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Official publication of the  
British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association  
**APRIL 1993**

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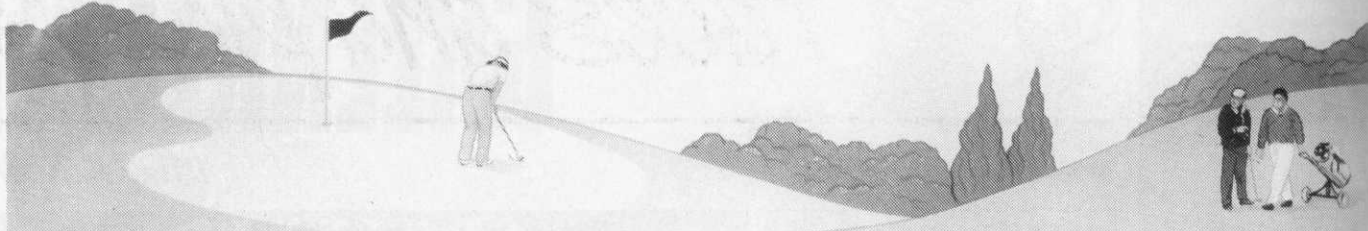
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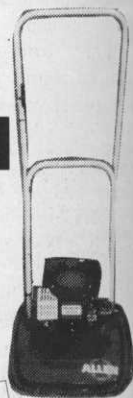
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# Faces and places



■ Yet another member of the greenkeeping profession is leaving the fairways to join the growing (some might say overcrowded) ranks of independent golf course consultants. David Jones, currently managing seven courses under the Whitbread (Country Club Hotels) banner, will go independent on 1 May. With some 30 years course management experience behind him, David has prepared playing surfaces for many European tour events and recently played a vital role in the development of the Forest of Arden course, venue for this year's Murphy's English Open. He can be contacted on 0291 629662.



■ As part of their continuing commitment to providing a first class service for the grass cutting and amenity market, Hayters have recently announced the appointment of Hamish Macfie as a demonstrator. Hamish is no newcomer to Hayters and their range of equipment, having worked on a casual basis with the company since he was 14 years old.

■ T Parker & Sons (Turf Management) Ltd. and Maxwell Hart Ltd. have merged under the name Parker Hart, operating from Worcester Park and Warrington. Neil Stewart of Maxwell Hart is appointed marketing director and Bob Cook of Parkers is appointed sales director.

Both Parkers and Maxwell Hart are long-established names in the market and they will continue to provide strong sales and technical representation, backed by a rapid distribution service throughout the UK. The best of their 'own label' products will be re-launched under the Parker Hart label and the company will continue to distribute branded pesticides, fertilisers and grass seed from the major manufacturers, as well as turf dressings from their sister company, Roffey Brothers. The southern sales office (and administration) will be at Worcester Park and the northern sales office will be at Warrington. Need more details? - call 081 3377791.



■ With a view to further increasing their Toro and Club Car activities, Lely (UK) Ltd have appointed Peter Mansfield to the post of general manager in their turf products division. Peter has been with Lely for 11 years and is fully experienced in all aspects of Toro management, having spent the last four years in control of the parts division.

■ Michel Mulder, marketing director of Barenbrug UK, will be tackling the 26 gruelling miles of his first London Marathon in April. Training hard, Michel is hoping to beat his personal best time of 3hrs. 37min. achieved in the '89 New York Marathon. A strict training programme involves running up to 60 miles each week. In addition to road work, much of Michel's training takes place at the Bury St. Edmunds sportsground which has been sown with a hard-wearing Barenbrug mixture, able to take the pounding of Michel's not insubstantial 6' 5" frame!

Training can be a very lonely job, but during the race Michel is hoping for some company - if not in person, then at least in spirit - in the form of sponsors. Cash raised will go towards Cot Death research and support (FSID). Anyone interested in helping this worthy cause and justifying Michel's blisters should contact Lorraine Lane on 0359 70766.

■ Following the retirement of Doug Walker after 27 years of service with John Deere Ltd., Alec McKee has been appointed as the new managing director for the UK and Ireland. After gaining an NDA from Harper Adams in 1967,

and the NDAgrE from Writtle College in 1968, Alec McKee worked for four years with a John Deere distributor in Zambia. He joined John Deere Ltd in 1972 as a trainee territory manager, becoming a territory manager in 1973, business management adviser in 1974, credit manager in 1975 and commercial manager in 1979. He was subsequently appointed general sales manager in 1991.

A graduate of the Edinburgh School of Agriculture, Doug Walker was closely involved with the establishment of John Deere Ltd in the UK in the mid-1960s, becoming managing director in 1968. The subsequent 25 years under his leadership has seen the development of a strong, dedicated dealer organisation and prominent market position for John Deere Ltd in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.



**Doug Walker, left, receives a commemorative pin from Alec McKee**

■ Carol Borthwick, senior lecturer in greenkeeping at Elmwood College, has just returned from California where she attended the 64th GCSAA conference. One thrill she will remember for a lifetime was meeting the doyen of American golf course architects, 86 year old Robert Trent Jones. Carol is pictured with

Trent Jones who, I am reliably informed, needed no translation of the delectable Scottish accent for which Carol is notably famous. Elmwood, already the biggest greenkeeping centre in the UK with a greenkeeping student population exceeding 250, is primed to increase its numbers substantially and has the European market within its sights.

■ Paul Baxter, deputy secretary of the EGU for the past seven years, has been appointed as secretary in succession to Keith Wright. A former boy and youth international - he won the Carris Trophy in 1960 - Baxter was formerly a club secretary, originally at Chevin GC and from 1977 until joining the EGU in 1985 at Sherwood Forest GC, where he was made an honorary life member.

■ Magistrates ordered that horseman Harvey Smith be remanded on unconditional bail until 30 March. Smith is accused of wounding and causing actual bodily harm, the charges arising from an alleged incident at Baildon GC in February in which two greenkeepers were taken to Bradford Royal Infirmary, one nursing a black eye and another needing five stitches in a head wound.



■ Len Cook, who began his greenkeeping career at Pleasington GC in 1953 on the princely wage of just six pounds a week, has just retired after 40 years service.

Len was presented with a camcorder by the club and was further honoured by being made a life member. Len will now find time to follow his other great love, that of breeding and judging geese. He is, we understand, an acknowledged expert.

■ John Deere Ltd has announced the appointment of Graham Williams as division manager, lawn & grounds care products, in addition to his managerial responsibility for sales promotion.

At the same time, Kathy Dowling has been appointed sales promotion supervisor, reporting to Graham Williams.

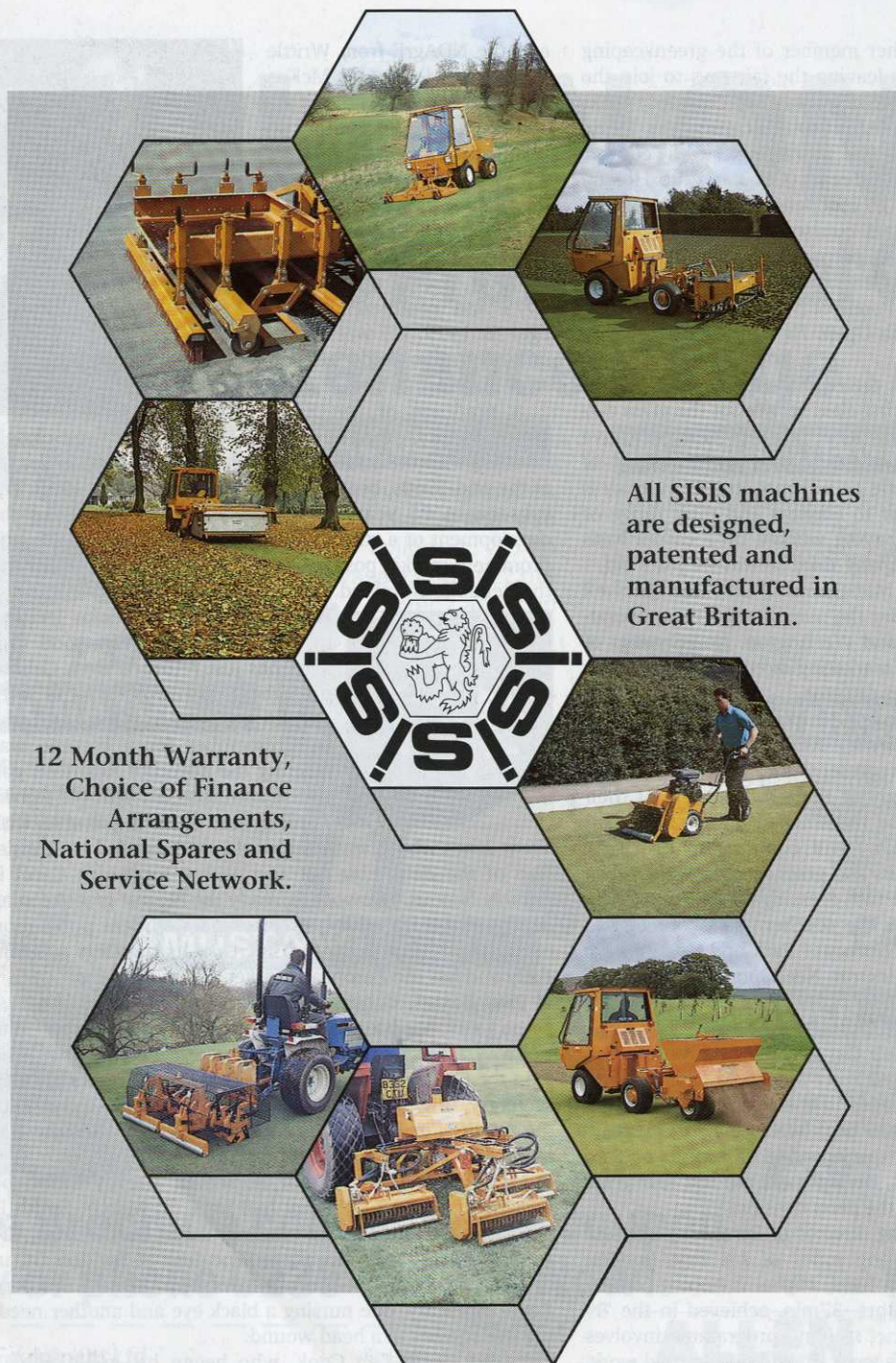


■ Martyn Jones, senior lecturer in Turf Science at Myerscough College, and Phil Turner, a second year student on the National Diploma in Turf Science and Sportsground Management, have raised over £1000 for charity by bungee jumping. Martyn, never one for convention, went a stage better by jumping both backwards and blindfolded! He's pictured above during one of his leaps.




Martyn, left and Phil

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# Tireless efforts are finally bearing fruit

The issues contained within the Neil Thomas interview (Pages 21/22) throw up a question as to the future role of the Joint Golf Course Committee, as we observe that the GTC will raise its finances through the four Home Unions and the Royal & Ancient, the latter having agreed to match the 6.25p golfer contributions in 1993/94. Will the JGCC, I wonder, remain in being purely to oversee the financing of recommendations that may emanate from the technical panel?

Hearing how BIGGA were frustrated in their attempts (from July '92 onwards) to orchestrate a meeting with the JGCC, and that communication from that body appears to have been notably lacking, I am left to conclude that had such dialogue taken place the issues might have been resolved earlier and in all probability there would have been a better understanding of BIGGA's unique position. It seems to me that BIGGA, having taken the initiative over the past five years, should have been given greater acknowledgment of its views, for at all times BIGGA has sought to communicate and advance greenkeeper education and training. That stated, at this late stage we should be grateful that the employers have at last accepted their responsibilities.

Looking forward to the future, with all the positive vibes that this latest initiative creates, we should not forget those key members, both within BIGGA and in previous old Associations, whose tireless efforts on behalf of greenkeeper education are finally bearing fruit. They were the real pioneers in the field of education and they can look back on a job well done.

In discussing with our chairman, Roy Kates, the matter of David Golding's pending transfer to the GTC, he expressed the opinion that the move by the GTC to take the responsibilities of financing greenkeeper education to the employer was "probably the biggest 'happening' since the inception of BIGGA, something we have long been striving for because everyone thought the game should pay for the training of greenkeepers." He continued,

"It is tremendous for the expansion of greenkeeper education in that it will enable us to spend more time and put valuable resources into other important things like the management training courses held at Aldwark Manor and, of course, the National Education Conference and the seminar programme at BTME. There is no doubt - it is good for BIGGA members and the board of management are totally behind it."

**Moving to another matter,** I've long held the view that so often it is golf club officials who need educating - or, at least, regularly seem to be in need of a liberal dose of common sense - and now seems as good a time as any to raise the matter of an alarming trend - albeit a mere trickle which could become a flood - for club management to be tempted into saving money by sacking, declaring redundant or otherwise manoeuvring deservedly well paid head greenkeepers - on the grounds that they can do the job themselves, 'with a little help from their friends'.

Some cases have come about by unscrupulous professional advisors suggesting 'we can replace expensive staff by coming at fortnightly intervals', others with the inexcusable reason that the club is in severe financial difficulties - this at a time when there are countless thousands who queue before dawn to pay for the pleasure of a game and thousands more who cannot ever hope to gain entry into a private club. In my view, if cash flow is a problem there is no clearer case for raising funds than by increasing annual dues, which often are little more than the price of three pints of ale per week - utterly, ludicrously low, even in recessionary times!

How on earth does an advisor hope to replace a skilled head man, one whose vigilance, anticipation and experienced eyes are far cheaper and more effective than expensive cures after problems materialise? By coming once a fortnight and relying on unskilled supervision for the other thirteen days! We know the answer to that one, don't we! I

hold the view that these advisors lower the whole professional standing of agronomy, damnable by ethical standards, for no advisor should set himself up as a surrogate greenkeeper and in any case, should a crisis occur shortly after one visit it may go undetected and uncorrected for ten or more days - with disastrous consequences.

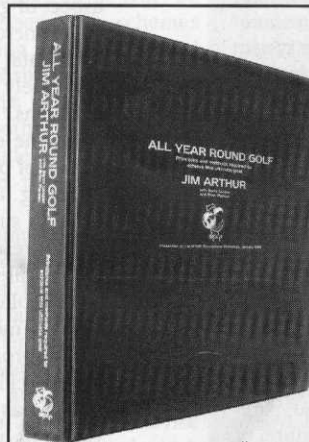
On the club front one such victim of a cash flow crisis, a hugely talented professional of many years standing, has been told that his skills were duplicated on the green committee and they were to replace him with a retired milkman who has sat on the green committee for 20 years, whilst another member, a mechanic, could do the machinery maintenance! The ludicrous nature of such an approach will no doubt show itself as their course suffers and falls into decline and morale plummets, whilst the implications of the Health and Safety at Work

Act will take them into serious legal difficulties if they use unqualified or unsupervised staff for specific operations such as pesticide spraying.

I could continue, but suffice it to say that clubs entering into these dubious transactions are playing with fire. Granted, in this magazine I'm preaching to the converted and these words should be blazoned through the golfing press, nevertheless I hope that somewhere a club official will take this warning on board: "The function of an advisor is to lay down policy, that of the greenkeeper to implement it and that of the green committee to see that it is funded. The latter should never interfere with methods as they cannot be expected to know anything about them". Spoken a decade ago by that doyen of professional advisors, Jim Arthur, and still true today!

DAVID WHITE

**'It is tremendous for the expansion of greenkeeper education'**



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**TO ORDER, COMPLETE THE CARD OPPOSITE PAGE 58**

# Flying Divots

■ Noting that greenkeepers often have different views on what makes a golf course great, especially when making comparison with those who do no more than play the game, Greenkeeper International invites members to send in their own personal 'top ten', with reasons for their choice. Given sufficient participation, individual listings will be published on a monthly basis, with a final aggregate 'greenkeepers top thirty' listed at the end of 1993.

■ The previous system of fixing abstraction charges, where ten different regions of the National Rivers Authority all used different methods of charging, has been changed with effect from 1 April. Now such charges will be on a national basis, effectively levelling out charges so that some customers may end up paying more and some less. In the end it is declared that the new system will be fairer all round – and easy to understand! In effect, the new charges for 93/94 will see a rise over the 92/93 total of 1.7 per cent.

■ Today technical expertise in turf grass maintenance comes from all directions. Yet with the high cost of specialised machinery and materials there is an apparent vital need for a simple and workable system of combining planning, monitoring and recording. With the dynamic nature of turf grass, there is a need for a continued appraisal of response to wear, site limitations and treatments applied.

Consulting agronomist Gordon Jaaback, with the financial support and marketing expertise of Rolawn, has developed a simple visual system that will create interest, spark discussion and pinpoint the full picture in a sports turf maintenance programme. Full details of this free system were not available as we went to press, but will appear in next month's issue.

■ Greenkeepers' ideas are worth pounds! This magazine is eager to promote greater reader participation in its editorial output and is looking for YOUR good ideas. Any feature-length idea will be worth £15\*, each picture that is published: £5\*. In one or two hundred words tell us what you did, why you did it, how, when, where and the results – including money or time saved and simple guidelines for others to implement such techniques. We'll need to know if the idea conforms to good practice with regard to health and safety, the type of course (links, heathland, parkland), and the prevalent soil structure, natural or otherwise. Finally, if the idea is one that has been passed down over the years, we'd like to know who to credit.

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**Farewell to the boom and hello to doom and gloom? Not so, says ecologist DAVID STUBBS, who argues that despite recession and clampdowns, obstacles can be overcome and there are grounds for genuine optimism**

**T**he twin perils of economic recession and tighter environmental controls have given the golf development industry much cause for thought. Gone are the heady, optimistic days of the recent boom period but nor is it all doom and gloom. While a few spectacular failures make the headlines, a good number of new courses have come on stream and will doubtless become successful ventures. Evidence of plenty of unmet demand yet to be tapped, coupled with the increasing difficulties faced by rural landowners and continued emphasis on land use diversification, suggests there is life in golf course development for a good few years to come.

What has to change is the methodology. Traditionally the emphasis has been on design and this has led the way on most projects. However this has some fundamental flaws which are being exposed in the new circumstances of the late 20th Century. Crudely put, golf development needs more science and less art. Boring perhaps but the bottom line is that golf projects must pay and this leaves little room for sentiment.

Good design will always be a vital aspect of golf but it is just one component of an increasingly complex process. Environmental and technical deficiencies may ultimately pose more serious and costly problems.

On the environmental side, the combination of public pressure and conservation lobbying has influenced the planning climate to such an extent that projects have to be presented in a much more studied and detailed manner if they are to be at all acceptable. This is no bad thing, it promotes a more responsible and site responsive approach to development which has been lacking in the past. But the golf world has been slow to appreciate the value of using the environment as an indispensable ally rather than a constraint to conquer.

One important effect has been a strong curb on the grandiose projects with associated real estate development. Such schemes are now rarely acceptable on attractive green field sites and market conditions have further put on a brake. This means that golf itself has to pay its way, unsubsidised by houses and hotel profits. Environmentally acceptable golf course sites tend to be concentrated on low grade urban fringe farmland and these are the target sites for pay and play developments. Here the premium is on low development costs and efficient management, not on big name designers and championship style marketing hype.

These dual environmental and economic pressures acting on golf course development in turn impose a rethink on

## 1 Tougher planning constraints



## 2 Technically difficult sites



## 3 Tighter financial margins



technical matters. Low grade urban fringe farmland is not the most suitable land from a pure golfing point of view but it is what we have to work with. Modern technology may have the potential for converting virtually any site to golfing land but this comes at a price.

Capping off a landfill with a golf course is one viable route, since the landfill profits easily cover the golf course construction costs (the site would have to be made good anyway) and golf provides a profitable end use with virtually instant returns. What's more, the design is likely to be less constrained, while site restoration offers long-term environmental benefits. The snag is of course that there is a limited number of such sites suitable and available for golf, while getting a landfill licence on a new site is even harder than getting permission for golf.

In general therefore, the modern golf course developer has to contend with the triple difficulties of tougher planning constraints, technically difficult sites and tighter financial margins. In theory this ought to elevate the importance of course managers and greenkeepers in the development process since it would be insane to press ahead with a project which has serious flaws which would lead to major, costly repairs and/or management difficulties.

However, it has not been fashionable to worry about soils, drainage, irrigation,

# 3 HURDLES TO GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT

agronomy and maintenance systems at the early stages of a development. Yet these are the nuts and bolts of a course which must be correct if it is to succeed on a long-term basis. Rebuilding of greens and tees after three or four years, or upgrading drainage or irrigation systems is not normally included in the business plan forecasts of a project. Often patch and mend is the only available option and for several years one has to make do with less than the best. This is unnecessarily expensive and potentially fatal in a competitive market.

Similar problems confront environmental specialists in convincing developers to plan along the length of a project and not just hop from one crisis point to another. Most calls on ecologists and the like are still largely firefighting exercises, to sort out immediate concerns related to planning difficulties. Only rarely does anyone consider that an environmental strategy could be a sound basis for taking a project forward, which co-ordinated with technical and financial appraisal, would help set the parameters for design and construction. The advantages would be numerous; a development with an intellectual logic based on the quality of the site and matched to appropriate economic criteria, with a clear understanding of the end product, including its operational management.

This would give golf projects a more credible image which in turn would enhance their acceptability in environmental and planning terms. Delays in dealing with objectors and resubmitting details could be reduced, planning conditions would be less onerous since

appropriate conservation measures would have been built into the scheme rather than imposed from outside and expenditure on construction and establishment could be more effectively targeted and controlled. Investors these days will be more impressed with schemes demonstrating sound technical appreciation coupled with environmental awareness. The logic of this is to make development a shorter and smoother process, bringing forward the revenue side when the course opens, with every prospect that it is going to last for many years.

To get to this happy state the direct way necessitates getting the right advice at day one. A three part appraisal is essential – your golf technical adviser will assess whether the site is right for golf (sufficient space, appropriate soils and terrain, water requirements, potential construction and management snags); the environmental expert will advise on whether golf is right for the site (ecological, landscape and historical constraints); and the financial consultant will say whether it will pay. The three are interlinked and one cannot effectively conclude an individual section without reference to the others. Together they provide the foundation for taking the project forward through planning and design, or an early and relatively inexpensive exit.

This appraisal-led methodology is steadily gaining credence in the industry. However, few have really grasped the crucial interdependence between financial performance and environmental and course management aspects.

More and more planning and environment related guide-lines, directives and regulations are coming forward and these will increasingly impinge on existing as well as new golf courses. Pollution control legislation, the introduction of environmental management systems (BS7750), eco-audit schemes and

environmental assessment regulations are all going to have a strong effect on golf over the years to come. They need to be understood by all concerned and this goes throughout the golfing industry. A number of important initiatives are taking place. The European Golf Association in collaboration with the R&A has been taking a pro-active approach in preparing "Environmental Guide-lines for Golf Development in Europe". It is hoped that this project will set the framework for treating environmental issues in golf development throughout the EC, with the blessing of the EC Commission and leading environmental organisations – better to get your own house in order before others do it for you.

In the USA the United States Golf Association has spent some \$5m over the last three years on environmental research and campaigns, and other major golfing bodies over there are actively pushing their own claims for environmental probity. Over here such activity is not so apparent and while it is unlikely ever to match the scale of American investment, the golf industry will soon have to pull together to address environmental issues in a co-ordinated manner. Identifying the lead body make take some time but it will have to happen.

For the greenkeeping community here is an excellent opportunity to play a key and influential role in the debate. It is greenkeepers who ultimately have closest involvement with environmental management, so it is only right they should be principals in any related initiative. BIGGA has for some time included conservation within its education programme. But this is only a start. As a profession greenkeepers will need to be much more aware and knowledgeable of environmental trends and issues to be able to make effective representations on policy matters and to ensure that guide-lines and regulations are meaningful and realistic. Ultimately it is all about raising standards across a broad range of issues.

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# 'Main man' Roy makes his mark



**E**ven before he began his term as national chairman we were calling Roy Kates the 'main man' – for having been schooled by the ebullient George Malcolm during his run-up to office it was abundantly clear that this 'main man' was stuffed full of bright ideas – like an exceptional club captain, we knew he was going to leave his mark.

Twelve months of exposure at the sharp end has done nothing to dampen his enthusiasm, and many of his personal aspirations, voiced in an interview conducted in early '92, have indeed become reality. Yes, it can be said that Roy Kates has left a very firm footprint in the cement of BIGGA's short but illustrious history!

Remembering his comments at that time – to follow the well-worn path of promoting further education for his fellow greenkeepers and to cultivate Golden Key participation – I prompted Roy to talk me through his year. He began in reverse time order by commenting on the up-to-the-minute revelations concerning the formation of a new industry-led GTC education committee.

"Recent developments have seen education pushed well to the fore, the career video being one such positive advance which is now far beyond the embryo stage and in the throes of becoming reality – and the initiative from the Greenkeepers Training Committee is something really quite exceptional. The board of management don't necessarily feel that we're getting everything we ever wanted, but see we must 'go with the flow' for the greater good. It is not as if we can expect to hold onto our baby forever, even though we gave it life and brought it through to young adulthood, so to speak. An organisation of our size cannot realistically hope to stand against the establishment and my personal view was always to 'go for it' anyway. Naturally there was some opposition, but I saw it as unfounded – you can't expect to start something and hold on to it for ever and ever – we had to see the wider aspects of the initiative and the decisions that have been made are widely viewed as being good for BIGGA and for the greenkeeper – the new GTC concept is very good news indeed in that it will allow the Association

to devote its time whole-heartedly to promoting other educational initiatives, and as you know we've certainly got a lot going on that score, all of them equally important."

Setting out into the relative unknown 12 months ago, Roy freely acknowledges the support given to him by his fellow board members, support that enabled him to spread himself around and be recognised – he grinned as he told me how his plan became something of an 'in' joke with friends: "It was to be one of exposure, of being recognised within the Association – I wasn't going to end up being Roy Who, I wanted to be remembered. I got a great buzz out of attending major functions, like BTME and regional seminars, and having people I'd never met grasp me by the hand and say 'Roy Kates, glad to know you, you're doing a good job.' Obviously they had seen my face in the magazine – almost every issue it seemed – and the plan worked. I think it something the job requires, I wanted people to relate to me and I feel that they have."

"The highlight of my year had to be Harrogate, the meeting with Prince Andrew. All the organisation behind the scenes to make this such a success needs to be shouted from the roof tops – these things don't just happen. I think the day before BTME my emotions went full circle – I had the build up, the elation of knowing I would be meeting Prince Andrew for maybe an hour or so, the sudden let-down when I discovered that Viscount Whitelaw was to be his official escort, and the joy again when Viscount Whitelaw almost casually passed the mantle back with his classic understatement – "Well Roy, I'll just leave Prince Andrew with you, you can do what you want now". "And that's exactly what I did, I spent nearly three hours with him – it was pure magic."

And what, I asked Roy, did Prince Andrew have to say? "All he wanted to talk about was his lawn." And how were you able to help him? A huge grin now, a joke: "Well, I gave him my business card! He was so genuine and sincere and demonstrated such real interest in everything he was shown – boy, it's something to be in the deep end like that with the national press, radio, television, all bustling for coverage – granted, it wasn't me they were focusing on but I was there in the limelight and it felt wonderful."

Roy has Gordon Hepson, his boss at Wexham Park, to thank for being supportive during this busy year. In truth Gordon Hepson was not simply supportive, he was downright encouraging in what was for Roy a very busy engagement, and it was perhaps fitting that 'the boss' shared in Roy's moment of glory at Harrogate, revelling equally in sharing personal moments with Viscount Whitelaw and our royal visitor. "Without him my year in office would not have been possible," Roy declared, "he has been my stoutest supporter, a very generous man." Praise indeed for a munificent character.

Everyone who knows Roy will tell you that he is great 'persuader' – he can sell ideas. Thus to round off this whistlestop tour of one man's year as national chairman, let me touch on his Golden Key connection. Roy was perhaps being modest in not mentioning the part he played in raising this initiative to even greater heights – suffice to say he lived up to his 1992 aspirations – to raise the profile still higher. As a result, BIGGA can count on two more Golden Key members – Risboro' Turf and Jacobsen's – both with us for altruistic reasons, thanks to the persuasive tongue of Roy Kates. There's no doubt about it, he's the main man!

DAVID WHITE