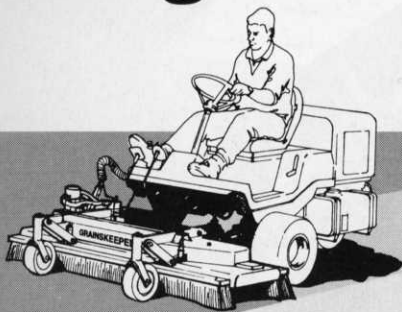


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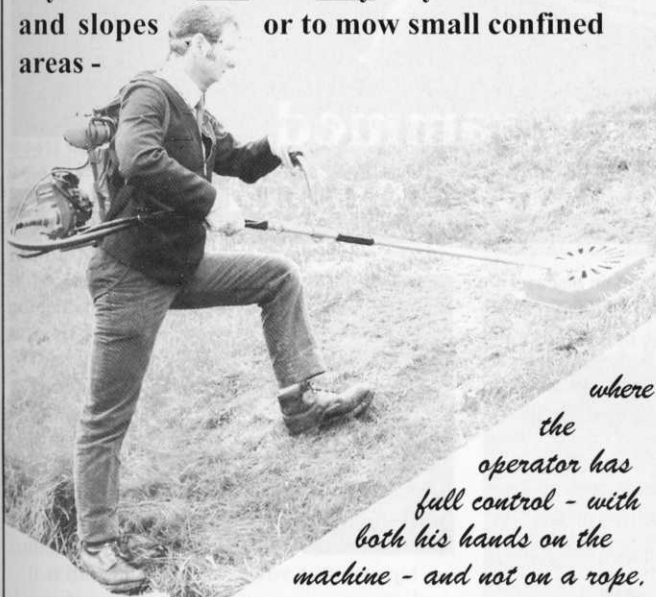
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SEACROFT

goes down a storm

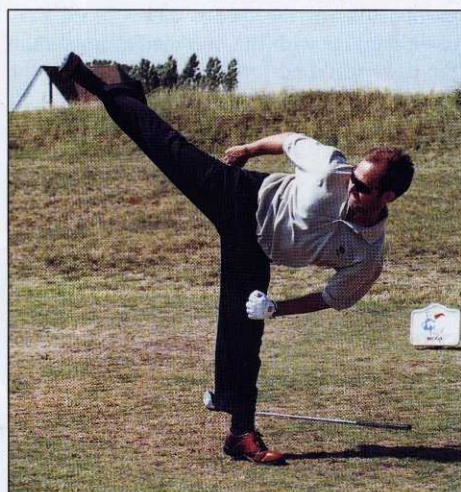
The 1996 National Tournament in association with Miracle Professional was a big hit with all who attended, reports Scott MacCallum.

Driving home from the National Tournament, news that scientists had uncovered life on Mars was being announced over the radio. It struck me that it was an extraordinary coincidence because at just about the same time so many people had discovered the time of their life in Skegness.

The National Tournament in association with Miracle Professional at Seacroft Golf Club was a resounding success. Many who had attended year after year declared that it was the best ever and others that National Tournament week was always the highlight of their summer.

It is difficult to analyse why 1996 should go down as a great year. The weather wasn't bad but it wasn't perfect. Indeed the thunder storm which deposited five millimetres of rain on the course in 20 minutes during the second round and lit up the sky with forked lightning had players and caddies racing for shelter. The course certainly wasn't of the "feel good" variety and didn't surrender any really low scores. In fact quite a number of players had to record hole scores which required more than one digit.

But the welcome afforded to BIGGA by the golf club, the superb service of the Crown Hotel in which the Monday night barbecue and the Tuesday night banquet were held,



Dave "2nd Dan" Leatherland opens his legs and shows his class...

together with a prize table which looked more like a window display at Dixon's ensured that 1996 would be a year to remember.

Seacroft is a traditional links golf course of the out and in variety beautifully maintained

and presented by Richard Hardie and his team. It is extremely well bunkered – some of which are big enough, if some of the competitors are to be believed, to contain double decker buses – but the principle hazard is one over which Richard has no control. The wind wasn't particularly fierce over the three competition days but still played a major influence on Seacroft's playability. Whipping in from the sea the prevailing left to right wind going out meant early danger and more than one player was forced to reload on the 1st or 2nd tees.

Peter Holtham was the star of day one. In conditions which were perhaps the toughest of the entire tournament he posted a gross 77 off a handicap of 9 for a three under par nett 68 which was the best of the day by three clear shots. Dropping only two shots to par on the more difficult outward nine Peter completed the round with nothing worse than a five on his card. A remarkable achievement.

Barry Emberley was next best, also with a gross 77 off a 6 handicap despite double bogeys at two of the par threes. He too kept a six off his card. The best gross score of the day came from John Berry who shot a 72 just heading Richard Barker on a card play-off.

The evening saw the Miracle Professional barbecue in the Crown Hotel, an event which drew a record attendance for the traditional Monday night function. Over 120 competitors, family and friends munched through 200 hamburgers, 120 chicken legs, 217 Lincolnshire sausages, 8 bowls of potato salad, 30 lettuces and 12 bowls of coleslaw, all washed

'Scoring was much better on day two'

down with assorted fluids.

Second round and the day of the storm. Ironically it was a much better day for golf than the first day with only a very small breeze to influence any club selection decisions.

For those who were lucky enough to witness it there was a unique sight early on the Tuesday – that of Scottish Regional Administrator Elliott Small, a man not known for his tolerance of late comers when he and wife Edna are organising events, running the final 50 yards to the 1st tee. The starter had already showed extreme compassion by allowing the Kincardine man's two playing partners to tee off before him and anything short of the lung bursting run Elliott put in would have resulted in his ignominious disqualification. His excuse? He and Edna had become stuck behind a tractor on the way to the course. As it was he struck a fine drive down the opening hole and came away with a bogey five.

Scoring was much better on day two and the day included the best nett round of the entire week – a nett 66 by 11 handicapper A. Roberts.

It was the lower handicap players who were beginning to dominate at the top of the leader board. Four handicappers Graeme MacDonald, John Berry and Richard Barker came in with gross 73, 74 and 75 respectively all playing in the same three ball.

They were also among the players caught in the spectacular – and potentially dangerous thunder storm in the middle of the afternoon. Fork lightning etched the inky black sky and the rain



A prize table and a half!



Everyone a winner



Roger Mossop and Richard Hardie



Dean Cleaver and Roger Willars

tumbled as though turned on by a tap. Those in the safety of the clubhouse set out in cars to retrieve anyone seeking refuge but such was the downpour – five millimetres fell in 20 minutes – it was impossible to leave the car and attract anyone's attention.

Ironically the storm coincided with Headquarter's Vickie Peckham's introduction to the peculiarities of the game. Vickie, until now more familiar with the 400 metres track than the links, caddied for Richard Barker on the second round and was not sufficiently put off by her drenching to stop her offering her services to Bert Cross as caddie for the final round.

The Vitax Putting Competition was also held during the second round and an excellent putting green surface was confirmed when Steve Sullivan triumphed with a "six under" score of 30.

In the evening it was back to the Crown Hotel for the Banquet and another full house. The excellent meal was complemented by the fine speeches by Club President Dr Gus Polard, BIGGA National Chairman Dean Cleaver and Miracle Professional Business Manager Roger Mossop. They were followed by comedian, Reg Thompson, whose 45 minutes of quick fire one liners and reminiscences of legendary music hall entertainers, were met by an enthusiastic audience.

Another feature of the evening was the antics of the table magician Mr Clive "Grate Suprendo" Heginbotham who had the many

children eating out of his hand.

The evening was also an opportunity for Midland Regional Administrator, Roger Willars, who is retiring from the role to be thanked for his excellent work over the years. He was lost for words when he was called up during the dinner to be presented with a watch by National Chairman Dean Cleaver.

Richard Hardie was also presented with a token of appreciation for the work he and his team had put into the golf course

Wednesday, and by an amazing fluke the draw, made three weeks before the event, threw up the three leaders in the final two groups.

Graeme MacDonald, John Berry and Richard Barker all struggled on the front nine Richard opening with a six, Graeme having a seven at the 2nd and John recording four bogeys to be out in 42, 40 and 40 respectively.

It was the Penrith man, John Berry, who pulled out the stops in the back nine coming back in level par to edge out Kirby Muxloe's Richard Barker, who dropped a shot at the 17th, by a single shot. John was therefore the overall winner of the Miracle Professional Trophy for the best nett score of the week.

The best gross round of the week was scored by the lowest handicapper in the field. James Dair, a one handicapper had not done himself justice over the first two rounds but shot a level par 71 on the third day to clinch the 54 hole gross prize.



Spot the ball



After the storm



The "Miracle" workers

FULL RESULTS

Miracle Professional Trophy (Best Nett 1-14 - 54 holes) J. Berry.
2. R. Barker, 3. P. Holtham.

Miracle Professional Trophy (Best Nett 15-28 - 54 holes) I. Needham.
2. T. Patchin, 3. N. Maltby.

Hardi Amenity Sprayers Trophy (Best Gross - 54 holes) J. Dair.

Jubilee Cup (Team Prize) Midlands - M. Hughes, P. Loffman, P. Holtham.

The David Royle Cup (Best Nett 1-14 - 36 holes). G. MacDonald
2. P. Holtham.

The Pattison Trophy (Best Nett 15-28 - 36 holes) 1. T. Patchin.
2. R. Pearce.

The Toro Trophy (Best Gross - 36 holes) J. Berry.

Over 55s (Best Nett - 36 holes) M. Hannan.

Monday:

Best Gross, J. Berry

Levington Trophy (Best Nett) P. Holtham.

2. B. Emberley; 3. R. Barker

Longest Drive (Aitkens Sports Turf) G. MacDonald

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) S. Pope

Tuesday

Best Gross, G. MacDonald

Standard Golf Trophy (Best Nett) A. Roberts

2. P. Wentworth, 3. P. Fitzjohn

Vitax Putting Cup, S. Sullivan

Longest Drive (Avoncrop) A. Brebion

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) M. Hughes

Wednesday

Best Gross, J. Berry

William Hargreaves (SISIS) Trophy (Best Nett) J. Dair

2. J. Seisun, 3. I. Needham

Longest Drive (E.T. Breakwell) S. Sullivan

Nearest the Pin (County Crop) S. Pope

BIGGA would like to thank the following sponsors for making the tournament such a success: Miracle Professional, Hardi, Amenity Sprayers, SISIS Equipment (Macclesfield), Vitax, Levington Horticulture Ltd, Lely UK Ltd, DS Holdings Ltd, Pattissons, Ransomes, Standard Golf, County Crop, Aitkens Sports Turf, Avoncrop, E.T. Breakwell and Jim Fry.

Have you got what it takes?



Education Update

BY KEN RICHARDSON

An advertisement in the August edition of this magazine for a Course Manager at a prestigious golf club asked for a greenkeeper with skills in the maintenance and presentation of the golf course and the following:

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There are some places left on this Autumn's BIGGA sponsored, Education and Development Fund subsidised Supervisory Courses for Greenkeepers. **Make sure of your place by returning the, reply paid card in this magazine, or by telephoning HQ on 01347 838581, TODAY.**

Places are available on:

Aldwark Manor Supervisory Management Courses-1996

Module 1- Managing People- October 7-11 (A few places left)

- Computing for greenkeepers, time management, team building, motivation, delegation and leadership skills.

Module 2-Managing People- October 14-18 (Places available)

- Listening and questioning skills, appraisal, assertive communication, constructive feedback, grievance and discipline, further computing for greenkeepers.

Module 3-Managing Operations and Resources- October 21-25 (A few places left)

- Resource planning, estimates, budgets, quality care, competency based training, portfolio development and computing for greenkeepers.

Module 4-Managing Information- October 28-November 1 (Plenty of places left)

- Memos, letters, report writing, managing meetings, communication skills, presentation skills and computing for greenkeepers.

Module 5-Managing Finance, Management of Health and Safety, Recruitment and Selection-November 4-8 (Almost full)

- Controlling budgets, expense reports, cash flow forecasting, computerised accounts, health and safety management, interview techniques, employment law, race relations, equal opportunities and computers in management.

The cost of each course, which includes all food, accommodation, tuition and access to individual computer terminals is £426 + VAT. Equivalent courses are available commercially for £1200 excluding accommodation.

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Master Robert Hotel	Hounslow	October 16/17, 1996	Frank Newberry
Royal Clarence Hotel	Exeter	October 23/24, 1996	Frank Newberry
Slieve Russel Hotel	Ballyconnell	November 18/19, 1996	Brin Bendon
Moat House Hotel	Washington	February 10/11, 1997	Brin Bendon
Moat House Hotel	Peterborough	February 13/14, 1997	Frank Newberry

Some places left on all courses except Hounslow which is now full.
 COST: BIGGA Members £50 per delegate, all inclusive. Non-BIGGA members £150

Budgeting and Finance for Greenkeepers

Introduces and develops the essentials of financial management including, budgets, expenditure, cash flow etc.

Old Ship Hotel	Brighton	October 14/15, 1996	Frank Newberry
Moat House Hotel	Bournemouth	October 21/22, 1996	Frank Newberry
Slieve Russel Hotel	Ballyconnell	November 20/2, 1996	Brin Bendon
Waterton Park Hotel	Wakefield	November 11/12, 1996	Brin Bendon
Quality Friendly Hotel	Walsall	November 28/29, 1996	Brin Bendon
Inchyra Grange Hotel	Falkirk	October 3/4, 1996	Brin Bendon

Some places left on all courses except Birmingham/Walsall which is now full.

COST: BIGGA Members £75 per delegate, all inclusive. Non-BIGGA members £150

Golf Course Health and Safety Management

Does your club meet the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act? Find out by attending one of these courses, which cover policy, risk assessments, manual handling etc.

International Hotel	Ashford	October 16/17, 1996	Jon Allbutt
Thornbury Golf Centre	Bristol	October 23/24, 1996	Jon Allbutt
Moat House Hotel	Nottingham	November 12/13, 1996	Jon Allbutt
Moat House Hotel	Blackburn	November 5/6, 1996	Jon Allbutt
Inchyra Grange Hotel	Falkirk	October 3/4, 1996	Douglas Shearer

COST: BIGGA Members £75 per delegate, all inclusive. Non-BIGGA members £150

Some places left on all courses

Essential Presentation Skills for Greenkeepers

Whether it's presentations to committees, seminars and conferences or you just need to improve your verbal presentation skills then this course is for you.

Old Ship Hotel	Brighton	October 29/30, 1996	Frank Newberry
Aldwark Manor Hotel	Aldwark	November 25/26, 1996	Brin Bendon

COST: BIGGA Members £75 per delegate, all inclusive. Non-BIGGA members £150

Several places left on each course

Each of the courses is linked to N/SVQ Level 3 Supervisory Units. Remember, the costs of all of these courses is kept at such a very low level by subsidies from the BIGGA Education and Development Fund which is supported by our Gold and Silver Key Circle Members. Equivalent two day courses are available, commercially for £700, without accommodation.

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Sound investments with planned finance

Budgeting for future course machinery purchases is one of the most difficult tasks faced by any golf club.

Although it is comparatively straightforward to compile a shopping list of new equipment that one might like to acquire over the coming years, unexpected breakdowns, failures or other pressing course requirements can disrupt even the best-laid plans.

By the time the specified item has reached the top of the list, needs may have changed or the machine may have been superseded by a new model. Result? Insufficient money is available for the purchase, leading to a frustrating delay for another year or so.

Although many clubs still feel most comfortable with the cash purchase, there is a growing realisation that the investment of a large sum of money at one time in a single item of machinery is not the most effective use of available funds. It may avoid the payment of finance interest charges, but it can also seriously affect cash flow. Paying cash to buy a machine outright also means that one has purchased a depreciating asset using today's money.

Many successful businesses have failed not because they were unprofitable but simply because they ran out of cash. There has long been a trend in Britain for smaller companies to use short-term funding – usually cash or the overdraft – to invest in items which have a medium to long-term working life.

This is madness. Whoever heard of a machine which worked harder for you because you paid cash for it? The most sensible way to take the pressure off cash flow is to spread the cost of capital investments over periods more closely matched to their working life.

This argument is reinforced by the fact that many finance schemes are currently available at a low, fixed rate of interest – reflecting the lowest UK bank rate for more than 20 years. One can also take advantage of manufacturer-subsidised finance offering zero and low cost finance over a realistic period of time.



No machine works better or harder for you because you paid cash for it. Using planned finance to spread the cost of capital investments over periods more closely matched to their working life can help ease the pressure on cash flow.



Exhibitions such as Saltex and BTME provide an excellent opportunity for golf clubs to plan a replacement schedule and budget for the key machines on the course.

Cash or the overdraft are much better used to fund the day-to-day running of the club and to pay for variable inputs such as fertiliser, seed, chemicals, fuel and wages. If surplus cash is available, then it should be directed initially to reducing any short-term borrowings, such as the overdraft. Liquidity is valuable and should not be discarded lightly.

When planning a replacement machinery programme, golf clubs should first estimate the value of its principal equipment fleet and any additional seasonal items such as specialist aerators, a hollow tiner or drainage machine.

Assuming a core equipment valuation of £90,000 to £100,000, it would not be unreasonable to set up a five year replacement programme to ensure that the key

items of machinery are kept up to date and maintenance costs are kept in check.

"The most budget-friendly way of achieving this would be through a five-year rolling finance scheme equating to a finance requirement of about £25,000 in each of the five years," commented John Westrope of leading golf course equipment finance company, FAF.

"Although many machines are needed daily throughout the year, certain items are used solely on a seasonal basis. It could be more cost-effective to hire these in when needed or arrange to share them with a neighbouring club."

When looking at a club's overall machinery budget and ways to optimise cash flow, certain finance options are more

favourable than others. The principal consideration at the outset is whether one wishes to own the equipment. If the answer is yes, then other than cash from existing funds, the two standard funding methods are a bank loan or hire purchase.

Mr Westrope points out that a bank loan can leave one vulnerable to rising interest rates and can be called in at any time if one has difficulty in meeting payments. Furthermore, the equipment is not regarded as security for the loan putting pressure on the assets of the club.

Hire purchase involves a deposit (normally between 10 and 20 per cent of the amount financed) and a series of fixed repayments over an agreed period. The deposit can often be covered by the value in any trade-in machine.

Once the final instalment has been made, title passes to the user, with depreciation being shown on the club's accounts. Clubs run as businesses or with an annual expenditure of about £44,000 or less can normally reclaim the VAT, which is paid in one lump at the start of the agreement.

Methods of acquiring equipment which do not involve ownership have gained rapid ground in recent years due to the appreciation that it is not necessary to actually own something to derive maximum benefit from it.

A finance lease is one option which allows full use of a machine without giving final ownership.

In principal, the business uses and maintains the machine for a given period in return for a fixed monthly "rental", enabling easy budget forecasting. At the end of the period, the item can be traded-in and the club shares in the sale proceeds.

Following the new VAT regulations of 1994, FAF recommends a finance lease as the best option for non-profit making members' clubs. Because the VAT element is spread across the whole period of the lease, this method reduces pressure on cash flow for those clubs unable to reclaim all the VAT at the outset.

An alternative to the finance lease is the operating lease, also known as contract hire. This is

equivalent to a long term hire and can include all maintenance and servicing costs. Unlike a finance lease, where the lessee and lessor share in the risks and rewards associated with ownership, an operating lease agreement reflects solely the operating costs of the machine over a fixed "hire" period.

Neither the equipment nor any maintenance charges appear on the accounts as a capital asset, an important consideration for those clubs run as businesses.

At the end of the period, the item is simply returned to the contract hire company, leaving the user free to start a new agreement. Beware, however, hidden extras such as charges for excess hours and damage or wear and tear to the paintwork and main components.

Whichever finance option selected, John Westrope points out that FAF is happy to structure



Using a finance lease, Coventry Golf Club has acquired new equipment valued at more than £200,000 at lower outlay than that required previously each year to hire in specialist machines and to replace, repair and maintain the club's existing equipment fleet.

repayments to suit each club's income and cash flow.

A members' club, for example, may prefer to pay annual instalments in the month following subscription renewals. A pay and play course will normally wish to arrange monthly or quarterly repayments. The length of agreement period can also be tailored according to the machine's level

of use and its importance on the course.

While highlighting the flexibility offered by medium to longer-term finance schemes, John Westrope stresses the importance of seeking professional advice before making the final decision.

The expression 'act in haste, repent at leisure' could well have been coined as a warning to those

who make important financial decisions without considering all of the options or the long-term consequences.

■ Thanks to John Westrope of FAF for assistance in the preparation of this article. For further information or to discuss a finance quotation, call the FAF Free Phone Help Line on 0800 225567.

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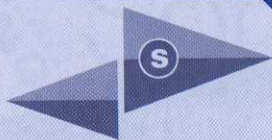
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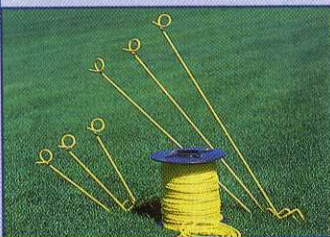
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Time to plan ahead

What a year so far! After such a late spring followed by a summer of variable weather, we are suddenly catapulted into the throes of planning for the autumn and beyond.

September is a month of great change, forcing all greenkeepers to assess the present condition of their fine turf areas, with the knowledge that well planned work executed in September can lay a firm, healthy foundation for the months ahead.

Our general cutting regime will continue this month with the putting greens and tees receiving a low dose application of liquid fertiliser in early September to ensure the grass is in a better position to recover from the rigours of the intensive maintenance work ahead.

We, like many, will be hollow coring all the putting greens and tees in a not too dissimilar fashion to that described by Anthony Davies' article in last month's *Greenkeeper International*. This single but time consuming work allows these playing surfaces a much better

chance of a healthy, problem free winter. We will verticut the putting greens deep and scarify the tees extensively to reduce the thatch before hollow coring. These will not be overseeded as this work was completed with great success earlier in the summer. The topdressing will be pure sand which is the same as the construction rootzone, ensuring continuity and no layering. Following this work a granule, slow release fertiliser will be applied, 15.0.30, followed by an application of iron spray to help reduce the formation of fungal mycelium.

We may need an application of Fenarimol late September to stem the spread of the disfiguring Take-all disease in these four year old greens.

The putting green and tee banks will also receive fertiliser and a spray of iron. The fairways have controlled release fertiliser

which will still be active and help regenerative growth after the drought this summer. Due to no fairway irrigation we will need to overseed some areas and will use a coultter type seeder to get seed into the ground. The height of cut will be raised from 15mm to 18mm and any weeds present will be sprayed with a herbicide before the seed is applied.

Other items to be covered in September's work programme include:

1. Marking out the dead trees in the shelter belt areas, adjacent to the A34 Newbury bypass so they may be removed in the winter.
2. Cut out winter tee areas in front of existing tees. Some use is allowed on the tees proper but this cannot be to the detriment of next season's expectations by the

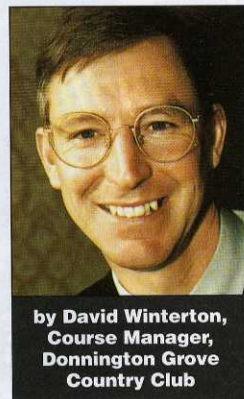
club membership.

3. Leaves may well start to drop early this year due to drought stress so these will be cleared as necessary.

4. As Course Manager I will be planning ahead, writing up the winter work programme to see us through to next spring. This will include all the general maintenance

requirements alongside major course improvements/costings, staff training and a list of unusual items like the pursuance of a grant to allow us to plant trees in some of the larger, open areas we have on the course. This should provide a long-term ecological improvement over regular grass mowing.

With the timely appearance of the Saltex show, this obligatory visit always leaves me dreaming of just how much more we could achieve if I had an open cheque-book! I hope you all enter the autumnal phase with pleasant memories of a long, successful summer gone by.



by David Winterton,
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