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GREENKEEPER

International

is the official monthly magazine
of the British & International
Golf Greenkeepers Association

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North Anston, Sheffield S31 7NZ
Tel: 01909 568533, fax: 01909 568206

**Greenkeeper International: winner
of Certificate of Merit in Magazine
of the Year category, Editing for
Industry Awards 1994 and 1995**

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Circulation is by subscription. Subscription
rate: UK £34 per year, Europe and Eire £44. The
magazine is also distributed to BIGGA members,
golf clubs, local authorities, the turf industry,
libraries and central government.

ISSN 0961-6977

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Golf Greenkeepers Association

APRIL 1995

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A question of standards

Amongst the dictionary definitions of standards are a measure to which others (should) conform or against which others are judged and a required degree of excellence. Where therefore stands the profession of greenkeeping and indeed our Association in this regard? As a positive statement, the lead from your Board of Management and Headquarters staff is one aimed at professionalism in all we do and in those instances where we are found wanting every effort is made to remedy situations with a degree of urgency. That having been said I suspect that within the profession we are daily surrounded by much complacency and at times a lackadaisical approach.

A recent letter of complaint I received from a golf club concerned interviews conducted for a new head greenkeeper following advertisement in *Greenkeeper International*. The letter informed me of the discourteous manner in which two applicants invited to attend failed to advise that they were not going to attend the interview. Both had been given adequate time to advise the club of a change of heart.

The letter went on to say that the two applicants had completely failed to extend to the club and a panel of five the common courtesy of a telephone call and that consequently five very busy persons wasted their time through the thoughtlessness of our members. The letter concluded that it does not put greenkeepers in a very good light. I would find it difficult to argue with that conclusion although I did point out to the club that the individuals concerned had not in fact renewed their membership for 1995 – perhaps a comment in itself. In fairness it must be said that golf clubs as potential employers often leave much to be desired as far as standards are concerned and many are the complaints I receive of the lack of courtesy extended to our members in terms of acknowledgement of their applications for posts or in the sending of formal letters of rejection.

The incident related above would seem to immediately render the two individuals concerned, should they wish to renew their membership, culpable in



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

terms of the first stipulation of our Code of Ethics. What Code of Ethics I hear many of you say for often there seems a lack of awareness that we operate under such a code? As a first consideration a member pledges himself to 'Set standards of personal conduct which will enhance the stature of the profession of golf course management'. I make no apologies therefore for republishing the Code on this page for in this day and age it becomes ever more important that our members abide by a Code to which they pledge themselves on joining the Association. Look carefully at the ten points for the standards set

are high ones and be self-critical in your own assessment of where you as an individual fall short of those standards.

Certain standards are set in the use of the membership card by our greenkeeper members to enjoy courtesy of the course. How many abide by the criteria set out on the reverse side of the card? Permission to visit a course should be sought in advance, correct dress should be observed on and off the course and the club should be thanked for their courtesy. Unfortunately not all members treat courtesy of the course as a privilege and I worry about the seeming increase in the number of clubs no longer prepared to extend the courtesy to our members. The warning signs are there and any known instances of abuse of the privilege should be reported to Headquarters in an effort to ensure that the failings of a few do not penalise the majority who recognise and implement their obligations in this regard.

One other area for consideration. Working out on the golf course in all sorts of weather means that workwear must be practical. That may be stating the obvious but again are standards important?

I think so. The inclusion in budgets of appropriate workwear for greenkeeping staff is important – workwear which will be smart and suitable for the tasks in hand whilst remaining essentially practical. Importantly it assists club members in their identification of the greenkeeping crew and helps create the right image. The 'any old thing will do' syndrome will not help the profession's cause and this is an area where, in many instances, an immediate improvement at low cost can be implemented.

What of personal presentation whether it be in terms of arguing a case at the green committee meeting or appearing at an event appropriately dressed. As an individual are you always setting the highest of standards? Now there is a view within the Association that BIGGA members project an image above their station and that ultimately this may not achieve job satisfaction or even the respect of others. It is not a view with which I agree but it is pertinent to the issues on which I have touched in this article. I know the way in which your Board wishes to take the Association in this regard in terms of setting the highest of standards and I believe that this is the prevalent view amongst the membership. What really is the alternative – an acceptance that greenkeepers should know their place with all the implications that will hold for wages, conditions of service, training and indeed job satisfaction?

By and large since the advent of BIGGA in 1987, huge steps forward have been taken in the professional development of greenkeepers and consequently in the game's perception of the profession and the esteem in which the practitioners of greenkeeping are now held. Yet it will only take a minority to undo much of the achievement and here I have outlined some worrying trends. If golf as a game has a great deal to do to put its house in order, we as a profession and an Association must strive to ensure that we do not leave ourselves open to unnecessary criticism by an acceptance of standards that may have prevailed a decade ago but are outmoded and unacceptable in 1995.

BIGGA Code of Ethics

This Code is established to promote and maintain the highest professional standards of service and conduct among the membership of BIGGA. Through adherence to this Code, members will gain for themselves recognition of individual integrity, responsibility and professionalism whilst enhancing generally the respect and good will for both their profession and Association. As a member of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, I accept this Code and pledge myself to:

1. Set standards of personal conduct which will enhance the stature of the profession of golf course management.
2. At all times carry out my duties and responsibilities in such a manner as to reflect favourably on the profession and Association.
3. Seek to use every opportunity to broaden my professional expertise for both self-improvement and the good of the profession.
4. Follow, as a basic tenet, sound business and turf management principles in exercising the responsibilities of my post.
5. Observe the highest standards of personal integrity in my relationship with

- fellow greenkeepers as well as other associated individuals and at all times, as far as I am able, assist my fellow greenkeepers as required of me.
6. Pursue job advancement only where vacancies arise and not at the expense of a fellow greenkeeper and abstain from any action, comment or communication not founded on truth which is likely to harm the professional reputation or practice of another greenkeeper.
7. Give endorsements of any kind only upon satisfactory personal experiences of the item identified.
8. Refrain from encouraging or accepting considerations of any value which might be deemed an inducement to find favour for a particular party or influence decisions in relation to that party and at all times avoid any exploitation of my Association, Industry or Profession.
9. Support at every opportunity the Association, its Regions and Sections in seeking to improve the public understanding and recognition of the profession of golf course management.
10. Report to the Association any evidence likely to be in violation of this Code of Ethics.

Magazine wins top award – again

For the second year running your magazine, *Greenkeeper International*, has won a top award.

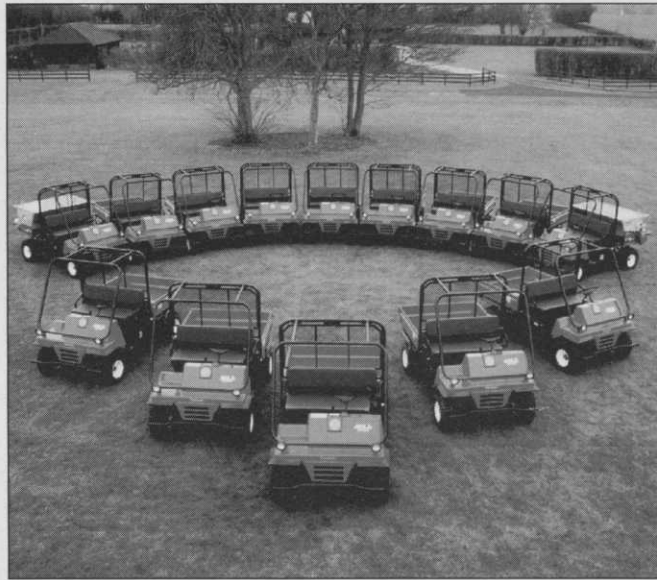
It scooped a Certificate of Merit in the Magazine of the Year category in the Editing for Industry Awards, organised by the British Association of Industrial Editors.

Up against big budget publications from the likes of British Gas, BP and Shell, the judges said: "Greenkeeper International continues to be a thoroughly worthwhile publication. This pleasing magazine is well presented, professional and must fulfil its target of informing and promoting all aspects of greenkeeping."

Some 1,439 entries – an all-time high – were put forward in the prestigious competition which attracts magazine and newspaper entries from trade associations, local government, industry and commerce across Europe.

MP and media celebrity Ken Livingstone will present the award at an Oscars-style ceremony in Harrogate next month.

NEWS



■ Never a club to do things by halves, Wisley has bought 14 Kawasaki Mule 2500s for carrying staff and equipment around the course. Two of the Mules, supplied by R Hunt of Stockbridge, are fitted with Amazon topdressers powered by hydraulic PTOs. These are pre-production versions of a hydraulic powerpack that Kawasaki plan to launch in the near future.

Greenkeepers under fire: from sub-machine guns

Greenkeepers at Ireland's Balla club in Co Mayo have to take great care when going between the second green and third tee.

This is where the gardai are to be found blasting away with sub-machine guns at a bank of earth. They stop when people pass, but members are, understandably, still concerned.

The course has been used inter-

mittently as an impromptu rifle range for at least 20 years, according to Dick Roche, a member of Balla town park committee, which owns the 18-hole course. But greater use has been made of the practice facility since an officer accidentally shot himself in the leg recently while preparing to go on patrol.

A gardai spokesperson said:

"Obviously we can't set up designated firing ranges all over the country. We've come to an arrangement with the golf course, and we do our best not to inconvenience golfers."

Mr Roche admitted that members found the gunfire a bit unusual. "But we wouldn't like to lose them. The gardai are paying rent."

FLYING DIVOTS

■ Edd Hall, 25, has moved from the London Golf Club, where he was deputy head greenkeeper, to The Buckinghamshire to take over as head greenkeeper. "With his experience at the London Golf Club and his four-year degree in horticulture and soil science, he will be a valuable asset to our operation," says Phillip Chiverton, who was promoted from head greenkeeper to course manager last July. Edd joins a team of 11 greenstaff at the 18-hole private members course which opened in September 1992. This workforce is topped up by six casual staff in the summer.

Steven Hook has been promoted to first assistant after three years at the club.

■ Graham Waller has been appointed head greekeeper/course manager at Crockett's Manor Golf and Country Club, Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire. Set in over 200 acres, the 18-hole par 73 course and 9-hole par 3 academy course opened last June. "I previously worked at Crockett's Manor as assistant greenkeeper but moved just after it opened to Oakridge Golf Club, Ansley, Warwickshire, where I was appointed head greenkeeper," Graham tells us. He returned to Crockett's and took over from Adrian Porter on March 27.

■ The former head greenkeeper of North Manchester Golf Club, Fred Johnson, has died, aged 91.



■ Derek Walder BEM, sportsground manager at the Richardson Evans Playing Fields in south London, was

installed as the chairman of the Institute of Groundsmanship at its AGM in Edinburgh this month.

■ Steve Mason beat 50 other applicants to get the head greenkeeper job at 9-hole Mount Pleasant Golf Course in Bedfordshire. The former deputy head greenkeeper at Welwyn Garden City is now building new tees to give the course 18 sets of tees.

Clearing out

Sisis land clearers, all tractor operated, are now available for hire direct from the manufacturers, for short or extended periods. Rates start at £525 per week. The Macclesfield company has also informed us of a new distributor for the Republic of Ireland – Turfland Enterprise Ltd of Blackrock, Co Dublin.





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NEWS

Golf course, superstore for Grimsby

A new driving range and golf superstore have opened in Grimsby. The accompanying golf course will follow in a few months. The Swingtime Golf Centre features a 27-bay floodlit driving range and a 9-hole 2,400-yard course created to USGA specification.

"I was genuinely impressed with the quality, design and variety of the course," said Stephen Bennett, the PGA European Tour professional with an academy at the range.

MGC credits

Attendance at the 'Greens' part of 'Grounds and Greens' seminars at Lancashire County Cricket Ground on June 21 will earn three credits towards the BIGGA Master Greenkeeper Certificate. Speakers include George Brown (Turnberry), Derek Ganning (The Belfry), Stuart Stenhouse (Gleaneagles) and Anthony Davies (Prestbury).



Turfgrass scientist Robert Laycock has set up a new agronomy consultancy. During his 20-year career working with turf, his clients and employers have included the STRI, Rolawn, English Heritage and the National Trust. Two years ago Ping makers Karsten (UK) Ltd took over his first consultancy, Turfgrass Science. Laycock will continue to work as a consultant for Karsten on its two golf courses at Gainsborough and to interpret the results of soil and tissue analysis for Karsten Turf Science, the analysis and fertiliser company run until recently by Laycock.



Tractor order

Eight new tractors line up at Haynes of Maidstone, ready for delivery to turf supplier Tip-Top Turf. The seven 51hp model Ford 3930s and one 75hp model Ford 5640 are fitted with 30.5x600x600 low ground pressure tyres and will be used for mowing, vacuuming clippings, spraying and rolling. Mowing is carried out on a three-day cycle with the tractors working up to 16 hours a day. Pictured is Tip-Top Turf director Charlie Wood (centre) receiving the keys from Peter Innis (left) and Eric Highstead of Haynes.

Langton Hall sold and could become 18-hole course

Langton Hall and its Hawtree-designed 9-hole golf course in Leicestershire have been sold to a private South African buyer. He paid close to the guide price of £1million to the receivers, KPMG Peat Marwick. Harborough District Council have indicated that they would favourably consider a change of use for the conversion of the hall to a 21-bedroom hotel, the

9-hole course into an 18-hole course with a clubhouse, and a residential scheme. Nigel Talbot-Ponsonby, chairman of surveyors Humberts Leisure, says: "Langton Hall's overseas buyer is particularly interested in the residential element of the scheme. It could provide over 15 houses in a superb setting, and will be developed over the next few years."

FLYING DIVOTS

Following the success of its first Greenkeeper's Information Day, the Cambridgeshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture is looking for sponsors for next year's event. Local greenkeepers, secretaries and members of greens committees were invited to the Milton Centre to listen to a variety of talks and see machinery demonstrations on the college lawn. They were joined by students from the second year NVQ course. It is hoped that next year's event will be bigger. Tel: Martin Crimmins 01223 860701.

The Greenkeeping Supply Company has appointed Tony Oldell to represent it in London, the south-east and East Anglia while Liam Galway has had his area increased to cover Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Cleveland.

Neil McCarthy-Primett, deputy head greenkeeper at Huntercombe GC, Nuffield, Henley-on-Thames, has passed the TDLB D32 and D33 assessor award at Oaklands College, St Albans. This means he is now qualified to assess his own staff at NVQ levels 1 and 2.

Hugh Soden has set up a new business - Jubilee Seeds & Turf (JST) - to market the range of turf grown by Q-Lawns in south-east England. Tel: 01797 320536.

Terravent Ltd has appointed distributors for its new range of soil aerators and decompactors. A&F Warehouse will distribute in Sussex (01428 661676); Surrey Power Machines in Surrey (0181 9741001); Haynes Agricultural (Kent) Ltd in Kent (01622 755726); BS Mowers in Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset (01272 353588); Keith Morgan Mowers in Dyfed, South Powys, Glamorgan and Gwent (01873 880244); and Risboro Turf in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire (01844 274127).

Fascinating glimpse behind the scenes

Having just returned from a Secretary and Regional Administrators meeting at Aldwark Manor, I would like to take this opportunity to say what an education it was for me. I'm sure everybody else who was in attendance would thoroughly agree.

Our meeting started with Neil Thomas making the necessary introductions followed by Ken Richardson giving an education update and Chris Boiling talking about *Greenkeeper International*. Finally we were entertained by the lively talk of Bill Lynch on sales and marketing.

The evening session was filled by Fenchurch Insurance who made us more aware of our membership rights and benefits, and where part of our subscription goes. We were informed of our 24-hour direct line service. This was followed by a relaxing evening talking to fellow secretaries on how everybody's section operates.

The next morning we were introduced to Brin Bendon who has been involved in the management courses at Aldwark Manor. Brin conducted a very good session on public speaking and presenting ourselves in committees. The morning finished with Brin giving us the task of making a presentation to a committee, which created some nerves when everybody's case had to be read out by themselves.

The afternoon session was a tour of the BIGGA HQ by John Pemberton who showed us how things operate and introduced us to all the staff. The day finished with an open forum for everybody to put their ideas forward.

To summarise, I would like to inform fellow members what a dedicated team we have working for us at BIGGA HQ and I would like to see more members actively involve themselves in the Association. We have come a long way since 1987 but can still proceed further with everybody's help.

Antony Bindley, East Midlands Section Secretary

A dog with a bone

With reference to two of your articles in the February edition of *Greenkeeper International*, I would, if I may, make certain observations. Firstly, "Com-

A gap does exist between our profession in UK and Germany

In reply to the two letters in the February edition, under the heading 'Jerry Bashing'.

Firstly, in reply to Mr Walton at the Sennelager Golf Club. I am sorry if you got the impression we were, as you call it, "Jerry bashing." The point was more than anything aimed at the profession and the vastly different practices between the English and German greenkeeper, and was not particularly aimed at the race. Also, if you would like to visit your local Arbeitsamt (unemployment centre), you will see there is no such 'beruf' (occupation, trade, profession) as greenkeeper. In the event of becoming unemployed, which I hope you never do, you would be registered as a Landwirtswirtschaft worker which is 'farmer or agriculturalist' or even Landschaftsgartner (landscape gardener). Let's hope this will all change as golf becomes more popular.

Secondly, I would like to reply to Mr Seve Schmitz. You're quite right, in any work you must earn respect from the people you work with and for. The former has been no problem, whether it be a German or

paction - the fight goes on" by Philip Shaw. I would most certainly agree that aeration is of utmost importance to any played grass area summer and winter alike. (Committee members and agronomists please take note.) To this end I would suggest that any golf club official reading this article actively encourage this procedure as often as is possible, it is in everyone's interest. As for any greenkeeper that is having trouble persuading his or her club of this point, consider two possibilities. Firstly, are you sure that you have effectively "sold" the idea to your committee? (Some really do take a lot of persuading.) Be like a dog with a bone - don't let go. I have had the same problem myself. Secondly, if you are cer-

tain there is nothing more you can do to persuade them to make the correct choice, leave! Yes, leave. Vote with your feet, go elsewhere, as that club does not deserve a conscientious qualified course manager. Take heart, it's not all doom and gloom. Some clubs have woken up. The others think we do it for our own good, not theirs!

The second thing I'd like to comment on is Paul Bishop's letter, "Bad and the good". Well, Paul, you are not on your own, (you may have noticed a reference to agronomists above). You state in your letter that you parted company from one golf club - be positive, be glad you are no longer there. I have met good guys but fortunately only one of

the other kind. Having given much thought to this gentleman over the years, I cannot decide if it was his fault or not. Think about the following. A number of years ago I took over a golf club which, in the early 1980s, had run into problems and called for help. They were sent an agronomist who was a specialist in a different field of sports turf. So I would ask, who is at fault? The agronomist could have said he could not help for obvious reasons, but surely he should not have been sent in the first place.

Do we need agronomists? I, for one, would say at certain times; a problem can arise which you or your colleagues haven't encountered before. Then a true golf course agronomist could be invaluable. Do not be discouraged by one or two unwitting people.

For any one who is interested, I am a qualified head greenkeeper of some 30 years, and in charge for over 20. I have been in Germany now eight months and have thus far not regretted the move. If anyone is thinking of the move out here, go for it, it is different to the UK but not as bad as some would have you believe.

Ray Jackson, head greenkeeper, Sennelager (British Army) Golf Club

Not an ideal world

In reply to my earlier letter regarding hard hats, Martin Petherick (*Letters, March*) states that, rather than greenkeepers wearing hard hats, it would be better to educate golfers not to hit golf balls when greenkeepers are in the vicinity.

This, of course, is the ideal. Unfortunately it is not an ideal world. Many golfers, regrettably, hold greenkeepers in contempt, the attitude "if they will cut the greens when I want to play my ball they deserve to be hit" is, sadly, not uncommon. Given this attitude, and that greenkeepers frequently use highly dangerous machinery, I believe they should use both hard hats and education, and any other method of protection available, and that golf course management should support and encourage them to do so.

James Smith, Ollerton, Nottinghamshire

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The

Eddie Connaughton continues his article on annual meadowgrass by looking at ways of managing it

When it is realised that annual meadowgrass is no longer just an annual plant, then it is possible to manage strategies to either eradicate it or live with it. The very nature of classifying plants such as *Poa annua var annua* and *Poa annua var reptans* is recognising that it is no longer just plain annual meadowgrass we are dealing with. Therefore it is necessary to manage the turf to the condition that prevails.

As an example, when new greens are sown out with fescue and bent grass, the first invading grass is *Poa annua var annua*, which is coarse in texture, shallow rooting and bunch type. Conversely, established greens will usually have a fine-leaved, low-growing, deeper-rooting grass, with stolons present which will most likely be the perennial biotype. Therefore, either for control or management of meadowgrass, it is necessary to determine what variety is present in your turf.

In my opinion, there are different classifications for the way meadowgrass is managed and all are applicable to individual situations. The three main categories of management are:

1: NEW GREENS

These are invariably built on free-draining sandy rootzones and are sown with predominantly fescue/bentgrass or, in more recent times, creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) of American design. Whether it is fescue/bent or creeping bentgrass, the same challenges exist in preventing the meadowgrass from encroaching the new surfaces. If a good density of whatever grass is sown is established, then the encroachment of meadowgrass is reduced. However, in all fine turf surfaces the real challenge occurs when the height of cut is reduced to produce the speed on the greens that is invariably dictated by television coverage, and in turn good surfaces are subjected to undue early stress.

It is at times like this that the

grass thins out, algae appears and the next step is meadowgrass. The 'traditional' way of encouraging the fescues and bents is through aeration and depletion of nutrients, because the meadowgrass are 'opportunistic' grasses and always invade an over-fertile area, thus suggesting that poverty will eliminate meadowgrass. This 'theory' is probably the most misleading of all the management policies that have been discussed over the past few years.

Of course, once a perennial grass like fescue or bent has declined and meadowgrass has appeared, the battle is on for which one will survive. In our climate, once the fescue/bent has declined, the meadowgrass will tolerate the practical conditions, ie:

- Continuous close mowing on a regular basis;
- Frequent bad weather including cloudy days;
- Year-round play;
- Compacted soils.

Having said all this, the fescue/bent and indeed the pure creeping bentgrass greens can compete with annual meadowgrass once they are healthy enough to prevent the invasion of the annual strain from establishing. Therefore to prevent encroachment on new greens, the turf sown (ie fescue/bent or a combination of both or creeping bent) should be kept in a healthy condition with good fertility management. This does not mean over-fertilising which has been attributed to meadowgrass invasion in the past, but more keeping the desirable grasses healthy to fight off the 'weed' grasses.

The other main advantage of meadowgrass encroaching new greens is that it is invariably the *Poa annua var annua* species. This strain is possible to manage through cultural methods such as scarifying, verti-cutting and top-dressing to reduce its impact. Certain chemicals have an inhibiting effect on the annual strain of meadowgrass in this country but