

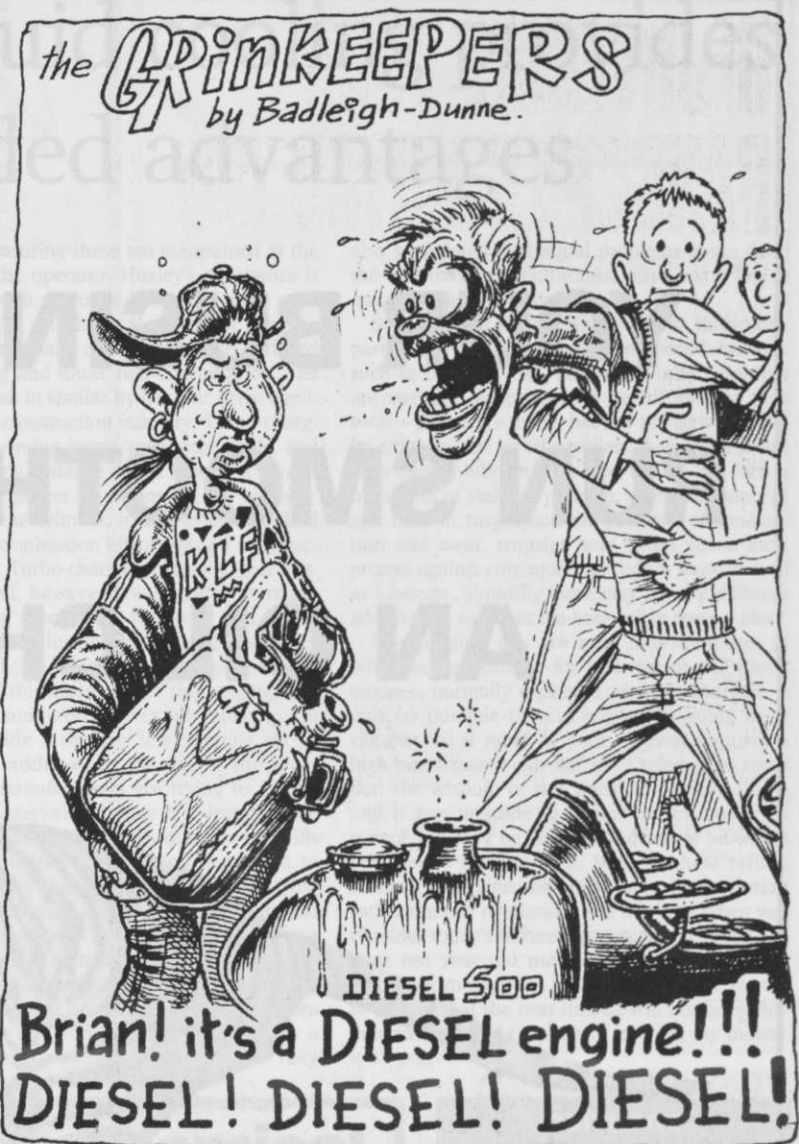
INES

Then the question is, can I get an engine to fit my machine? The answer is most probably yes, as engines are now available in a very wide range of configurations from single and twin cylinder air cooled units which can be obtained in horizontal or vertical crankshaft form through multi-cylinder water cooled units. Engines are available with drive from either or both ends of the crankshaft and with additional PTO's for hydraulic pumps. Starting can be by rope, recoil, hand crank or battery. Power ratings can be from about 5hp onwards with very good torque characteristics.

As much machinery used on golf courses is imported from America (where fuel is cheap) the use of high horsepower petrol engines goes by unnoticed. In the UK, however, petrol is very expensive, particularly in relation to gas oil or 'red' diesel, so much so that a diesel engine can more than pay for itself in fuel saving in less than a year. If these savings can be made on a long life engine for one piece of equipment, imagine the scale of economy when a whole fleet of golf course equipment is considered; and as every course manager and greenkeeper will know, cost is of paramount importance. All courses have tractors and therefore diesel fuel will be readily obtainable. Its extended use will reduce the quantity of highly inflammable petrol that needs to be stored at any one time.

Now that diesel engines are made to be more readily started, many of the small units can be as easy to start on the recoil as a petrol engine. The multicylinder indirect injection engines have heater plugs and many or all of the features found on modern automotive diesel engines to ensure that they are trouble-free cold starters.

The diesel no longer need be regarded with suspicion, for it can be easily started, is reliable, economical and has a very long service life. There is a type and configuration for nearly every job on a golf course. As we have already seen, engines can be bought from small air cooled single cylinder versions to multicylinder liquid cooled units with their own radiators. Now is the time of year to consider re-engineing



that expensive equipment with a long life, low fuel consumption diesel engine.

■ Greenkeeper International acknowledges the assistance given in compiling this comparison feature from Briggs & Stratton (petrol) and Tecnamotor (diesel).

Engine efficiency means less pollution

by HUGH TILLEY

Fuel economy was the prime goal for engine development a few years ago but now the goal posts are in front of lower emissions and pollution control – reflecting demand by customer, user and the general public. In particular the golf playing public is expecting mowers to be seen (but only if essential), but not heard nor smelt, (nor should they smoke or otherwise pollute the atmosphere). For the operator there are also health and safety hazards in noise and toxic and obnoxious emissions which have to be avoided. Development is also taking place in engine management systems which offer considerable scope for improvement in engine efficiency, the main factor restricting their introduction appearing to be cost and acceptability.

There is a clamour for bio-degradable and synthetic oils though this ideal has yet to match the reality. There has been rationalisation in the number of makes of small engine used in turf machinery, perhaps as smaller makers fall behind in R & D and marketing, and today is the day of the lightweight, high speed, compact diesel engine, especially for the professional who values the greater economy and reliability they offer – so

says one leading maker of such engines. Another manufacturer suggests that one gallon of diesel will do the work of three gallons of petrol, similarly he estimated the service life of a diesel to be twice or three times as long, perhaps 10,000 against 3/4,000 hours. This may be exaggerated as the latest petrol engines also have improved consumption and a longer service life. A number of American manufacturers have been a little tardy in adapting their machines to diesel – because 'gasoline' is cheap (in America). In the UK, diesel has many advantages and prime reasons for specifying it include the ease, safety, and convenience of storing. Considerations over whether to specify diesel or petrol must also look at annual running hours: some machines will never put in sufficient hours to justify the extra cost of a diesel engine. Significant advances have been made in petrol engines, and petrol is still the predominant fuel for pedestrian operated equipment, and because weight, simplicity and cost are usually important, most are air cooled. Much noise has been designed out by better balanced components and improved ignition chambers, and the trend is towards overhead valves which, while more complex and expensive, do

result in better ignition, – thus a cleaner, quieter burn and improved fuel efficiency.

Solid state or electronic ignition has made a dramatic improvement in both the reliability and performance of small petrol engines. Most people have also been converted to low octane unleaded fuel without real trouble. Many of these petrol engines now have automatic decompression systems which dramatically reduce the effort required to start them, this is particularly noticeable with recoil starters, but it also applies to key starting. Because the engine spins more readily so is it quicker to start -making 'first pull' starts more of a reality. The saving in broken cords and frustration can be quite real too.

Diesel engines are now available from about 5hp, and while they are more expensive than an equivalent petrol version they may now be very little heavier. Air cooled versions can be expected to be noisier than an equivalent liquid cooled version, but the deeper note of the diesel may be more acceptable than the more penetrating tone of an air cooled petrol engine.

The latest generation of diesels, particularly for ride-ons etc., are likely to be compact multicylinder water cooled designs, and these → 23

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21 → will be seen more and more widely on golf courses as manufacturers ranges expand. These engines are inevitably of the indirect injection type which means they have a pre-combustion chamber. This 'feature' may be lost on the average greenkeeper, whose main interest is whether they work reliably. What he will notice is that indirect injection engines (usually) need the air in the cylinder to be pre-heated (with a glow-plug) before they will start, whereas the direct injection design, prevalent on tractors, will normally happily start after a few turns of the starter – battery drain is about the same either way. Indirect injection is slightly less economical on fuel although paradoxically it is actually more fuel efficient, it is also significantly quieter with a lower level of particulate emissions – ie. smoke, – telling advantages which come from the better controlled and relatively slower burn of the fuel.

Despite the extra complications of radiator and circulation system and the extra cost, the majority of compact diesel engines have liquid cooling, usually water. The significant advantages of this are in providing a more effective medium for heat transfer, and by providing a sound deadening jacket around the noise generation combustion chamber. If radiators and so on are an abhorrence, or unsuited for other reasons, perhaps an air cooled petrol engine is the better option.

The 'engine management system' on most small engines is a hand/foot throttle and mechanical governor with advance and retard mechanism. Motor racing is pioneering electronic controls which sense more parameters faster, and as well as the setting of the throttle and the engine's revs they can monitor load and power demand to give a faster response and significantly better fuel efficiency. The first (and currently only) manufacturer to use electronic engine control in the turf industry is Huxleys with their Electronic Drive Control (EDC) on the Huxtruk. While not fully integrated into the engine this unit controls engine and hydrostatic transmission according to the power and speed demands of the PTO

Liquid cooling provides added advantages

and wheels, ensuring these are maintained at the speed set by the operator. Huxley's experience is that the EDC unit responds faster and more positively than the mechanical governor on the engine, and they claim quieter operation, reduced engine loading and lower fuel consumption. The unit was proven in similar hydrostatic drive applications in the construction industry. Turbo-charging is also becoming increasingly acceptable, and while in the first instance it was seen as a way of increasing the power of an engine, by 'blowing' extra air into the cylinder, it does offer a method of improving combustion efficiency and so reducing emissions. Turbo-charging places greater burdens on the oil, however few manufacturers are now specifying specific oils for diesel and turbo-diesel engines. Reducing emissions also includes reducing crankcase emissions – a major source of pollutant, and this means better ring sealing, and lower oil consumption. Lower oil consumption has a down side – there is less 'topping up' to replenish the additives in the oil. At the same time engine manufacturers are trying to extend their service intervals. If there is a lesson to be learned it is that the less often one fills or refills the sump the better quality of oil one ought to buy. One major lubricant manufacturer told Greenkeeper International that they have looked (and continue to look) at oils on the golf course (literally as well as metaphorically). Their conclusion is that bio-degradability has limited value, as much of the damage from oil spillage comes from suffocating the leaf and root of the grass, thus a wetter and water may be the best answer. They

also speculated that equal problems come from the additives and pollutants, often toxic heavy metals, which are in the oil.

Several firms are offering synthetic lubricants, particularly greases or special purpose lubricants such as chain-saw oil. Teflon and other additives are available which can reduce friction and thus wear – claims are many, but few are actively 'sold' by either engine or oil suppliers. A major problem with engine lubrication is that the oil has such a multitude of tasks to perform: to clean, intercept and hold in suspension the products of combustion and wear, transfer heat (from piston etc), protect against corrosion and reduce noise as well as lubricate. Typically there may be nine different additives to augment the base 'oil' in these duties.

Most engine oils are now multi-purpose, in other words, suitable for both petrol and diesel engines, normally aspirated or turbo-charged. It may be possible to save money by going for a cheaper oil if none of your engines requires a high performance oil, but the saving is so small that the wisdom of this must be questionable – and if you upgrade to a new diesel mower or tractor you may be left with a drum of oil which you should not use in it. Most of these refinements (in engine and oil) came by evolution rather than by revolution, and it is only when you consider today's technology against the engine in your ten year old mower that you realise the strides technology has made – nor is there reason to believe that the next decade will not bring further advances. (As a point of interest, my mower is 33 years old!)

Correct approach to chemical usage: sensitive and sensible

Careful chemical selection and weed control programme planning will do much to answer the growing public and legislative pressures related to herbicide use in sensitive areas, according to Mark DeAth of weed control specialists Nomix-Chipman.

Speaking on the options for environmentally-friendly weed control at a specialist water quality seminar in London, Mr DeAth advised local authority and amenity managers to examine their options in detail. With the choice being between residual and non-residual herbicides, there are four primary strategies available to specifiers today, he said.

"The ultimate in environmental acceptability is to use non-residuals only. This will obviously have a higher cost in that at least two applications will be needed each season to give an acceptable level of weed control. However it also poses the least risk of water contamination.

"Another option is to alternate between residuals and non-residuals, using a residual in a single application one season followed by a non-residual which may require several applications the next," he continued. "This will reduce the chemical burden on the environment while maintaining good weed control."

"The third possibility is to combine non-atrazine and simazine residuals with knock-

down herbicides. This eliminates the use of atrazine and simazine but maintains a high level of weed control from a single application at a comparable cost to a triazine-only programme.

"Finally, the most economic option is to use triazine mixtures. Although this will control weeds over an entire season from just one application, it carries the greatest risk to local water supplies. No official restrictions have yet been placed on the use of triazine mixtures, but it is widely accepted that curbs will soon apply."

DeAth went on to outline factors which govern the choice of weed control strategy, including the availability of labour, the need for operator safety and the application equipment to be used.

With herbicide application becoming as important as chemical choice in achieving the best balance, he defined the key application needs. Systems should maximise labour productivity, minimise spray drift and operator contamination, maximise chemical use and minimise chemical disposal problems.

"Whatever strategy is chosen, there are a number of operating guidelines which should be followed to minimise the risk of water contamination," he concluded. "If there is any doubt, seek professional advice from suppliers and ensure that all advisers are BASIS qualified."

OBITUARY

Joe Gillett – always proud of his 'calling'

It is with regret that I now inform fellow BIGGA members of the death of Joe Gillett, the much respected head greenkeeper of St Annes Old Links Golf Club from 1953 until 1981.

Joe, as all who knew him will surely recollect, was a great character and a skillful golfer who played with great enthusiasm, especially remembered as a worthy winner of the Ransomes Trophy at Wallasey in 1971.

Joe came from a family of greenkeepers and began his illustrious career in 1931 at the Fairhaven Golf Club. He was always proud of his calling and it gave him great pleasure to see his chosen profession grow from strength to strength.

We are all proud to have known him and on behalf of all his many friends and members in BIGGA, I send our deepest sympathy to his wife, Barbara, and to his family.

GEOFF WHITTLE

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Price cuts ■ Testing times

■ To my knowledge, most head greenkeepers prepare annual budgets for their respective Clubs and, once approved, work within accepted limits. To do this effectively one must have up-to-date prices and I am thus bound to ask 'why is it so difficult to get these from stockists?'

Writing in late April, I have received just one 1992 price list, and this came through the pages of Greenkeeper International. When requesting lists the excuse offered is often that they are still 'at the printers' or 'one will be sent' (still waiting!) and I am prompted to ask: why are they not printed at the same time as brochures, which are always in abundant supply?

Do stockists resist sending them for fear of price comparisons, or are they just saying to themselves 'greenkeepers need the products anyway, so why bother?'

I would like to think this letter will bring me some price lists, and would urge suppliers to send brochures *only* when they can be backed up with prices.

SAM MORRISON Head Greenkeeper,
Royal Aberdeen GC, Scotland

ate strategies are used and problems addressed. Our younger greenkeepers who feel their exam mark is below their ability at practical greenkeeping may well have a specific learning difficulty and should get specialist testing as soon as possible, as help should be available. The test for adults can cost around £25 and there is often a waiting list to endure. However, if a specific learning difficulty is established, help can be obtained in many areas and examining boards can allow extra time and/or make a greater allowance for spelling/grammar errors in such cases.

I think more discussion needs to take place on the subject in order to remove the cloud of academic failure from some of our able workers. How can the Association help? What can a head greenkeeper do if he believes one of his staff has a dyslexia problem?

More information about resources is available from local Dyslexia Institutes - details in local phone books - or contact the Dyslexia Institute, 133 Gresham Road, Staines, Middlesex TW18 2AJ.

RICHARD HEASLIP
Hainault Forest GC, Essex

■ I am writing to you to raise the subject of dyslexia. Over the last couple of years we have been in the process of getting help for our son, aged ten. Well, what has this to do with greenkeeping people you may ask? I shall try to explain.

We came to realise that our son was having learning difficulties, particularly in reading, writing, and also in short term memory, although he had no trouble solving practical problems. We took him to the Dyslexia Institute for assessment. The report confirmed our fears - in spite of an IQ of 120, specific learning difficulties were identified.

It was in conversation with the psychologist that she told us the Institute had been consulted by an agricultural college to advise of ways they might identify and help students who have problems. It had become apparent to the college that agriculture tends to attract a higher than average number of people who have some form of learning problem and greenkeeping must be included in this.

With more and more emphasis placed upon written examinations, this, in some circumstances, could preclude individuals with natural flair and ability from advancing to their full potential unless appropri-

■ I read with interest the articles (May G.I.) about water features on golf courses. Certain points led me to wonder how hazards such as these are now influencing the design of new courses in the British Isles. At Bank House they have 18 holes and a driving range in a limited site of just 120 acres. I presume that most of the 13 lakes must be used as safety zones between fairways, as opposed to being created for irrigation storage purposes or as part of the strategy of the course design.

I cannot admit to having visited the site, but the article gives the impression that the lakes are not in naturally occurring depressions which would normally collect surface water, especially when they are merely two feet deep.

What most interests me is the reason for creating all these lakes. I presume it is the 'Florida influence', as a majority of the resort courses in Florida feature lakes highly, but why? Is it to make the courses more difficult, or to improve the playability of the course, or is the real reason to provide further income for the developer in the resale of 'lake balls'? I think so, especially as they are becoming an increasingly profitable product in most pro's shops

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Letters

■ Golf isn't a water sport ■ Training is The Way Forward ■ A waste

nowadays, often selling at a premium. One resort course I know on the outskirts of Norwich undertakes several dredging operations throughout the year, a highly profitable exercise.

Surely this relates to the type of course being offered to the golfer – the developers of 'Pay-as-you-Play' courses are keen to keep players moving as swiftly as possible. If a golfer hits his ball into a lake, he doesn't have a choice – the ball is irretrievable, he has to forget it and play another. This means that five minutes are not otherwise spent looking for a ball in deep rough or scrub and it keeps the golfers moving. (Unless of course the golfer keeps playing each subsequent shot into the lake!)

This, however, has a detrimental effect on the standard of the golfer. How can a player ever become proficient at shots from different and varying lies if the only hazards on the course are water, closely mown semi-rough or widely spaced staked trees. Where is the rough and deep rough?

I feel that the element of surprise is, effectively, being removed by incorporating an excessive amount of lakes into a golf course design. Maybe this is best explained by the following analogy: two golfers tee off down a par 4 hole, one hits his ball straight, the other slices into the rough and scrub. The latter finds to his surprise and great pleasure that his ball has come to rest in a clearing – allowing him a shot to the green, with a chance of halving or even winning the hole. He has, in effect, been given a reprieve, but he has still got to be able to play a good recovery shot to take advantage of the situation. This makes for exciting golf. A lake allows for one result only – unplayable: reload! As a hazard it is so final, whereas deep rough will always provide for the possibility of another result – that which is based on an element of luck or good fortune.

Thinking back to some of the most exciting Open Championships, this element has always provided spectacle. Take, for instance, the memorable final rounds of Watson and Nicklaus at Turnberry in 1977. The result was uncertain right down to the final putt, and it almost swung in Nicklaus' favour after he made a remarkable recovery shot from a fortunate lie amongst the gorse and then proceeded to hole his putt for a three from the edge of the green. Watson was left with a

two footer to take the Championship by a shot, which he confidently holed.

Had Nicklaus' tee shot drifted into a lake as opposed to the gorse, the Championship would have been over before they had even reached the final green. And what an anticlimax that would have been.

My point in writing is an attempt to explain that there will always be a strong objection against the move towards golf as a water sport. It may well appeal to golfers in the USA but I fail to see it gaining nationwide approval in Britain. Firstly because of increasing problems relating to water shortages and to restrictions set by the NRA, and secondly because of the British golfers' reluctance in having to keep buying new balls.

Do not misunderstand me, though, because invariably, carefully located and well designed water features on a golf course can provide the perfect effect or setting. Depending upon the character of the site, a lake can be considered to be useful for several functions: in providing a positive outlet for drainage purposes; as part of the strategy of the golf course design when a natural depression exists; or for storage purposes for an irrigation system. Ideally, though, the latter will not be visible from the main playing areas.

It is up to the architects of these new courses to convince the developers that there are alternative ways of creating a hazard. In many cases I regard a lake as a 'cop-out' – where the architect lacks the imagination to provide something more stimulating.

I appreciate that the flow of golfers through these new facilities has to be maintained, but surely there has to be some compromise somewhere and by this I mean to provide some thick rough (or heather and gorse) in strategic locations on the course to give the golfer something to really get his teeth into.

JONATHAN GAUNT BA (Hons) Dip LA.
Golf Course Architect, Forest Gate,
London

■ For those sceptics amongst us who sometimes question the standing and direction of our Association, whilst suffering from a seemingly terminal dose of apathy, I would like to report on our (BIGGA Kent Section) strides forward and the recognition we are receiving.

David Wood and myself recently

attended a seminar organised by the Kent Golf Union at Rochester and Cobham GC, aimed at secretaries and captains. David was invited to talk on Greenkeeper Training, something that would have perhaps been unheard of at such an event in the past. Other speakers included Keith Wright, secretary of the EGU, on the role and objectives of the Union, Henry Wylie on the diversity of golfing organisations and Derek Pulford on the role of the County Unions. Much time was devoted to the speakers and delegates were involved in what turned out to be a fairly lively debate, mainly inspired by David's address. It would be fair to say that a minority of the delegates embarked on a spree of 'greenkeeper bashing.'

The usual chestnuts came to the fore: 'why do greenkeepers need training? They then ask for better wages and conditions or are poached by other courses or organisations'. 'One of the newly constructed greens on my course is appalling, it must be the greenkeeper's fault (even though he didn't build it!) and what yard stick can we use to show ineptitude and sack him!' Also 'why do greenkeepers need managerial, accounting and computer skills to cut grass' – this from the odd secretary no doubt fearing for his job. These comments were vigorously countered by Keith Wright, Brian Evans (KGU), David and myself, and it is clear that the Golf Unions and perhaps the majority of delegates actively support our efforts for a strong force of well trained, educated and skilled greenkeepers.

One of the keys to all this will be communication, with this seminar demonstrating how in the past this has been sadly lacking. I read the journals of the EGU and the Secretaries Association and it is clear from reading them that we all suffer the same problems and difficulties in carrying out our duties. These seem to be the haphazard way some Clubs are organised, the lack of funds available and the lack of active management policy in some areas.

As Keith Wright was at pains to point out, the EGU is the most poorly funded Union in Europe, although it caters for more golfers and offers a greater service – and as the gent with the dodgy greens also pointed out, he would like to have an agronomist look at them, but his Club and committee couldn't find one cheap enough!

I am pleased to say some were very keen for BIGGA to provide more information on training – perhaps encouragement for us to move forward and do more. Finally, may I thank Brian Evans and the KGU for a cracking event – I can't wait for the next one, for it is clearly what is needed to enhance co-operation, communication and response to 'The Way Forward'.

PAUL COPSEY Head Greenkeeper,
Barnhurst GC, Bexleyheath, Kent

■ The 'concerned greenkeepers' of West Sussex GC raise an important issue in your May edition. Our company gave consideration to the problem of container wastage at the design stage of our green foliar feed, Agrimaster, and we opted to reduce the number of plastic containers in circulation while offering a high nutrient input at the same time. In the result one 25 litre container of our concentrate proved sufficient for treating 18 golf greens, thus greatly reducing wastage, storage space and handling.

From time to time we have recovered empty containers from some of our larger users but transportation and cleaning costs (including investments in equipment) make this a discouraging proposition. Perhaps the plastics industry should itself take some responsibility for the recycling of packaging materials. However, we acknowledge the legitimate concerns of West Sussex GC and remain willing to discuss the matter with any interested parties.

ROGER WEST

Technical Director, Agriland Ltd.
Bournemouth, Dorset

■ In July of this year my husband, Eric Palmer, will have served 50 years as a greenkeeper – 41 of those as a head greenkeeper.

During his career he has worked on just three courses, Sitwell Park in Rotherham, Abbeydale in Sheffield, and his present Club – Hickleton near Barnsley.

His dedication to his work cannot be surpassed and he is and always has been a credit to his profession. He has seen so many changes over the years and I feel justly proud of him – indeed I have learned quite a lot myself.

Eric has been nominated by his first assistant for the 'Greenkeeper of the Year' award, but notwithstanding this I feel his 50 years of dedication deserve recognition.

MRS MARGARET PALMER

Baby, Doncaster, S Yorkshire

Management Courses



'In just a week at one of our Management Courses, greenkeepers can pick up a fantastic wealth of knowledge, new ideas, techniques and tips from top industry experts. Don't miss out!'

- DAVID GOLDING, BIGGA Education Officer

Join the buzz!

BOOKINGS are now being taken for the BIGGA Management Courses - fast becoming recognised as the best events of their kind throughout the entire industry.

And thanks to the continued financial support of Kubota UK and the Greenkeepers Training Committee, the in-house courses will once again be held at Aldwark Manor. In stylish surroundings delegates will be able to gain valuable knowledge, pick up new ideas and exchange views with their counterparts on other courses and some of greenkeeping's top names.

For six weeks commencing in mid-October, Aldwark Manor - home of BIGGA HQ - will be buzzing with all that's happening to make tomorrow's greenkeeper better equipped than ever before.

This is the fourth year of the courses. Delegates who have attended in the past will be aware of the need, therefore, to book early. It's a rolling programme, so book straight away for your next year. If you haven't already witnessed the superb facilities at Aldwark Manor, apply today for Year One. Priority will be given on Years Two, Three and Four to delegates who have attended in previous years.

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To reserve your place, complete the pre-paid postcard in this magazine. If you have any queries or you need more information, call Sue Gudgeon on 03473 581/2. There are only limited places available and interest is always high: book straight away to avoid disappointment.



Management Courses Autumn/Winter 1992: TIMETABLES

Year 1 16-20 November 1992 or 23-27 November 1992. Delegates per week: 20

	9am - 12 noon	1.30pm - 4.00pm	4.30pm - 7.00pm
Monday	Delegates arrive at BIGGA HQ for lunch at noon	How to manage your time more effectively: David Illingworth	Introduction to computers: Fred Robinson
Tuesday	Computers: continued Fred Robinson	Grasses for the Golf Course: Andy Newell STRI	Communication workshop: Nick Bisset, Askham Bryan College
Wednesday	Conservation on the Golf Course: Robert Taylor, STRI	Problems associated with the maintenance of Greens, Tees, Bunkers, Surrounds and Fairways: STRI speakers	
Thursday	Health & Safety Update: Jon Allbutt		
Friday	Turf Grass Diseases: STRI speaker	Delegates depart following lunch	

Each day: Coffee break: 10.30am • Lunch: 12 noon
Tea break: 4pm • Dinner is served at 7.30pm

Year 2 2-6 November 1992 or 9-13 November 1992. Delegates per week: 20

	9am - 12 noon	1.30pm - 4.00pm	4.30pm - 7.00pm
Monday	Delegates arrive at BIGGA HQ for lunch at noon	Assertiveness: Frank Newberry and Lesley Moore	Report Writing: Frank Newberry and Lesley Moore
Tuesday	Verbal Presentations: Frank Newberry and Lesley Moore	Leadership: Frank Newberry and Lesley Moore	Presentation: Frank Newberry and Lesley Moore
Wednesday	Health & Safety at Work Act 1974: Jon Allbutt		
Thursday	Preparing a Health & Safety Statement of Safety Policy/Preparing a Risk Assessment (COSHH-FEPA): Jon Allbutt		
Friday	Fertilisers: What are the Options? David Lawson, STRI	Delegates depart following lunch	

Each day: Coffee break: 10.30am • Lunch: 12 noon
Tea break: 4pm • Dinner is served at 7.30pm

Year 3 26-30 October 1992. Delegates per week: 20

	9am - 12 noon	1.30pm - 4.00pm	4.30pm - 7.00pm
Monday	Delegates arrive at BIGGA HQ for lunch at noon	Job Interview	Writing and Assessing CVs
Tuesday	Team Development	Managing Performance: Paul Whiteley and Frank Newberry	
Wednesday	Surveying: Robert Everett, STRI		Finance: What are the Options? Keith Jaynes
Thursday	Construction of Golf Greens: Brian D Pierson, British Association of Golf Course Contractors		
Friday	Preparing and Implementing a Course Policy Document: David Stansfield, STRI	Delegates depart following lunch	

Each day: Coffee break: 10.30am • Lunch: 12 noon
Tea break: 4pm • Dinner is served at 7.30pm

Year 4 19-23 October 1992. Delegates per week: 20

	9am - 12 noon	1.30pm - 4.00pm	4.30pm - 7.00pm
Monday	Delegates arrive at BIGGA HQ for lunch at noon	Advanced Public Speaking	Marketing and Customer Care
Tuesday	Negotiating Skills: Paul Whiteley and Frank Newberry	Working Under Pressure: Paul Whiteley and Frank Newberry	
Wednesday	First Aid		
Thursday	Health & Safety at Work Update: Jon Allbutt		
Friday	Presenting a Course for Championships: Bruce Jamieson, PGA European Tour	Delegates depart following lunch	

Each day: Coffee break: 10.30am • Lunch: 12 noon
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BIG ROLL KEEPS TURNIN'

There is a perversity in big business that belies good sense in that it feeds and flourishes on bad news, with the world of fine turf certainly no exception. One company rubs its hands with glee as another reports falling dividends or losses, a contrariness difficult to understand when one appreciates that almost any bad news in a given industry may have a knock-on negative effect. Taking this a stage further, I still wonder how many companies talked themselves into recession by taking too much notice of the doom and gloom fed to them in the 'heavies'?

What is even more surprising is that bad news moves faster than good, gathering rumour upon embellishment upon innuendo as the story travels down the line. Thus it was with the snippet which circulated less than two months ago, purporting to tell of the demise/bankruptcy/closure/insolvency/receivership of Lawn Tech, the Lawn on a Roll company. This was a story that had my telephone humming for several days, versions changing with the tide.

My nature is to sniff out the truth and I was therefore heartened by the suggestion of Andy Church, the ex-Tottenham Hotspur head groundsman turned sales manager for Lawn Tech, who ventured the idea at Westurf that the true telling of their story would do much to clear muddied waters, whilst perhaps serving as a salutary lesson to others on the perils that lurk for the unwary when conducting business in the 1990s, together with the miserable inconsistencies and utterly unfair laws prevailing in company liquidation.

To begin at the beginning, readers should understand that Lawn Tech are not turf producers, rather they are the inventors and manufacturers of Big Roll turf laying machinery and independent suppliers and layers of turf grown by others within the industry, notably Inturf. Their work is the laying of big rolls in a controlled fashion, undertaken for the contractor doing the job on a given site. They began by developing their new machinery in 1990, completing trials by the end of that year and founding the company proper in March 1991, funded by independent sources. At the beginning there was almost universal scepticism about whether the system would work, even from Inturf, though they were eager to be proved wrong and Inturf's managing director, Derek Edwards, intimated that if it proved successful the machine could change the face of the industry and his company certainly wanted to be where the action was!

Taking up the story, Chris Bradshaw, the company's sales director, told of a successful first year when from a standing start they laid no less than 500,000 square yards, mainly fine turf for greens and tees. Being totally frank, he also admitted that in being very hungry for business the company failed to look carefully enough at some of those they were working for, and in the

process they picked up irretrievable debts to the tune of £80,000. In particular, one single company (owing the major part of that £80,000) went into liquidation only to start up in business again the following week! In a sentence, Chris opined that this practice was obscene and should be illegal. Rightly and visibly angered, he further suggested that his anger is not just a personal thing, for he knows of other companies where the same thing has happened, rather a frustration for the injustice of a system which allows the miscreants to pull a 'fast one' and then re-form the same company under a different name on the same premises, using the same assets and employing the same people. Since company law dictates that this is not an illegal practice, there is a total impotence to get back at them – or for that matter, to get even!



This debt left the company strapped for cash going into winter – an obvious leaner time in the turf industry – and their position was rapidly worsening. They were left with three alternatives. Perhaps the simplest was insolvency but the consequences for this were too miserable to contemplate. The next was to struggle through, which was just possible, though in doing so they would be putting others at risk if they failed and therefore of hurting creditors even more by going down in a much bigger way. The final option was to enter a Corporate Voluntary Arrangement (CVA), a system whereby a deal is made with creditors to pay what is derisively called a 'dividend' – a part payment of the debt, though substantially bigger than any resulting from insolvency – with an assurance that since the creditors were effectively helping the ailing company to stay in business, they would obviously be the first to benefit when the corner turned and the company became self supporting. The CVA method can only be entertained when a company can demonstrate to the courts (putting aside its immediate financial problems) that it is a viable business with a future.

With a few rather piddling exceptions, the creditors rightly opted for CVA and have been most supportive. Added funds were provided by

the investors the day after CVA (March 27th) and this is held in escrow until the Inland Revenue can OK figures (which they know are right, but the Civil Service can be so slow...) when creditors will receive payment.

Inevitably there has to be some sacrifices at all levels, and the company has taken a long, hard look at itself and brought in economies to become altogether leaner and meaner. The company is now run by Chris Bradshaw and Richard Pickance, the finance director originally put in by investors to act as their 'policeman' and now a shareholder. Chris pointed out that the recession had hit their business hard but late, coming very quickly and effectively reducing prices for the service they provide by about 20%, not by any reduction in material, labour or running costs, but simply from gross profit, in order to remain competitive.

What they definitely could not afford to do is fund any more bad debts. Specifically, their major debtors came from outside the fine turf area – from landscaping to be more precise – and from discussions within the fine turf industry they now realise that this sector is one in which to tread very warily indeed, to be treated with caution or indeed suspicion.

They will now concentrate predominantly on golf, cricket, bowling and the like – and will look with an eagle eye at total ability to pay. Chris admits they were often so eager to get business that they were reluctant to press overly hard for payment. 'It seems silly now', he says 'and we'll not make the same mistakes again'.

Other economies include trading down on costly company vehicles – Chris has changed from a 4WD Nissan to a much more practical pick-up, which can be used by anyone and is a veritable workhorse for carrying machinery – and slimming down on staff by utilising well trained self-employed landscapers to augment the permanent turf laying team of six. An air of complete optimism prevails where just six weeks ago there was despondency.

Summarising, their future looks decidedly brighter and the feeling is that the recession is easing. Perhaps, Chris suggests, this is in part due to the country feeling more settled about the political future, quite irrespective of the colour of government. On the business front their 'phones have never been busier and deliveries of new machines are taking off – two scheduled for Sweden and a veritable gaggle off to the United States, where they have taken a storming market lead.

New, innovative companies often need more than a modicum of good luck to set them safely on their way; and certainly they can do without being stripped bare by unprincipled crooks. Time will tell if the formula is right now, but there can be no denying that the will to succeed at Lawn Tech is alive and well.

There is little doubt that Westurf is here to stay, growing both in quality and stature with each passing year. As a meeting place for greenkeepers and green chairmen in the South West and South Wales the excellent site at Long Ashton Golf Club knows no equal, and as a shop window for greenkeeping products and services it is undoubtedly reaching the parts that other shows cannot reach!

It is hard to put a finger on its success, but if there is one word that sums up Westurf '92 to a tee that word must be *enthusiasm*. This was evident in the enthusiasm generating from the hard working trio comprising Gordon Child, Ivor Scoones and Hugh Parry, who worked like Trojans to ensure that not a single thing was left to chance, and to a team of willing helpers who were as well drilled as any army - parking cars, directing traffic and making visitors feel very welcome indeed, despite a chilling wind which kept everyone on their toes.

The trade were equally enthusiastic in voting the event well worthwhile and this was borne out by increased participation, with 66 exhibitors taking up 92 stands and including many first time attendees. Informed gossip around the stands was of an upturn in business and traders general optimism indicated that perhaps the worst of the

dreaded recession is coming to an end.

Quite apart from well supported trade stands, demonstrations of new and established turf care machinery were seen to be very busy indeed, kept buoyant by a constant stream of enquiries and helped by an exhibition of tempting equipment presented in colourful fashion.

As is to be expected, the importance of education was highlighted by the representation of Cannington, Sparsholt and Pencoed Colleges from the South West and South Wales region, along with the Welsh college of Mold and backed up for the first time by the welcome appearance of an STRI stand, manned enthusiastically by Tim Colclough, the 'man on the spot' for those in the West.

Both BIGGA and IOG stands were kept busy with a constant stream of members dropping by, and it is good to see the friendship between the two Associations still thriving in this region - indeed Ted Cavell of the IOG was most helpful in adding support to the worthy efforts of Gordon Child - many thanks, Ted.

With over one thousand visitors through the gates by mid-day, Gordon can feel justly proud of Westurf and, glutton for punishment that he is, he is looking forward to repeating the whole exercise on April 28th 1993, even though organising this event is no lightweight task.



Westurf '92

Report and pictures by DAVID WHITE



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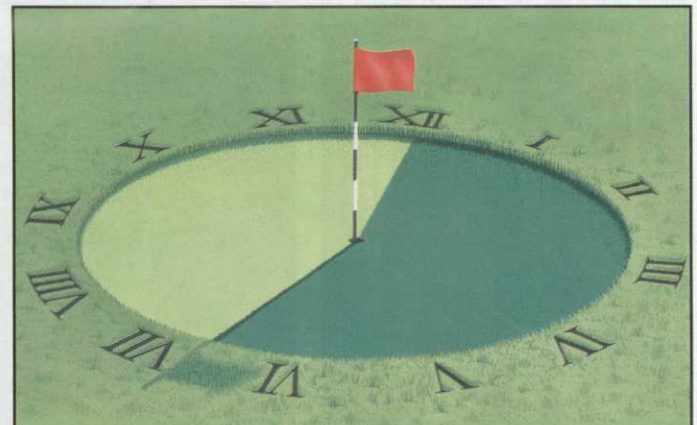
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