

SPIRIT!



In the swing: Martin Scothern, left, who achieved lowest gross score and William McMeikan, under 21s winner

such and such a shot'... but such is the agony of golf. Suffice to say Paul's 104.5 was streets ahead of the second placed 112 of Toney Livingstone, and 7.5 strokes to the good of third man, Chris Powley. Chris also collected a nice award for being closest to the pin on a selected hole, whilst for the longest drive of the day we turned to the incredible Brian Mulholland, Northern Ireland's answer to John Daly and of not dissimilar stature. Brian is huge fun to be around, has a reputation for wicked humour – and we know he has a deft touch equal to Daly

regarding the right elbow!

Of the Scots, I must report less than perfect results, perhaps explained by the 'entertainments' enjoyed with those wild men of the Emerald Isle the previous night. Whatever, it was left to Alex Wallace and young William McMeikan to bring a smidgen of comfort back to the Scottish team, Alex's 118 taking the 'over 55's' award, William's the 'under 21's' with a score of 116.5.

When the accolades were given, there was a sense of elation in the victorious Northern team → 12



It's a gift: Alex Wallace, left, over 55s winner, receives congratulations and a prize from Kim Macfie of Hayters

Come with BIGGA to the
GCSAA Conference
and Show

DALLAS 1994



The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America will be holding its 65th International Golf Course Conference and Show in Dallas from 4-7 February.

BIGGA's party attending this major international event will assemble on Sunday, 30 January at the Moat House Gatwick Airport, leaving the next morning on a *direct flight* to Dallas Fort Worth Airport and arriving back at Gatwick on Wednesday, 9 February.

In over 150 years, Dallas has grown from a cabin on the banks of the Trinity river into an internationally recognised commercial and manufacturing centre thanks to the discovery of Texan oil and the tenacity and spirit of its people. It is a major cultural centre of skyscraper banks and offices; elegant shops, fine restaurants and hotels. Neighbouring Fort Worth, originally a military outpost, retains a 'western' atmosphere and continues to be headquarters for the cattle industry. Fort Worth's clubs feature country and western music whilst its western heritage is most evident at the Historic Stockyards Area where there are frontier-style shops and cafes.

GCSAA will be organising more than 70 educational seminar sessions and forums, a three-day, 190,000 square foot trade show with more than 600 manufacturers and distributors of golf and turf industry products, supplies and services together with a gala banquet featuring performances by the Oak Ridge Boys and country star Crystal Gayle.

An exciting trip is in prospect and *bookings with full payment must be received by 19 November.*

ITINERARY

Sunday, 30 January

All participants assemble at the Moat House Gatwick Airport, overnight accommodation with FREE car parking is included.

Monday, 31 January

Depart Gatwick for Dallas Fort Worth Airport on British Airways – 10.05 hours – arrive 14.40 hours. Upon arrival transfer to Hotel Loews Anatole, stay 8 nights.

Tuesday, 8 February

Return transfer to Dallas Airport and depart on British Airways – 16.40 hours – arrive 07.30 hours on 9 February. Return transfer to Hotel to collect cars and drive home.

Price

£724 per person based on twin shares; £1,060 per person based on single room accommodation, plus comprehensive travel insurance for the duration: £35.

Included are: flights UK to Dallas and return; US Airport taxes; Hotel accommodation in the Loews Anatole including taxes, room rate only; Full comprehensive travel insurance for the duration.



Please forward full payment of £759 or £1,095 (unless travel insurance is *not* required) to BIGGA, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Alne, York YO6 2NF to arrive by *Friday 19 November at the latest*, together with name, address and contact telephone number.

'The spirit lives – it's called the Hayter Challenge Tournament'

11 → camp, for Ian Holloran and Bob Lupton a reward for all they had done behind the scenes, whilst no greater applause was ever heard than for the new sponsors of this wonderful tournament, Hayters PLC.

Taking over an established tournament is never easy, but Hayters have properly stamped the mark of 'A1 First Class' on the whole shebang, bringing a professionalism and a sense of real purpose to a tournament that is now rightfully their very own property. In everything the Hayter professionals touched, the trophies, the Hayter presentation packs, the Hayter flags, and the display of nifty looking Hayter machinery (I hope you all took a good, long look), the event shone clear. This event is very much the right stuff, a civilised haven for a few precious days, an escape from a world that all too often is tainted by greed and grossly over-paid sportspeople. The spirit lives – it's called the Hayter Challenge Tournament.



Above: Hayter Challenge Winner Mike Hughes, centre, receives his trophy from BIGGA Chairman John Crawford as Kim Macfie looks on. Left: Members of the Northern Team receive their prize

RESULTS

The Hayter Challenge Trophy:
Mike Hughes (Midlands) 102.5

Low gross score:
Martin Scothern (Northern) 111.

Over 55's:
Alex Wallace (Scotland) 118

Under 21's:
William McMeikan (Scotland) 116.5

Category One (0-9 handicap)
1st: Bill Francis (South East) 107
2nd: Jonathan Guest (Northern Ireland) 111.5
3rd: Jon Moorhouse (Midlands) 112

Category Two (10-18 handicap)
1st: Chris Hulme (Northern) 106
2nd: Mathew Blake (S. West & S. Wales) 114 (countback)
3rd: Owen O'Connor (Eire) 114

Category Three (19-28 handicap)
1st: Paul Jackson (S. West & S. Wales) 104.5
2nd: Toney Livingstone (Midlands) 112
3rd: Chris Powley (Northern) 113

Nearest the pin:
Chris Powley

Longest drive:
Brian Mulholland (Northern Ireland)

Team Prize:
1st: Northern 916
2nd: Midlands 943.5

Financial Services to Members

The Association is pleased to announce that with the help of Peter Hoare & Co Ltd., a panel of F.I.M.B.R.A. registered brokers has been set up which is able to give pensions and related advice to members. The panel will consist of a total of 35 brokers across the United Kingdom enabling a local service to be offered. Each broker will be monitored to ensure a high standard of service is maintained.

Initially members' enquiries should be sent to BIGGA Headquarters at Aldwark Manor, to be forwarded to the local contact.

Members' attention is drawn to the enquiry card (postage paid) at the front of this issue of Greenkeeper International and it is proposed to feature this every alternate month.



All brokers in the panel have joined BIGGA as Associate members and there will be a strong representation at BTME '94.

In the meantime, members requiring information on the scheme should contact either their local secretary or John Pemberton at BIGGA HQ. (Tel: 0347 838581).

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Fax: (0742) 309494.

Neil Thomas, BA
Executive Director
British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association
Aldwark Manor
Aldwark
Alne
York
YO6 2NF

12 August 1993

Dear Neil

Independent Financial Advice For Members

Many thanks for appointing us to act as lead member of a team of professional Independent Financial Advisers.

We are in the process of creating a list of first class advisers across the country in order to give BIGGA members unbiased and independent advice on any topic within our brief. You can be assured that the members will be pleased with the resulting response time and the ability to talk over their problems with a local IFA at their leisure with no pressure being brought to bear.

Being able to talk about any insurance company product has a distinct advantage compared with the restrictions placed on a representative of one company. All the panel will be in a position to deal with any insurance company and will do their utmost for your members. In fact, the rules of our governing body insist that the clients' interests come first and we must give the best of advice at all times.

The panel will be able to provide advice on pensions of all types - whether frozen or active - as well as setting up any new contracts required.

Life Assurance, Pensions and Investment can be very complex but you can have peace of mind in the knowledge that our panel members will be well versed in its intricacies.

We look forward to a long and happy relationship with your association.

Yours sincerely

M G J Bower
M G J Bower
Director

Directors:
R.G. Boulter ACH FIBBA, A.F. Combe ACH,
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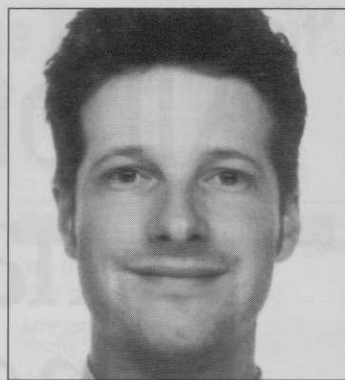
Alexander McAuley



Bridie Redican



Iain McCulloch



Jonathan Oldknow

Meet tomorrow's



The field of greenkeeper education, or more specifically the training colleges around the country and across the Irish Sea, has seen a hive of activity lately, with the selection process to find the 1993 Toro-PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year reaching fever pitch. In previous years 'approved colleges' were invited to nominate a student candidate, who then went forward automatically to the final. This year it was decided by both BIGGA and the sponsors that all colleges offering greenkeeping courses at craft level should nominate their 'Student of the Year', with regional finals staged to select the final eight candidates now featured.

Six regional finals have been held recently, the first at the Welsh College, followed by Oaklands, Cannington, Warwick, Askham Bryan and Elmwood. In addition, our colleagues in Eire and Northern Ireland held their own selection process. Thirty one nominations were named as 'student of the year' by their colleges, and by a process of interview and assessment we now have reached the final eight.

Huw Parry, BIGGA's education chairman, and Debbie Savage, BIGGA's new education officer, along with a representative from Toro-Lely, carried out interviews which sought to establish, amongst other things, a history of each candidate relative to a career in greenkeeping, their individual views on the benefits gained from their college course - including improvements they might like to see - and where they might see themselves in greenkeeping in, say, five years time. Judging by the comments received, we hope there are enough

'championship' golf courses for them all!

The winner, who will enjoy a Toro sponsored expenses paid trip to the USA, including student membership of the Winter School for Turfgrass Managers at University of Massachusetts, will be featured in the next issue of Greenkeeper International, as will the two runners-up, whose prizes will take them to a European Tour event as part of the PGA Support Team. The event takes place at Aldwark Manor on 11 October.

The Candidates:

ALEXANDER McAULEY
nominated by Greenmount College, Northern Ireland

Thirty six year old fitness fanatic Alex is not the sort you would care to upset, for in a jiffy he'll likely have you on the deck! Joking aside, Alex is an avid and highly accomplished practitioner of the art of ju-jitsu and boasts a yellow belt - which means he's pretty damned good.

He's also made impressive in-roads toward carving a solid career in greenkeeping, having begun his fine turf education as an apprentice with the City of Belfast, working at numerous different sporting locations and including a lengthy spell on the underrated but significantly important task of nurturing a bowling green to the standard demanded of championships.

Now with the Ballyearl Golf and Leisure Centre, he's been their head greenkeeper for some five years, during which time he's tucked an NJC in Horticulture and Turfculture under his belt and completed Phase II in Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management, with a distinction in paper two. Currently undertaking some major course development work at Ballyearl, when this is complete Alex intends to concentrate more on what he describes as 'getting serious' about playing golf.

BRIDIE REDICAN
nominated by Teagasc National Botanical Gardens, Dublin

Glory be, for the first time ever we have a lady nominated for this prestige award, and a practicing greenkeeper to boot! Bridie is 25, lives in County Kilkenny and works as an assistant at the new Jack Nicklaus designed Mount Juliet, a course which played host in 1993 to a PGA European Tour event, the Carrolls Irish

Open. What a busy schedule Bridie has packed into her life, with a good deal of golf course experience, including construction of tees, greens and bunkers, in such far flung places as Australia and Michigan USA, all this before joining the team at Mount Juliet under Aidan O'Hara.

Bridie started her career by studying Horticulture at An Grianan College, though since becoming a full time greenkeeper she has followed the time-worn path of studying City & Guilds in Greenkeeping, working now toward Phase II with plans to continue with Phase III on block release.

Pat Suttle, Bridie's tutor at Teagasc, praises her conscientiousness and is fulsome in his admiration for her ability to compete - and to win - in what is often considered a male dominated profession. Like many who enter greenkeeping, Bridie is hooked on golf, though she does not have a handicap just yet - no matter, watch out Laura Davis!

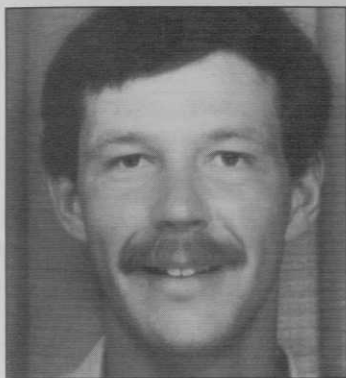
IAIN McCULLOCH
nominated by Langside College, Glasgow

We may assume that Iain McCulloch has a strong right arm and a splendid pair of lungs, for he is a member of the Scottish fly fishing team - a Scottish Youth International no less - and he also plays the bagpipes as a member of the local band. He's just 20, took to greenkeeping first as a seasonal employee before catching the eye of his employers and being offered a three year apprentice at Torrance House GC. Iain has taken all modules in the Scotvec National Certificate in Greenkeeping and Groundsmanship, and was chosen as the best second year student in 1992. Not content to rest on such laurels, he will soon undertake further study by way of an HNC in Golf Course Management.

Writing of Iain, Langside tutor Colin Urquhart declared him a sound theorist and an eminently practical exponent of the art of greenkeeping, whilst bringing to the college an inspiration to others in his peer group, offering well rounded and coherent points of view, often with originality and insight. Guess what, he's a beginner at golf and is already 'hooked' - forgive the pun!

JONATHAN OLDKNOW
nominated by the Warwickshire College

Twenty six year old Jonathan was voted the



Anthony Bindley



Mike Yorston



Richard Andrews



Christopher Solman

cream of the crop

Warwickshire's top practical greenkeeping student of 1993, having completed C&G in Phases I and II before moving to Year IV in Turf Management. Like so many who turn to greenkeeping as a career, he's a keen sportsman, having represented the City of Coventry schools in both football and cricket, whilst also nursing a pretty good golf swing to a handicap of 16. Full time education gained Jonathan six 'O' levels and an 'A' level, and he began his career with the Metropolitan Police Force – 'Oldknow of the Met' has a nice sound about it – but altered his ideas of a police career after a spell with the West Midlands Police Force, thus taking a complete change of direction by working for the Warwick Parks and Leisure Department. This valuable experience in sports turf management and horticulture, both practical and theoretic, brought him to his present task, that of assistant greenkeeper with the Coventry Hearsall GC.

Jonathan's tutor at the Warwickshire praises his leadership qualities, whilst being equally impressed by his extensive knowledge of plants, his commitment, his self motivation and his high level of initiative.

ANTHONY BINDLEY

nominated by Reaseheath College

The catch-phrase in East Midlands golfing territory, as players quietly succumb to defeat at the hand of Anthony or his brother – the notorious Bindley twins – is to murmur 'I've been Bindleyed'.

Anthony, 30, is described as 'the quiet man of golf' by his tutor, Denis Mortram, also 'one who has excellent dedication to his chosen career, being highly perceptive and with the ability to work diligently whilst alone.' Not content with ringing Anthony's praises, Denis quietly let slip his opinion that Anthony is 'Reaseheath's best nominee for several years.'

Anthony has been in golf greenkeeping for three years, having taken C&G in Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management at Phase II (and winning the 'Best Student' nomination) whilst working as an assistant at Kirby Muxloe GC. He plans to begin Phase III in the coming year.

Before Kirby Muxloe, Anthony spent a decade as an assistant groundsman at the Leicestershire County Cricket Club and, as you might imagine, cricket is as much a love as

golf. He's captained the village cricket club for the past five years – whilst 'Bindleying' his way to wins in the BIGGA E. Midlands Singles and Pairs Knockouts in 1992. Nice fellow, quiet maybe, but a deep thinker and a canny wee golfer.

MIKE YORSTON

nominated by Sparsholt College

Mike, 24, is fortunate to work at that most delicious of Surrey courses, Worplesdon. Luckier still that he took to greenkeeping, for the job which has become so much a part of his life was originally a 'temp' post, a chance simply to earn enough to travel around Europe! Mike must have liked Worplesdon and they must have liked him, for the rest is history – three years working his way up to first assistant – whilst also taking C&G in Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management at Phases I & II. In writing, Mike explained the Worplesdon job offer was 'too good to refuse', and he is deeply involved now in all aspects of course maintenance, priceless experience that includes a programme of clearing scrub and sucklings to encourage heather growth where it had been shaded by trees, also to the benefit of wildlife.

Hailing from New Zealand, it's not surprising that Mike is a keen rugby player, playing for the first team in the London New Zealand Rugby Club, but his sporting fancy also covers golf – playing to a mean 12 – and he serves on the Surrey section of BIGGA – a busy man. Like all Antipodeans he wants to travel, but his real ambition is to become a golf course manager – either here or on the sunny shores of New Zealand.

RICHARD ANDREWS

nominated by Oaklands College

Richard, 26, is an assistant greenkeeper at Highgate GC, a post he has held for less than a year. OK, it's a short spell, but having been accepted at Oaklands on a full time ONC in Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management, Richard knew full well which direction his new career would go and he threw himself into greenkeeping like no other. I suspect also that Richard doesn't ever do things by halves, you would never expect it of a man who this year alone has competed in a 25 mile walk, a 75 mile bike race and a half marathon, plus a swimathon for charity. By the way, he plays

tennis, golfs' well enough to shoot level par (his best) at Brent Valley, and likes taking photographs – phew!

Ian Merrick is fulsome in his praise for Richard, his 'Top Student and Award Winner' declaring him as being possessed of a high degree of personal motivation and taking particular pride in projects. Voted by his peers to become their course representative, in this capacity he became a member of their Greenkeeper Liaison Committee. Richard joined Highgate GC for just four weeks work experience under Derek Mason, the course manager, and as a direct result he's now full time at this London parkland club. Coming soon – Richard Andrews in Phase IV Business Management!

CHRISTOPHER SOLMAN

nominated by Pencoed College

In humorously describing life before greenkeeping, Chris, 24, wrote of starting in sales – followed by nearly three years in the Army, where the attraction was to learn a trade and travel the world – and of being thoroughly disillusioned! His only trip was a boot-camp week in Scotland, his time spent playing rugby for his regiment at Bordon, Hampshire. The sum result was three months training as a vehicle mechanic, untold rugby games and lots of bull! – he quit. Returning to civvie street, quite by accident Chris was directed to labour as a summer worker at Cardiff GC. He thought his military training might come in useful (machinery maintenance, presentation, discipline, time-keeping, that sort of thing), and hoped, as he liked the life so much, that the club might take him on permanently. They did, he's been with them for four years now, the accidental start becoming a very smart career move indeed.

Luck has a way of following the lucky, and Chris admits to having his fair share of good fortune – Cardiff GC agreed to him attending Pencoed, he's currently completing his second year of Phase II G&STM, and he's soon to make a start into Phase III. His tutor, Peter Gillard, thinks Chris is rather special and wrote glowingly of his 'presenting the image of a very modern, progressive greenkeeper.' Peter's convinced he'll go to the top. By chance, Chris and Mike Yorston have much in common – Chris plays rugby and holds the record number of tries in one season at Tongwynlais – 32 in 18 games!




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Kings of the castle



DAVID WHITE discovers a jewel nestling in the Edinburgh suburbs

Leaving the by-pass which skirts forever round the City of Edinburgh, bound to keep an appointment with Willie Blair at Kingsknowe Golf Club, I missed seeing any 'KINGSKNOWE THIS WAY' signs and for a while became hopelessly lost in a jungle of look-alike, mostly post-war housing. Recalling Pete Seeger's famous song, I thought the place could easily have been Pete's role model. The song begins "Little boxes, on the hillside, and they're all made out of ticky-tacky, little boxes,

little boxes, and they all look just the same".

Left with my own homing device and lacking guidance from the natives, all of whom seemed to vapourise as I searched, I scabbled around following instinct rather than map, before catching a sudden sweet glimpse – through high and extremely sturdy chainlink fencing – of Kingsknowe's lovely little golf course, a view that conjured up a wicked thought: a rose amongst thorns! Peering through the grill I sensed how it must feel to

be imprisoned and how inmates must react, looking out at the promised land – yet knowing it is out of reach. Granted, I was on the outside looking in, but Kingsknowe Golf Club seemed just such a place, inviting freedom and escape from an otherwise cramped suburb, a course overshadowed to the south by high-rise blocks and surrounded by an assemblage of anonymous houses and other assorted bits of 'ticky-tacky', yet with lush green fairways that beckoned and beguiled. → 18



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'One of James Braid's

17 ➔ Do I malign this suburb of Edinburgh? I think not; for I reckon residents who have the Kingsknowe course on their patch are positively blessed. Further, as I later discovered, they are thrice blessed, for a tail-end of the Pentland Hills nips at their back door, peering moodily across the fairways. As a bonus, the views north to the Ocle Hills and especially toward Edinburgh Castle some five miles distant are simply stunning.

The course at Kingsknowe was opened in 1908, long before the ugly high-rise apartments were plonked out of place, certainly before the majority of Kingsknowe's surrounding housing plots attracted land-hungry developers. It is easy then to imagine how the territory must have appeared when James Braid cast his expert eye over what is now Kingsknowe Golf Club. Braid, Open Champion for the fourth time, obviously was not too busy with exhibitions to turn down the chance of an honest guinea or two for course design, and he must have liked what he saw, for this layout is simply one of his cleverest. It began life as a par 74 in the days of hickory, and is now par 69, stretched to its fullest extent to be no longer than 5975 yards. There is no vast grandeur as may be found at Gleneagles;

Willie Blair:
'master of the
golf course
rather than
its puppet'



where Braid designed The Kings, but with the meagre acreage allotted he certainly turned up trumps. The proof is there to see: Braid's only creation in the whole of Edinburgh is no simple rose amongst thorns, as I had surmised originally, rather a wee gem set fair in the outer perimeter of this ancient city.

Willie Blair, a man hugely proud of his greenkeeping heritage, is the custodian of Jimmy Braid's rather special patch. It was Willie who'd suggested my visit, urging me to 'come cast your eyes over a great little city course'. En route for Dunbar, I needed no second bidding.

Willie's greenkeeping career followed an

almost perfect learning curve, for he was apprenticed to the legendary Andrew Anderson at Gullane, a man oft likened to a professor and one who ensured his charges were expertly tutored in the art of greenkeeping. In the event Willie stayed with Andrew for close on fifteen years, giving every credit to this sadly missed old sage, declaring Andrew as the one who taught him everything. As a single example of the clever way Andrew worked, Willie told how during one season at Gullane the team lifted, rebuilt and restored six greens - without the membership knowing! Of course, those were the days before Arnie's Army, before courses were as overplayed as they are now and before the game, fuelled by TV, had reached fever pitch.

Readers travelling through East Lothian will surely have noticed the Lothianburn Golf Club, hard by the main road into Edinburgh. Slap on the east slope of the Pentlands, laden bounteously with broom and gorse, it was until recently over-run also with sheep! It was to this mountain-goat territory that Willie made his move after over fourteen years at Gullane, poached, would you believe, by two Gullane members who happened to be members also at Lothianburn. They'd seen how well Willie

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cleverest layouts...'

performed as foreman on Gullane's Number Two, they knew his greenkeeping pedigree to be beyond reproach and they wanted him as their head greenkeeper. They persuaded the 29 year old to bring his wife and three youngsters to the wicked city!

From seaside links to heavy clay-based hillside site, when Willie arrived at Lothianburn it was so run-down that folk declared even raking the bunkers would show a big improvement! In the event, Willie took the place by the scruff and gave it a thorough shakedown, spending eight happy years there and leaving it a much better golf course than anyone could have imagined. He left to take over at Kingsknowe after Peter Dodds departed to Royal Aberdeen.

Working on just three golf courses in close on 40 years (he's been at Kingsknowe now for some 17 years) seems to me pretty good indication of dedication to the task, and in summarising that dedication it seems also that Willie thrives on what I'll call the 'high aggravation' factor.

Certainly there was aggravation aplenty at Lothianburn, with claggy clay and rocks galore, sheep to dodge, no water at all, not a single tap until Willie installed one, all this on a course that defied the laws of gravity. Now at Kingsknowe he works within the confines of just 110 acres: every inch parkland, every inch cultivated and every inch (including rough) cut to some degree, all in the interests of keeping the overplayed areas uncluttered, of speeding players through.

His course again is on clay, which is nobody's friend, and his predominantly meadowgrass greens grow on old clay puddle constructions (save one, the 17th). What's more, he's surrounded, literally, by a ten feet high fence, a la Colditz! What purpose does it serve? It keeps *some* of the vandals at bay (though last year alone over 400 flag sticks were stolen) and reminds, if nothing else, of trespass boundaries. Kingsknowe members cannot enjoy the luxury of timber benches, fibreglass flagpoles or decorative chains round tees – these simply would disappear. Last year the club lost, in addition to flags, some £15,000 of equipment to burglary, which has resulted in an elaborate alarm system being installed at the sheds.

On the course it's a case always of keeping the hard-played greens in good shape with, Willie hints, 'an old head and a little sulphate of iron'. Rather more, it is a case of composting the surfaces regularly (every six weeks or so) with sandy loam (which Willie swears by), and keeping the overly lush fairways cut every single day (he just can't stop 'em growing), in the summer months. Keeping thatch at bay demands regular spring and autumn hollow coring and the utilising of groomers and verticutters, Willie believing in working these tools hard and scarifying the daylight out of the Poa annua. With 600 members and a busy schedule of visiting societies to keep happy, this

is the only way he can manage – and it works.

He's mean on fertiliser, mean on water, in fact he's a believer in Jim Arthur's regime of austerity in greenkeeping, following it almost to the letter, though he admits he couldn't get away with one Arthurian practice – slitting in the summer months – certain that his members, '600 amateur greenkeepers', wouldn't stand for it.

Willie doesn't think he'll ever move away from Kingsknowe, content in the satisfaction the job gives him, happy to be working with a great crew and pleased to be amongst 'good club people who are nice to work with'. He's an honorary member of the club, he sits on committee, prepares monthly reports and presents his own budget. Granted he seeks approval for such expenditure, which is normal enough, but Willie feels he's master of the golf course rather than its puppet, not having to rush for 'second opinions'. In a nutshell, he appears to have Kingsknowe licked, though I reiterate, he thrives on conditions from which I would run a mile: those that would top my 'high aggravation' list.

There can be but few greenkeepers who don't know 'Our Willie', especially through Association activities. He's been secretary of the Scottish East section for 15 years, beginning with SGGA and latterly SIGGA before amalgamation some five years ago into BIGGA. He says "I don't know what I'd do without it", and one is moved by his sincerity, aware that he's the Association's most ardent ambassador, devoted to the hurly-burly; the selling of a greenkeeping philosophy. He gets peeved when discussing those greenkeepers who distance themselves from BIGGA. Far too many, he thinks, even in such a golfing enclave as Edinburgh. "They say they won't join because they don't play golf", he says, "but the Association was never set up for golf alone. We're about education, about seminars, about training people and helping them to be

better at their job" – OK Willie, I'm convinced!

I found myself charmed by Kingsknowe, despite first reservations, and Willie Blair warmed me greatly. As we ended he leaned across, grinned, and spoke directly into my recorder: "I'm just a routine worker", he whispered, "I never say a word out of place and I get on well with everyone"...OK Willie, I believe you, I'm convinced!



On the horizon at Kingsknowe GC: top, the clubhouse with Braid Hills behind; one view across to the 'high rise horrors'; and a city vista, with Edinburgh castle in the background

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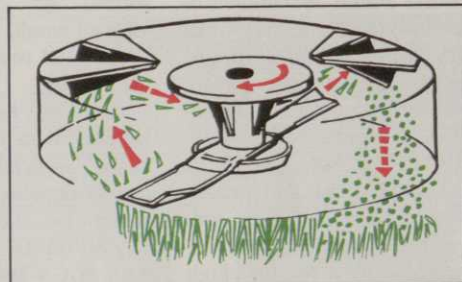
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