

drink

similar benefits, albeit on a smaller scale.

So, having dug a hole and filled it, what next? A very good question. Life being what it is, the answer to one problem quite often begets another. Right! All that water adds yet another demand to the day-to-day business of golf course management...

That demand comes in the guise of water management – the important task of ensuring that the quality of water stored in-ground does not deteriorate to the point where it can represent a distinct environmental hazard.

Reservoirs and lakes are, after all, living ecological systems in which the control of algae and weed is an important factor in maintaining a natural balance between what is good and that which can be harmful – to man, wildlife and turf,

As a simple example, think of algae 'bloom'. That thick green stuff which covers the surface of many a village pond. Viewed from a distance, some may feel that it looks attractive but the truth is that its very existence causes trouble down below.

By preventing natural light from penetrating into the depths of the water, algae deprives other oxygen giving plants from thriving deeper down.

Since plantlife is an essential and natural method of releasing life-providing oxygen into the water the lack of light begins a process which, if left unchecked, will upset the balance of nature.

As oxygen levels fall, the 'bloom' dies off and sinks to the bottom of the pond. More oxygen is needed to combat the effects of decomposing plantlife yet, in reality, the reverse is happening. Allowed to develop further, the water becomes anaerobic – deprived of oxygen. At this stage all natural life in the water including fish is seriously at risk. So too is the quality of water intended for irrigation purposes.

As anaerobic bacteria begins to thrive on waste materials – dying plants, fish and even grass cuttings blown into the water from nearby fairways or greens are digested anaerobically rather than by natural means. (Fertiliser entering the water through run-off doesn't help either).

You'll soon know when this stage has been reached because noxious odours are released as a by-product. Yes, the water on your course *smells!*

Apart from the obvious; murky water clogging filters, valves and sprinklers, the bacteria present in the water also threatens both soil and turf.

Algae present in the water will build-up on soil surfaces to create a perched water table. Anaerobic bacteria can, as at least one well-known head greenkeeper in this country will testify, play havoc with fine turf...

In days of yore, many a lake or pond was left to its own devices until the stinking, slimy contents forced those responsible to take action. Then, it was mostly a question of dis-



Fountains like this – and much larger models – help water to circulate and provide additional oxygen

posing of the water and dredging the glutinous mess off the bottom and carting it away. Phew!

Latterly, chemicals have been used to control the imbalance created by neglected water. Repetitively expensive, time and labour consuming, this method has obvious limitations.

Today's answer? Aeration, the method of adding oxygen – and movement – into the water, a natural process aided by man-made equipment which helps rid reservoirs and lakes of the pernicious effects of algae, plant death, suffocating sludge and anaerobic bacteria, automatically.

Aeration, in the form of high-profile fountains, like those at The Belfry, represent one answer to the business of water management. Used as a visual feature in ornamental and in-play lakes, the effect of a single fountain is helpful but conditional on the volume of water it is attempting to re-cycle.

The larger the lake, the more fountains are required to handle the sheer expanse of water involved effectively.

Parallel to introduction of fountains, floating and submersible aspirating and diffused air systems have been developed to increase the below-surface movement of water and add high levels of oxygen on a continuous basis.

Where a breakdown in the quality of water has already taken place, air stripping systems provide an efficient method of dissolving

gases, chlorine hydrogen sulphide and other bacteria at the rate of 150 gallons per minute.

In essence, all these systems work on the basis that air pumped into a reservoir or lake assists the natural aquatic rejuvenation processes by increasing dissolved oxygen levels, providing much needed circulation and maintaining aerobic conditions.

What does that mean? Simply this; aerated water gives you the means whereby irrigation can be carried out without the fear of bacteria and the like affecting the quality of your prized turf, the balance of nature can be maintained in and around the water and irate telephone calls from the secretary's office, complaining about 'that smell' will never reach your ears.

Postscript: As this article was going to press the Daily Telegraph published a story featuring scuba diver, 23-year-old Emma Elliott-Pyle, who has obtained a contract (with a dozen golf clubs) to retrieve balls from in-play lakes. Commenting on her task, Emma was quoted as saying; "The lakes are usually pretty disgusting. I have to shut my eyes and feel about in the dark." Enough said.

●Details of Otterbine fountains are available from Golf Course Services; 0858 463153. Readers wishing to learn more about AquaScape fountains, aspirating aerators and air stripping systems should call TIL Irrigation Limited; 0425 476162.

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Judges' decision is final. Not open to BIGGA staff.

★ Peter Creary, course manager at Hatfield London Country Club, Essendon, Hertfordshire, was the winner of our May competition. A few minutes searching through these pages paid off for him - Will YOU be next month's winner?

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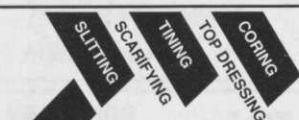
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Brickendon Grange Golf & Country Club

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Applicants should possess recognised qualifications.

The successful applicant will have a sound knowledge of and experience in all aspects of course management and machinery maintenance.

The ability to lead and motivate staff, organise work programmes and maintain Health & Safety Requirements is essential.

Accommodation available.

Apply in confidence with C.V. to
The Secretary, Brickendon Grange Golf & Country Club,
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**The Secretary, Swinley Forest Golf Club,
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For further information contact Robert Cox (Grounds Maintenance Manager) on 0831 850091

Alternatively contact the BRETS Personnel Department for further details and an application form at 24 Uxbridge Road, Ealing, London W5 2BP. Tel: 081 758 5565. Please quote reference no. BR010



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Billingham Golf Club

invites applications for the post of

HEAD GREENKEEPER

Applicants must be fully qualified and be able to show a proven record of achievement.

The ability to lead and motivate staff, organise work programmes and an awareness of all relevant Health and Safety legislation is essential.

The successful applicant will also be expected to have a sound knowledge of budgetary control.

Salary negotiable. No accommodation.

Replies in writing together with full CV to

Secretary/Manager, Billingham Golf Club Ltd,
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Mr JDF Cressey, Chairman of Green, Newark Golf Club,
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Meltham Golf Club

invites applications for the post of

HEAD GREENKEEPER

This parkland course requires applicants who are suitably qualified and experienced in all aspects of course management. The ability to motivate and lead an established team and organise work programmes is regarded as essential.

A practical knowledge of modern greenkeeping machinery and current Health & Safety regulations is also required.

Salary negotiable. No accommodation.

Apply in writing, with full CV to:

The Secretary, Meltham Golf Club, Thick Hollins Hall,
Meltham, Huddersfield HD7 3DQ



Settle Golf Club

require a

GREENKEEPER

Applicants must be experienced in all aspects of greenkeeping and have a practical knowledge of modern machinery.

Accommodation is not available. Salary negotiable according to experience.

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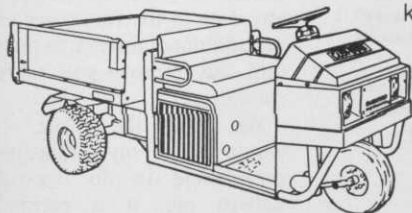
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TALKING HEADS

Everyone agrees that good communication between the keepers of the green and the users of the green is essential, but is it worth going to the extra bother of organising a presentation evening for members? Duncan McGilvray, course manager at Letchworth, reckons it is.

It is my belief that the vast majority of our present problems are due to the lack of communication and presentation of ourselves and our staff. If, as we have proved at Letchworth, this can be largely overcome, everybody – including member, committee member and secretary – is much happier and, dare I say, the greenstaff are better paid.

Giving a presentation such as the one outlined below may seem a daunting task but, if successful, makes all our other tasks much easier.

Following five years of annual course manager presentations in the clubhouse giving updates on progress, describing problems, with the assistance of invited speakers, and answering sometimes difficult questions, I believed that there was something more that could be done to get the message across regarding what the job of the greenkeeper was all about.

Then in 1992 I attended an EGU seminar on policy documents and there was the answer – Ed McCabe and Arthur King from Brockenhurst Manor Golf Club had given their committee and membership a presentation of the greenstaff and their equipment.

With great enthusiasm I returned to work the next day and planned our own presentation at Letchworth.

Firstly I asked the greenstaff what they thought. All agreed it was a good idea and suggested different set-ups to get the most from the day – even though it was scheduled for a Friday evening in the middle of summer. With that sort of backing from our staff I knew it would work. Permission from the club? No problems. Huge encouragement from our liaison officer. The treasurer even advised me to set-up a separate budget so that we could do it properly (decent PA system, cheese and wine, etc). Treasurers always know somehow that a little money spent now bears fruit into the future.

So all the preparations were made (far too many to list) and the day arrived.

5pm: Final staff briefing. All staff including seasonal and part-time were there.

4.30–6.15pm: PA system installed and tested.

5.30–6.15pm: All relevant equipment, machinery and staff to putting green and in place for presentation.

5.30–6.15pm: Still and video cameras set up so that an accurate record of the event could be kept – all set up and monitored by our liaison officer Brian Hodder (without whom my position as course manager would be near impossible).

6.30pm: The presentation begins – and the sun was even shining.

The president of the club, who introduces all our course presentations, introduced me with his usual flair and then it

was down to a very nervous course manager.

Following my brief introduction of what the evening would hold for our members I started with our greenstaff.

The staff

I spoke about each of them in turn, probably embarrassed some, named them, went through their service history, explained about training and some of the tasks they had to carry out and the difficulties they were up against in getting some of those tasks completed with golfers on the course.

The machinery

How much it cost. I explained that they are not just lawnmowers in the same way as greenkeepers are not just grasscutters. How much the machinery costs to maintain and more importantly the costs and problems which would occur if it was not maintained.

Action demonstrations

A pin position was changed all the time a commentary was done on what the staff have to think about before a place is selected – nobody I spoke to following this demonstration had any idea how much was involved. The differences between triple and hand mowing were explained along with height of cut, hand watering, wetting agents and dry patch.

We even set up a situation on the first fairway where one of the greenstaff was cutting a fairway and an irate lady member (assistant pro with a skirt on) was trying to play the first hole.

I could then discuss the difficulties experienced by both parties and explain why – and more importantly *how* – they could be overcome in the future.

I then closed the reasonably formal part of the evening and invited all present to visit our workshops for cheese and wine and discussions with all the staff.

The workshop visit

The members were generally left on their own to look at whatever they liked with the staff on hand to answer questions – they were kept very busy and a very good atmosphere was created.

Some of the attractions were bench set-ups of vertical cutting units and back-lapping machinery. We especially took time out to show some of the behind-the-scenes administration involved, ie. year planners for competitions, holidays, maintenance schedules etc, diaries, day books, forward planners, machinery records and health and safety requirements.

When I look back, the good that was done on that one evening in June 1993 will last a very long time – the membership know much more about the work that we do, and that is no bad thing.

Much more importantly they now see the staff as highly trained, respectable, professional people.

The staff themselves got a great deal from the evening as well – they now look at our membership in a different light – not just aloof golfers who get in the way of their work.

It is a fact that the membership pay subscriptions which ultimately pay our salaries and if they know that the course is managed by trained professionals they will not argue at any time in the future regarding additional finance to maintain and improve golf course conditions.

We made the effort – I would urge my colleagues everywhere to do likewise. Believe me, it is certainly worth the hassle.

● Duncan McGilvray has been at Letchworth GC for more than six years.



Above: the club president gets the members in the mood for course manager Duncan McGilvray



Left: members take a look round the workshops