of their registration number. Failure to obtain this information can result in fines.

Special Waste can be identified from the table below, however as a guide, any product carrying a hazard symbol as shown can be interpreted as Special Waste.

The most important item in assessment with regards to pesticides is * above. This statement simply means if the pesticide will cause discomfort or damage to skin or eye tissue over a period of 15 minutes then it is Special Waste. Having identified Special Waste (with pesticides in mind) what disposals are likely?

- 1 Any full containers of pesticide no longer cleared for use by MAFF or no longer required.
- 2 Any empty containers that have contained these products.

How do you dispose of special waste?

Disposal by burning? – NO

The burning of pesticides or empty pesticide containers must have approval from the air division of H.M.I.P and the Environmental Department of the Local Authority. Fumes or smoke present a serious health risk and should burning take place the following must be adhered to. • Burning must take place in an open space at least 15 m from a public highway and not in a location where any smoke produced is likely to drift over people or livestock or move towards any highway, housing or business premises. • Any containers must be open and placed on a very hot fire a few at a time. • The fire must be supervised constantly. • Care must be taken to avoid breathing any smoke the fire produces. • The fire must be extinguished before being left. As far as we are aware, no approval has ever been given for illegal burning. The penalty is £2,000 (as from April 1st 1993, £20,000 or 6 months imprisonment).

Disposal by burial – NO.

It is an offence to cause or knowingly permit any poisonous noxious or pollutant matter to enter * any controlled waters. These include rivers, lakes, canals, estuaries, coastal waters and underground waters. A consent to discharge issued by the National Rivers Authority must be obtained and to date no known approval for burial has been given. (* eg. by leeching.)

Fine for illegal disposal £2,000 (20,000 or 6 months imprisonment from April 1st 1993).

Empty containers washed and then disposed of? – YES.

• Providing they are thoroughly cleaned. Following research by the Waste Technical Division of the DOE it was found that this takes at least 6 rinses. Even then some residue may remain in the curl, thereby you will commit an offence. • That you gain approval from your Local Authority to take the ‘clean’ empty containers to a landfill site. • That all necessary waste transfer notices have been completed.

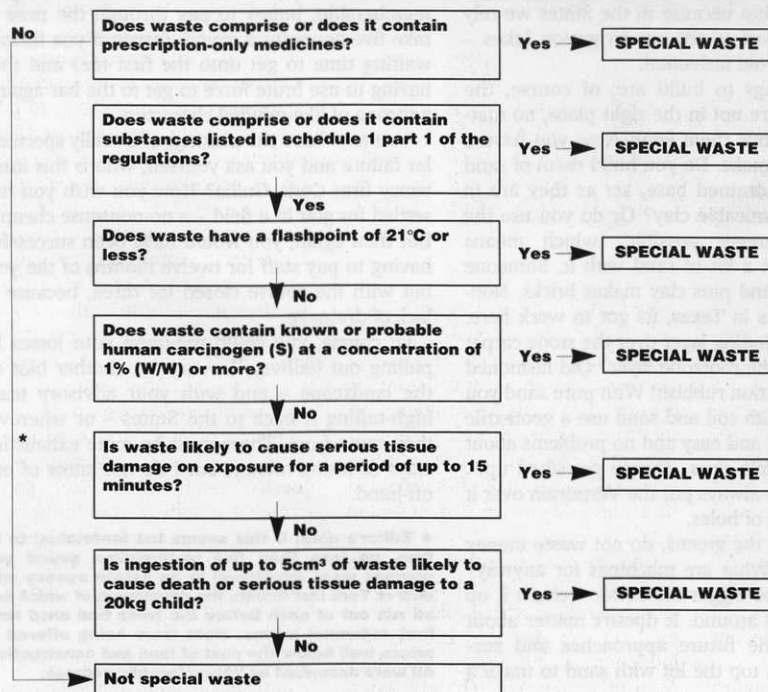
Disposal in a correct and legal manner through a licensed Special Waste contractor – YES

• Providing they are registered. • You complete a section 17 consignment note.

A number of special waste contractors are already registered and a special section has been set up within the Local Authority Unit to ensure consistent standards of enforcement and to deal with pesticide matters.

♦ Contributed by Carl Crome, marketing director of Maxwell Hart Ltd. Their national Special Waste disposal company is Envirogreen. Tel: 0345 125398.

SPECIAL WASTE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE



PETER ROBERTS, Toro Irrigation Ltd and GRAHAM DALE, Lely (UK) Ltd

Two men, Peter Roberts and Graham Dale, though from different sectors of the turf industry, have become inextricably linked and identified, certainly in BIGGA circles, by a company name that is world renowned in the sphere of fine turf management. Both are dedicated to furthering greenkeeper education and both are known for their involvement with BIGGA under the umbrella that is Toro.

To be scrupulously accurate, Peter works for Toro Irrigation Ltd – he is their UK managing director – whilst Graham is identified as ‘Mr Toro’ in the machinery sector, though he is actually the managing director of Lely (UK) Ltd, the Toro machinery distributor for the UK. Both are high profile personalities known best as the joint sponsors (along with the PGA European Tour) of the TORO/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award, a prestige event that has caught the imagination of thrusting young college greenkeeping students. This is seen as a wonderful, indeed mind-boggling, experience for the fortunate winner, who is whisked away for two months to the USA as a guest of the Toro Parent Company, visiting such widely differing places as the City and University of Massachusetts and the Toro machinery manufacturing plant in Minneapolis, through to the warmth of Southern California and Toro’s irrigation HQ at Riverside. Winning this event is a fairy-tale experience, with the planning, execution and financing down to the individual companies of Messrs Roberts and Dale.

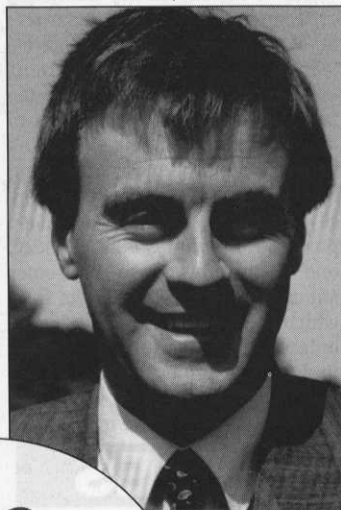
All that ought to be enough, but these two eminently likable workaholics are not content to just sit on the sidelines and watch – no, they are in at the deep end, tossing ideas around like confetti and offering more than mere finance – the Student Greenkeeper Award is very much the better for their active involvement.

Let me now turn to their individual characters and personalities, so much alike in their collective thinking about BIGGA – twins almost – yet as different in style as, say, Camembert and Parmesan. Peter is the archetypal salesman, a following that has been his forte for all his adult life and for over 21 years in the irrigation industry. He is instantly recognisable, a ‘character’ with a wicked grin, a winning personality and a ready wit, though at times appearing almost scholarly when his pipe is on fire alert and his bearded face is wreathed in clouds of sweet smelling tobacco smoke – what is it he smokes, I wonder? I must ask him!

Peter began in irrigation quite by chance, thrust by family into coun-



Peter Roberts



Graham Dale



Heart and soul

try life from London roots and chancing upon a Hampshire company that needed a sales administrator. The story is told of his first day – of being cheesed off and not wanting to return after a pub lunch but forced back as the only one with a car, of being somewhat taken by a gorgeous young lady that afternoon and of returning the next day to see ‘what progress could be made’. We can draw a veil over that episode, but the business outcome was to have repercussions that are evident to this day.

Quickly realising that colleagues

would duck from dealing with ‘difficult’ orders or unusual requests, Peter offered to take the tough ones, learned far more about irrigation by *having* to investigate problems on the factory floor – quizzing the technical experts – and was soon recognised as an expert himself and thrust into the mainstream of selling – his real love.

Chance took another hand in 1976 when Toro Irrigation Ltd, previously working with a sole distributor, set up in the UK as an independent subsidiary and had need of a salesman. The grapevine

suggested Peter was their man, he was hired and the rest, as they say, is history.

Those were pioneering days, the British irrigation industry was in its infancy and much was myth and magic, with few understanding what they were buying. Someone in the golf world (*not* the irrigation world) had put a round sum of £5000 as the amount that would buy an automatic system – it didn’t, but it bought a few domestic sprinklers, a bit of piping and rudimentary controls – and only when drought hit hard did weaknesses manifest themselves.

The irrigation industry learned quickly, and by the time the first recession of 1980/81 ended they were well organised and thinking and acting in a professional manner. The British Turf and Landscape Irrigation Association had been formed, a watch-dog group dedicated to establishing standards and a Code of Ethics and seen as a voice of reason when ‘cowboys’ were muddying the water during the so-called ‘golf boom’. The market on both sides now viewed irrigation as a professional science and one that must not be entered into lightly.

For approaching ten years Peter was all things to all people in the UK, an irrigation power-house, especially in the golf field. In 1986 his job changed, he took over Northern Europe and became embroiled with distributors and developers, acting as a management consultant – living out of a suitcase and enjoying every minute. Only in early ‘92 did he come home to roost, this time as managing director of what had become Europe’s fourth largest Toro business turnover, the British market. This, in his own words “is of such size that it needs total dedication, for it is more difficult to stay number one than to get there. My time will now be 100% in the UK marketplace and my plan is to take Toro forward to an altogether different level – we’ll stay number one by dynamic management in selling not just systems, but through a total concept of consultation through design facility and product application, together with immaculate installation and after sales. Above all, the product will not stand still and we will become even more technically advanced – that is what makes an irrigation system”.

Outside of work Peter is a tournament caster – a fisherman who doesn’t catch fish! He’s good, scratch by golfing standards, and challenges most amateur golfers that he can cast further than they can drive a golf ball – to the first bounce – take up the challenge and get good odds!

Turning now to Graham, we see a man whose bearing and appearance

'We both felt that we needed to get more involved in education'

would not go amiss in the corridors of power: the bearing of a politician perhaps, or maybe someone big and mysterious in the City. He's the less talkative of the pair, but you can almost hear his mind whirring, a deep thinker and a most astute observer. I'll admit to being surprised on learning that he had enjoyed four storming years as a private entrant Moto-Cross competitor – and in truth rather saw him as a pukka yachtsman, which indeed he told me he was and still is – funny how first impressions can throw you! I digress.

Graham is from Ipswich, as are so many others who make it in the

world of turf machinery marketing or technology, and began his career at Ransomes. His early interest leaned toward a career in farming but it became evident to him by the late 1960s that unless one was of direct farming stock that wasn't likely – indeed there was no guarantee even for those with the farming silver spoon, as later events have proven. He began as an apprentice, one of twenty or so Ransomes annual intake of raw recruits from which the future of their industry, indeed almost *the* industry, would find its new production managers, designers, engineers and sales technicians. Exposed in the mainstream

of Ransomes technology, Graham quickly felt that agricultural machinery sales should be his chosen path. He was fortunate in being trained at a time when Ransomes were selling combine harvesters and even more fortunate in manoeuvring himself from the more mundane apprentice tasks of engineering inspection by being assigned to finished goods, an interesting exercise. Equally fortunate, Ransomes encouraged further education and Graham took several courses in mechanical engineering at Ipswich College.

The role of a Ransomes apprentice is very thorough and opportunities presented themselves for Graham's exposure within the agricultural sales division. With his apprentice not yet complete, decisions nevertheless had to be made on his career path and he was guided by Roger Smith, who suggested that the future lay not in agriculture but in grass machinery – and that a vacancy in sales was there for the taking! At the tender age of 20 Graham was a demonstrator, at 21 seconded to Australia on an exchange scheme and working in the distributorship network for three years. It was in Australia that he saw another side – the smaller and altogether more personal side of the distributor.

Although there were to be no instant changes – still too much to do and learn in Ransomes – this 'other side' had sown a seed in Graham's mind – which was to come to the fore later. For the time it was work as a territory rep back in 'Blighty' till 1977, then a brief and satisfying flirtation in being one's own boss – selling kit boats (the sailing connecting) which only ended when recession cut into every yachtsman's pocket and made smaller business enterprises very precarious indeed.

Luck follows the lucky, they say, and a Toro area management job was whispered on the grapevine as being for the taking with the Toro distributor for the South West. Graham had covered this area for Ransomes, knew the people and certainly knew the machinery business – the job was his! Various promotions followed, culminating in a move from the south west to County Durham as sales manager until 1983, when things began to change. Changes take place, business tycoons make decisions and company profiles alter. In this brief article it is not possible to precis all that happened behind boardroom doors at that time – suffice to say that the Toro distributorship changed hands – without bloodshed – and Lely UK, a Dutch owned company in the agricultural machinery business, took over this sole distributorship prize.

Graham was hired as sales manager at Lely for Toro products – not

surprising in view of his skill and expertise – thence promoted to the general manager's role and finally to the lofty role of managing director – lifting a turnover of £2m to one of over £5m and rising. It all seems so simple written here, but this is really a lengthy tale of dedication in a highly competitive market, of grasping every opportunity and winning more than one's share in a tough business. Looking at the Toro machinery marketplace, one thing stands out – the meteoric rise in technological features and innovations: nothing stands still, and in scanning a complete product line of, say, 1983 and comparing it with today, one will see that not a single machine has escaped the high-tech advancements for which Toro are noted. It isn't that obsolescence is planned – it comes by demand from the end user, who literally presurise for more and more innovations. It's called 'the what's new' syndrome. A prediction from Graham for the future? "Watch out for a huge leap forward in the use of micro-chip electronics and controls – see what the motor industry has done in that field, we'll surely follow".

Like any good Captain of Industry, Graham has a release-valve in being an active yachtsman, with what leisure time he has all down to getting thoroughly soaked; heaving-to, luffing to leeward and all that stuff. A sport and language I cannot comprehend, but eminently enjoyable and a wonderful re-charger of human batteries.

In closing, I quizzed these good friends on the BIGGA Student Greenkeeper Award connection. They had both worked through the EIGGA, SIGGA and BGGGA syndrome – both enjoying and revelling in the politics of it all: "We had to know which political cap to wear" they both chuckled in unison. Graham now – "We both felt that we needed to get more involved in education and we listened with glee when Paddy McCarron suggested that greenkeeper education needed something upon which to hang its hat – a publicity vehicle if you like and the scholarship came out of that chance comment.

"Any advice for candidates?", I asked, and their reply, again in unison, centred around a candidates achievements both in college and on the golf course, together with enthusiasm for their chosen career and how they might cope out of a normal environment – in short the candidate who is chosen will be the one who might most benefit career-wise from the experience – that's how it has been, but one never knows: nothing stands still and changes can and do take place, so being on one's mettle is the wisest guide-line.

DAVID WHITE

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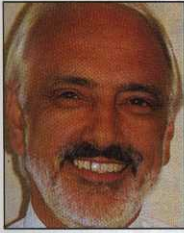
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Membership joins with industry to boost Fund

NEW MEMBERS



René Orban



Roy Kates



Howard Evans

Jacobsens are the latest company to join the Golden Key Circle.

René Orban, Managing Director, Jacobsen Ltd commented, "We think the Education and Development Fund is ideal for companies wishing to contribute to the future development of greenkeeper education and training.

"Membership of the Golden Key Circle is a natural path for Jacobsens to follow as a company with a long tradition of supporting the greenkeeping profession.

Contributions from the industry, the game and BIGGA members are now being channelled into one central fund, which will provide substantial future training benefits for greenkeepers."

Neil Thomas, Executive Director, BIGGA, welcomed Jacobsens' contribution pointing out that they are the tenth company to join the Golden Key Circle since its inception in January.

Donations to the new fund in the last month signify the impact of the fund on the BIGGA membership. The South East region board donated a sum of £790.65 whilst the Surrey section committee has contributed £1,000. In welcoming these initiatives at both region and section level, Neil Thomas said: "It is particularly pleasing that BIGGA's own membership is recognising the importance of the new fund in terms of enhancing future greenkeeper education and training.

These are significant contributions and give a further boost to the fund which to date has met with an encouraging response. In the months ahead I am hopeful that increasing publicity will generate further interest within the game, the industry and our own membership and thereby

provide a sound base for future educational developments."

The growth and success of the Westurf Exhibition has been reflected in a donation of £1,000 to the Education and Development Fund by its organising committee. The committee says it considers it "very important that monies raised from the exhibition are utilised towards new and improved training programmes for greenkeepers." Those companies supporting the exhibition are therefore contributing to the continued growth of the new fund and BIGGA is much appreciative both of their support and the donation of the Westurf committee.

BIGGA will be presenting plaques to Jacobsens, the South East region, Surrey section and the Westurf committee to mark their donations.

■ Association Chairman Roy Kates has joined the Golden Key Circle on an individual basis.

"I consider it most important that members of the Association support the new fund," he said. "I am sure it will have a significant impact on the future of greenkeeper education and I would urge all members to offer their support in this inaugural year - and thereby ensure the fund is soundly established and will offer lasting benefits for the future training of greenkeepers."

■ Howard Evans, Special Financial Advisor to BIGGA on pensions and mortgages, has also joined the Golden Key Circle.

"I am in regular contact with greenkeepers all over the UK on a personal basis and I am only too well aware of the need to offer increased educational and training opportunities to those working in the profession," he said.

"It gives me great pleasure therefore to contribute to the Education and Development Fund."

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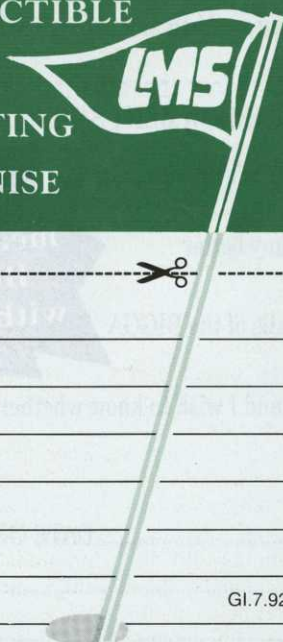
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AD REF 371

Golf Course inspection under FEPA

From April 1992 the responsibility for enforcing the Pesticides Regulations passes to the environmental health officer for the local authority. He or she has just completed the excellent Open Learning Course for FEPA (available from HMSO price £16) and is now 'armed' and ready to do battle! This new responsibility is added to their other duties to enforce the Health and Safety at Work Act; The COSHH Regulations and, of course, the Environmental Health (Food Hygiene) Regulations. Your local inspector is now able to take a broad look at the workplace with his enforcers eye; so what will he be looking for with his FEPA/pesticides hat on?

The inspection is going to be 'by the book', as most EHO's will not have much experience of the use of pesticides on the golf course. They are likely to take a more severe view of even small points than the HSE agriculture inspector and have powers to issue Improvement Notices giving a number of days (usually 30) to carry out the improvements or else!

Because the Regulations place a duty upon the employer to protect staff and the environment from any hazards arising out of the application of pesticides, it would be wise for the employer to have a formally written policy setting out the Club's position. The inspector on reading this will be in no doubt that the Club accepts its responsibilities and has taken steps to meet them. The policy will set out how the Club intends to meet the main requirements of the Regulations, these being clearly set out in the Code of Practice for the use of Approved Pesticides (copies from David Golding).

The inspector will want to see details of the training and certification of staff, and this should include office copies of the certificates and details of the training carried out. If the training and testing was carried out more than three years ago, there should be details of revision courses carried out or proposed. Just having certificates is not enough, for staff must be kept up to date on the many changes that are taking place in product labelling, application techniques etc.

'The inspector will look at the general condition of the sprayers'

The storage of pesticides is important. The inspector will want to see the store, the inventory, spill clean-up procedures, empty container storage and disposal arrangements. There are changes in approvals for some pesticides: some are being withdrawn (simazine and atrazine 1992/3), others are being discontinued. Make sure that all the products in store are up to date and approved.

The pesticides applicators will be inspected and the inspector will look at the general condition of the sprayers: are they clean; do they look clean; are there any worn or chafed hoses, is there a clean water tank for rinsing of containers and for operators to wash after mixing a batch of pesticide out on the course.

The pesticide application records are important too. The Code of Practice has a suggested format for a record of pesticides application. The records must be kept for at least three years and may be important for health monitoring if staff have been using organ-phosphorous or carbamate chemicals.

The issuing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) will also be looked at. The new PPE Regulations (to be published shortly) will form a part of inspection. The first question to be answered is whether the PPE is 'suitable for the purpose'. Are there data sheets showing the equipment has been tested and is suitable for protection against the pesticides in use. Is the equipment clean, in good condition and stored separately from other clothing where it can dry. If respirators (RPE) are in use, they must have the correct filter fitted, they must be stored in a sealed bag and be in a clean condition. Many respirators are supplied with dust filters as standard so when buying respirators tell the supplier what they will be used for and make sure they are supplied with data sheets showing that they are suitable.

If a Club has made a good start by implementing a policy, has good storage arrangements; owns good equipment; has trained staff and is keeping good records, the inspector will be much less likely to go into print on what improvements he requires. But if no effort has been made then beware - the inspector will not be amused and may well add a lot of improvement items under health and safety legislation as well.

JON ALLBUTT

Bookings up and hotel prices stay the same for BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition 1993

Bookings are UP on this time last year, for the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition in Harrogate, with a number of companies exhibiting for the first time.

Although it's early days, the stage is set for another hugely successful event. The 1992 exhibition was hailed by many to be the best so far.

The majority of exhibitors who took space in this year's exhibition, have booked their positions again for January. Exhibitions Officer Debbie Savage believes exhibitors are moving more quickly this year, in order to secure the best stand spaces.

And there's further good news for delegates. The Old Swan Hotel, situated just around the

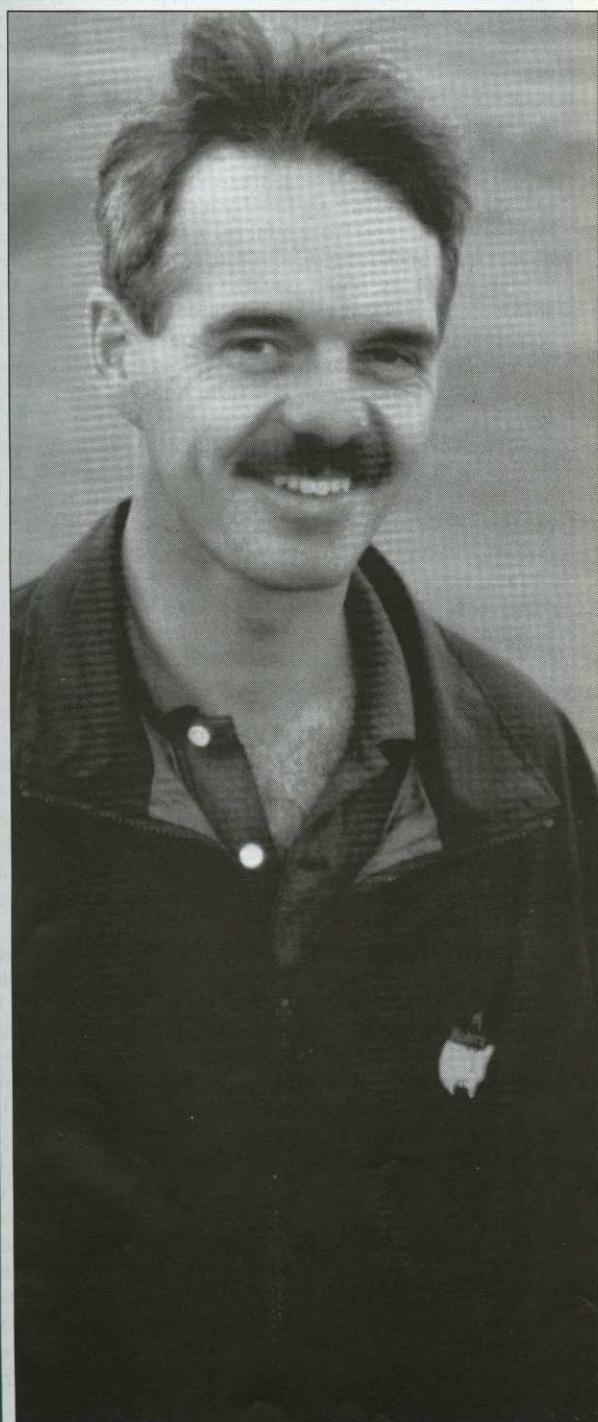


corner from the exhibition and focal point for a number of activities, have agreed to peg their prices for the 1993 BTME. Rates remain at £59 (single) per person and £72 (double) per room, including full English breakfast. Reservations can be made now by ringing direct on 0423 500055. Quote your atten-

dance to the BTME to reserve these rates.

As last year, the BTME Newline will be distributed in October. It will give visitors and delegates news and industry information on what they can expect to see at the show. Companies who have already booked their stand positions will soon be invited to contribute news of intended product launches, or any other relevant information. Information for the Newline can be sent straight away, however, to Debbie Savage at BIGGA HQ.

■ For more details about the show, or for a copy of the comprehensive BTME 1993 Information Pack, call Debbie on 03473 581 or fax 03473 8864.



THE OPEN

All eyes will soon be upon Muirfield for golf's premier tournament. Ready for the action is Chris Whittle, the course manager who went for his job with "guns blazing" for the chance to handle an Open venue. DAVID WHITE reports on the man and his mission

When the victor of the 121st Open Championship marches down the eighteenth fairway of Muirfield on July 19th, savouring the sweet smell of success and basking in the tumultuous cheers and adulation, there will be another who will share equally in that victory. His name? Christopher Alan Whittle, golf course manager to the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers at Muirfield, East Lothian, Scotland – the undisputed number one golf course in Great Britain.

Despite the clatter of grandstands being built and giant marquees being lifted high to the sky, the place that is Muirfield still retained its undoubted air of aristocratic elegance when I called to see Chris Whittle, so much so that the raising of voices or the revving of engines seemed tantamount to hooligan behaviour – one must always be on one's best mark in such august surroundings. Granted, the place was being turned into a circus arena for The Championship, with hundreds of contractors beavering away, but above the bustle Chris Whittle, pictured left, remained serenely calm, despite this being his Open preparation debut.

Chris and I had met before – at Royal Birkdale in '91 – and I had walked the links of Muirfield many times, falling for those subtle bunkers that lurk to trap the least weakness – fade or draw – and always impressed by the sheer discipline of the course: Muirfield wants good golf to be played, but it never allows liberties. I knew how good the course was as a golfing examination – now I could see that it was most exquisitely well kept. ➡

'Business as usual, but

My first question for Chris – I really wanted to know – was “how does an Englishman come to be managing the number one Scottish course, indeed the number one rated course in all of Britain, here in the very heartland of what many regard as Scotland’s Mecca”. His answer was honest and without an ounce of side – “Why not – I had always set my sights on managing an Open venue and when I saw this post advertised I went for it, all guns blazing”.

Chris’s story-book career in golf began in the time-honoured way as a schoolboy golfer who caddied on Formby Links. Although he became a banker on leaving school in 1971 this was short-lived, for he gave himself just six months in which to either like banking or quit – six months to the day he resigned! Straight to Formby he strode and asked for a job, which by good fortune was given to him, working as an apprentice greenkeeper under the inimitable Jimmy MacDonald, now head greenkeeper at Royal Lytham & St Annes.

“Jimmy has taught me just about everything I know”, Chris said, “he’s just about the best in the business and he certainly knows how to keep a ‘mean’ golf course”. Praise indeed, which perhaps explains why Chris needed no second bidding, on completion of five years at Formby, to join Jimmy at Royal Lytham. Good fortune continued when Jimmy’s deputy soon moved to Royal Dornoch, for Chris was offered the deputy’s job! Time moved on, skills were honed to perfection and Chris was ready in 1981 for his first ‘head’ job, close by at St Annes Old Links, a delicious course much loved by all who play upon it and known as a fine challenge for those who seek to qualify for The Open. The practice of keeping a ‘mean’ links continued at St Annes Old and in October 1988, well skilled and eminently well suited, Chris took up his present role as course manager of Muirfield.

“How does your present job as course manager manifest itself”, I asked, “Ninety per cent in directing and supervising the management of course and crew, with, if I’m lucky, ten per cent ‘hands-on’”, he replied. “The trouble is the minute I’m in a ‘hands-on’ situation, someone wants me, so my tendency now is to delegate more”.

He expanded on getting the job, telling the tale of driving from Lytham to Muirfield during Open week, the fateful Friday of the downpour and subsequent flooding, of turning on the TV in his hotel room and seeing Walter Woods pushing water off the ninth at Lytham. “I wondered what the hell was going on”, he grinned. “Could it happen at Muirfield”, I asked, “unlikely” the quick reply. “What happens here is that once the soil profile is wet it will take all the rain imaginable. It may show a temporary puddle or two, but once any dry layer is moist, which takes minutes, even if the heavens are open the course will drain beautifully – almost to the point of disbelief. Most of the sandy soil particles are uniform in size and the pull through is remarkable. One thing though, if there is a break in the drought, July will be the month, though God forbid it should happen during The Championship”.

Having been selected from a ‘field’ of 32 applicants, Chris started at Muirfield the week after the 1988 Home International Matches and just in time for winter preparations, so he quickly had to assess immediate needs, prioritise the work, and think about formulating a machinery replacement programme. “I’ve never had a bad employer”, Chris ventured, “but these folk are without doubt the best, good as their word, fully supportive in everything I do or ask for in my roll-over replacement programme, and very knowledgeable collectively in golf course management. They don’t want the place to be too green, they’re true links golfers to a

MUIRFIELD'S MAJOR MACHINERY

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Jacobsen Tri-King 1671D*
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6 Ransomes Autocertes 20in. Mk3v
1 Ransomes Autocertes 20in. Mk2
2 Ransomes Autocertes 18in. MkB
3 Ransomes Marquis. 10 JLO Flymo GT2s
Allen Pro Brushcutter 43.

* Acquired over the past 4 years as part of a roll-over/replacement programme.

man, which is wonderful for me. We meet five times a year and I give my report on what has been done and what will be done. I also write an explanatory bulletin for the members notice board, which prepares them for any disruptive maintenance work and prevents futile questions”.

“Muirfield is about 200 miles north of the Fylde coast, but is much dryer, with around 50% less rain, though gales are a problem and an ‘overnighter’ will take upwards of 60 man-hours to replace bunker sand. We had eleven gales one spring, which took up most of my labour for weeks on end”.

“How long did it take you to get the course to your own personal high standards”, I asked, “well, it can never be perfect, for links maintenance is an on-going thing”, Chris replied. “We can seek perfection, but there is always something... the course is fully grassed, a mixture with a moderate degree of course grasses such as patches of rye, dating back to a time when seed for divoting was unspecified. We’re soon to start a campaign to remove this, for apart from the unsightly appearance it’s awkward to cut. The greens are fine, though we get a flush of *Poa annua* in April, but it soon goes as we are too dry for the weed to cope. We fertilise very little – I’m a minimal man in this respect and always have been – Jim Arthur proved to me the wisdom of this approach and I’m a devoted fan. Everything he ever showed me works very well and is so simple. Granted that sometimes it hurts before it gets better, but prevention is better than cure, of that I am convinced – ‘tis a pity more people don’t follow his creed, which, simply applied, is keep it basic”.

A typical playing season at Muirfield starts in April, though the Club don’t encourage stroke play and the average field for a medal is a mere handful. The proper game is foursomes. Weeds were a huge problem when Chris first arrived and over £2000 is spent annually on selective applications, not only for the course proper but also turf nurseries, paths and practice grounds – all call for treatment and they are now well on top of the problem. All watered is by hand – no automatic system – and though the idea of installing a system is discussed just about every year, the members express greater satisfaction in playing on a fine-textured, sometimes browning, turf at Muirfield than on a lush green one elsewhere! True links golf indeed. Chris opined that there might be an automatic need at the moment of Open Championship preparation, when they are busy chasing hosepipes around the course, but true to his minimalistic beliefs, he suggested that at the end of a season – any season – automatic water is about the last thing on his mind.

“Mainly the season is taken up with watering, weed spraying and mowing, just like any other course, and at the back-end of the year I usually get a Vertidrain in to treat at least part of the course, mainly fairways, tees and paths, and we begin our own aeration programme, with spiking, hollow tining, whatever is necessary. We also go mad on re-turfing, using our own nursery turf, because it must be down and rooted before the year end. This is very necessary, as we can get frost and gales, which really do crash in with a vengeance and bring us scuttling back to base to work on machinery or boundary work and scrub clearance. We are inundated with rabbits and employ contractors to do their worst – using gas; snares; shooting; ferrets or whatever. They are a huge problem and we actually had one tee collapse on us through underground burrowing: we backed a tractor on it and the whole thing sunk! We rebuilt it, fitted a reinforced plastic mesh below ground and have it netted off, which helps”.

“Tell me about your plans for The Open”, I asked. “It’s

more of it'

really business as usual, but more of it', Chris replied, "more intensive maintenance – and obviously we are protecting the greens and not cutting them quite so low – normally at this time we would cut at 3/16", mowing six days a week with three hand cuts and three by machine, but at the moment we are cutting at 1/4", though obviously we shall gradually lower to 1/8" when the Championship approaches – it will all be very gradual, ending up with a twice-daily cut using both hand machines and the Jacobsen Triplex, which we stipulated should have extra blades in the verticuts from 3/4" to 1/2" spacing – it's a great machine!

David Boocock, the STRI agronomist, is a regular caller, increasingly so during Open year and we think along the same lines. He's a great help and we sort out any problems together". I asked about the R&A influence, which Chris indicated was minimal, "I'm sure they would have greater input if things were not to their liking, and they've been around quite a bit over the past year playing, inspecting and walking the course. It seems they're happy. Bear in mind, however, I've worked at Clubs where major R&A events have been staged. I've had the Curtis Cup, Ryder Cup, English Amateur, British Amateur, Home Internationals, The Open whilst at Lytham and I've had the British Amateur since I've been here, so I'm not new to the task or the demands. The R&A folk work fantastically well, manage their side of this huge operation quite remarkably and ensure that contractors are in the right place and not running around where they shouldn't be – they smooth out a lot of wrinkles and are great at team work".

"Any particular problems this year", I asked, "Drought" the quickfire reply. "We have a bit of browning-off and moss is a recurring problem. It's been difficult to eradicate as we've had no growth to speak of until a few weeks go – just a typical East Lothian cold, dry spring – so we just get on with it. During the season we don't fertilise much, maybe two light feeds of an 8-0-0 on greens and tees, and this year we've dressed the fairways with a farmyard type slurry dressing, followed perhaps next year with a seaweed formula".

Almost inevitably my next question was, "what will you do to the greens, will you be doing anything special". Chris is a man who knows about tournament golf and has the answers: "Obviously we will increase the frequency of mowing, our greens are undulating and cutting at 1/8" will make them plenty fast enough. In the final analysis, of course, it will be down to the R&A to tell me if they are too fast, but I fancy they'll be fine. We cut at 1/8" for the British Amateur and they were plenty fast enough!" "Tell me about stimpmeter readings", I asked and again this was clearly answered by a man who knows: "I've got one but frankly I haven't found it helpful enough, undulations are such that you can get far too many variable readings – easily the best way to judge is to get out and play the course and all my nine staff are very observant players".

This team of nine includes a full time fitter, though with an increasingly large percentage of state-of-the-art machinery used, his time is now split 50/50 with on-course work. A good example of changing ancient for modern is seen on the cylinder grinding side: from somewhat archaic old grinders capable of handling only up to 30" reels, and resulting in an annual bill of £750 for off-site grinding, Muirfield workshops now boast an ultra modern Juno grinder and a Garfitts spin grinder – money and time savers both.

Another nice 'Whittle touch' is the thinking behind never spraying chemicals during playing time – an ecology move that may mean a 5am start -with Chris at the helm keeping his hand in – and again at 8pm for a couple of hours.

Turning thoughts to Open week proper, Chris is greatly looking forward to the big occasion, though he's far too busy to be nervous – "it may happen, who knows", he says with a wry grin. He'll be pleased to welcome the BIGGA support team in their distinctive regalia, is delighted that help from BIGGA is close at hand whenever it may be needed and is the Association's most enthusiastic supporter – "haven't we come on well in the past couple of years" his astute observation.

Great champions have been crowned at Muirfield and to a man they've heaped praise upon its hallowed acres. Five times winner, Tom Watson, acclaims Muirfield as a place where 'there isn't one poor hole on the course'. As the world's TV cameras flash the saga of The Open across the airwaves into billions of homes, many watching will also give silent thanks to Christopher Alan Whittle and his dedicated team of expert greenkeepers, maybe even waving a flag or two – quite rightly so.





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