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# An environment for golf

by Bob Winfield,  
Environment Consultant

Take a large number of golfers from a selection of clubs and ask, "What do you value most in your golf course environment?" There would be a high level of agreement on the preferred features of a course and the atmosphere of the surroundings. Most golfers would vote for genuine attractive countryside in keeping with the history and natural heritage of the local landscapes. What can a club do to provide such an environment? How should a club decide what is genuine, natural, local and authentic?

The interesting and challenging answer to that question is that the landscape of every golf course has its own history, and can be managed to conserve, restore or re-create features of the man-made and natural heritage of the site. A difficult decision is how far back to go in the history of a course to decide what is the local natural environment? A new

course created on farmland may look back 50 years to traditional farm management with the flora and fauna which existed before modern intensive agriculture. A course created on downland or heathland at the turn of the century will have its heritage in the man-made landscapes of earlier centuries.

A 'new order' of environmental management has developed in recent years, which recognises the priority of conserving whole natural habitats and wildlife communities in order to make any significant contribution to conservation. Adjust the management of the course to include conservation objectives, which are kept in balance with the sporting and visual objectives, in order to achieve a win/win result for both golf and the natural habitats. The golf course environment is greatly enriched by this approach, and can be used as a positive and unique benefit to enhance the golfers' enjoyment of the game.

Fine words! But what does this

mean on the ground? We are not of course talking about the main playing surfaces which are managed as sports turf. The natural course environment lies between the fairways, and around or beyond the tees and greens. In these areas there are opportunities to provide and manage a much more natural countryside at little or no cost. The opportunities were overlooked too often in the past, but happily there is now more concern for the course environment.

**'We make special efforts to be as sensitive as possible to the needs of wildlife'**

This is well demonstrated by the success of the BIGGA Golf Course Environment Competition, in association with Rhône Poulenc and Amazone Ground Care. Ken Richardson, Education Officer at BIGGA said "Our hope is being fulfilled that the Competition is increasing awareness of

the positive benefits that golf courses give to the environment."

Let us take one aspect of the management of non-play areas. Probably the greatest loss to the golf course environment over recent decades has occurred in the diversity of ground flora, probably the most vital element in the whole wildlife food chain. Indigenous grasses, wild flowers and wetland plants provide food for invertebrates, insects and small birds which are then available for predators higher in the food chain. Whereas an attempt to re-create the original flora of a landscape could take decades, progressive restoration work can be relatively easy and can go most of the way to an 'original' natural environment in a few years.

The course at Sandford Springs Golf Club, near Kingsclere in Hampshire, was created in the last 10 to 12 years on land previously used for mixed farming with several wooded areas. Design and construction were sensitive to the existing land-

## PRESENTING THE POWERFUL NEW REELMASTER SERIES.





**Ponds created at Sandford Springs are home to a thriving population of water voles – an increasingly threatened animal**

scape, and subsequent management of the course has created many natural features which are both attractive and genuine local wildlife habitats. Some 20,000 trees were planted (all native species), and six ponds created in an area of three acres of marsh. This wetland is protected from the effects of intensive sports turf management, and is especially rich in wildlife. The Course Man-

ager, Norman Fenwick, who is committed to a high quality course environment said, "We make special efforts to be as sensitive as possible to the needs of wildlife, and have developed important habitat areas throughout the course."

Temple Golf Club in Berkshire was created in 1910 on chalk downland, but there was very little of the original characteristic

down grassland left by 1990. Martin Gunn, the Course Manager, amended the cutting regimes of grassland rough and semi-rough, and changed the woodland management to re-create the conditions for an exceptionally rich and attractive ground flora. Large numbers of nectar-feeding butterflies can be seen having a 'birthday' on the roughs during the summer

months. Martin said, "Only a third of the course is under sports turf and it is important to take a holistic approach to course management so that we can restore and retain important natural features." The course now makes a very important contribution to the local wildlife environment without suffering any additional problems from pests.

At Hankley Common Golf Club in Surrey, the natural heritage is lowland heath; a habitat which is now rare and threatened along with the many plants and animals which are found only in lowland heath. Until ten years ago the large areas of heath, maintained for centuries by grazing animals and rotational burning, were reverting to low quality woodland by the invasion of birch and pine seedlings. Ian McMillan, the Course Manager, has removed 40 hectares of trees and scrub to open up heathland habitats for a wide range of plants, insects and birds. Ian commented recently, "We have worked hard over the

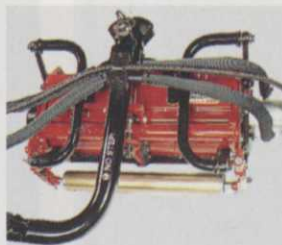
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## An environment for golf

last decade to re-create the natural heathland environment for the benefit of future generations, while continuing to maintain the course in best playing condition throughout the year."

Many courses would benefit from restoring some previously unmanaged habitats in non-play areas. This could include the re-introduction of typical local flora which were lost, often through insensitive management and the excessive use of herbicides during the 1960's and 70's. Regular or rotational cutting, coppicing and clearing, are usually the key elements of maintaining good quality habitats. The correct timing of operations to minimise interference with nature (eg nesting sites, or food sources), and allow the maximum benefits for wildlife (e.g. coppice management for birds such as warblers and nightingales), requires specialist knowledge.

Where the re-introduction of trees, shrubs or ground flora are planned, it is important to select species which are native to the local conditions. This maintains the authenticity of the landscape and provides habitat extension

which will be readily colonised by local wildlife species. If wild flower mixtures are sown they should be customised mixes containing only the most appropriate local species. The soil type, fertility level, moisture and proposed management can all be crucial to the success or failure of individual species within a mixture. Local conservation organisations are usually very willing to give advice on such issues.

Who said "Keen golfers are only interested in one thing – low scores"? How many golfers would complain at the occasional distraction by an unusual butterfly or two, or if they found a ball in the semi-rough surrounded by low-growing vetches, bird's-foot trefoil or ladies bedstraw? Where golf clubs have made information available to members on the value of their conservation management techniques, the well-informed golfer derives satisfaction and a better appreciation of the course environment. ■ *Bob Winfield advises golf clubs in the South of England on conservation and environmental management.*

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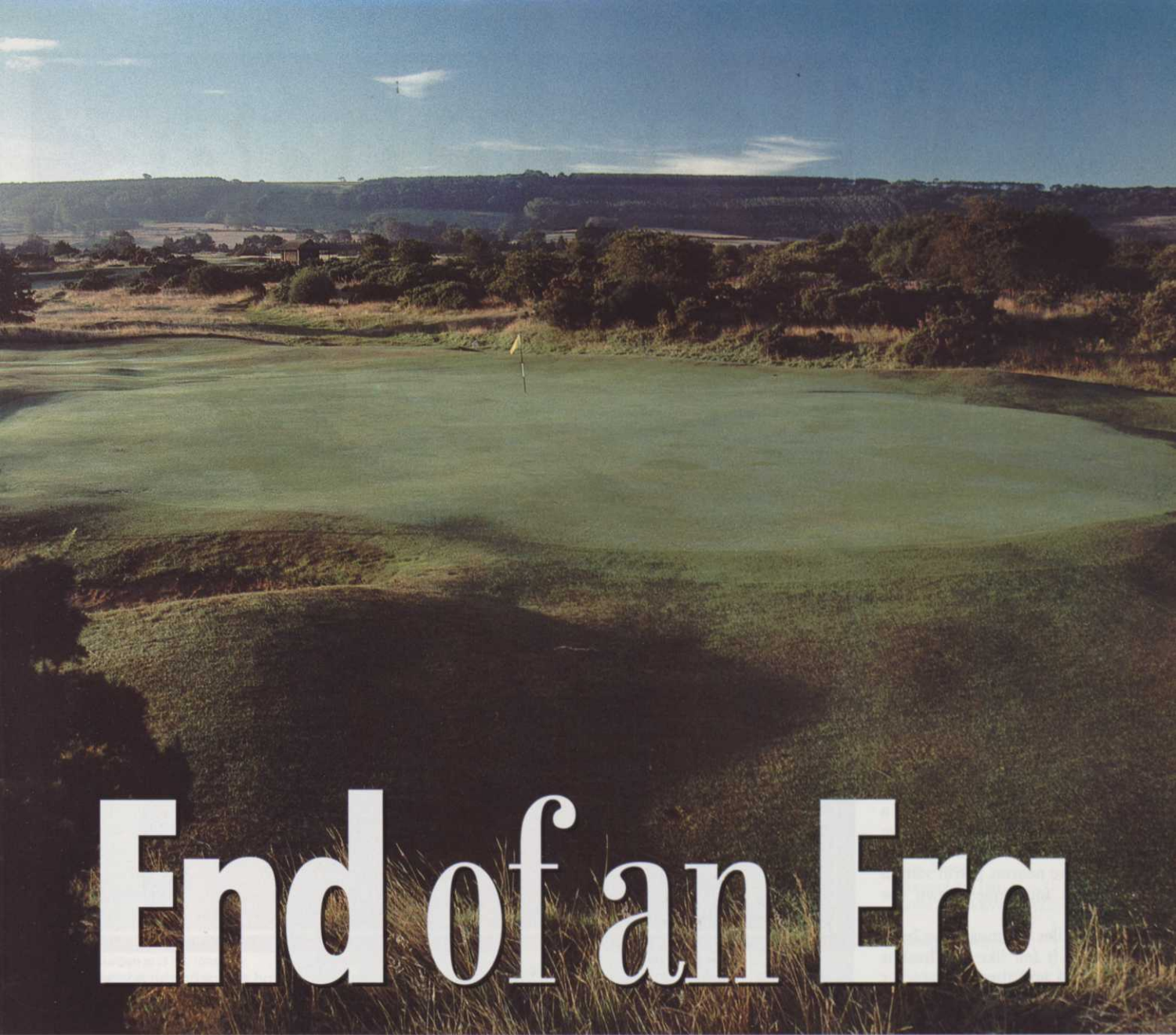
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The rich flora at Temple Golf Club is the result of careful and consistent management

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Ganton photograph by BRIAN MORGAN

# End of an Era

**T**he last playing of the Hayter National Final at Ganton was an occasion to reflect on five outstanding years during which time laughs were had and friendships formed at an equal rate of knots.

Like any good thing which comes to an end there is always a tinge of sadness and, although the excellent relationship of Hayter and BIGGA will continue in other areas, the feeling that an enjoyable era had come to a close was just below the surface in Scarborough.

That sadness was magnified many times over by the subsequent news that David Spurden, Head Greenkeeper at Ganton, and member of the Northern Region team during the week, had been killed in a dreadful accident while out on the course less than a week later.

It is perhaps appropriate that the last Hayter Challenge Final should be the final big event, of many huge events, for which such a staunch BIGGA member had

## HAYTER CHALLENGE *the final final*

prepared Ganton. It was an event when David was with his colleagues and he could share in the banter and bon homme for which Hayter events, whether they be at Section, Region, National or International level, have become famous.

There can be no better tribute to David than the stream of compliments he received from the other 62 greenkeepers for the breathtaking quality of the golf course during the week of the Hayter Challenge.

The competition, our friends from Hayter, Ganton itself, but perhaps most of all, David Spurden, will live long in the memories of those who were at Ganton for the last playing of the Hayter Challenge Final.



David Spurden: Breathtaking quality of his golf course is a fitting tribute

# HAYTER

## CHALLENGE

*the final final*

On her debut as team Captain South West and South Wales Regional Administrator, Paula Humphries, inspired her team to a famous win. Here she takes us through the eventful week.

The coach was booked and the weather looked set fair. The players turned up on time at their chosen pick up points and we kept almost precisely to the timed schedule prepared. All was going too well! This was not to last.

The coach was a rickety old thing which at times, with a following wind and a down hill slope, almost reached 70 mph! It was so noisy that we could not listen to the radio and I could not hear a word that was being said in the body of the coach. (Just as well, probably!) As we approached Scarborough the bus started leaping about and all sorts of funny noises were coming from the engine. "Oh, b., I think I have run out of petrol," said the driver. With a lot of revving and a great deal more of praying we lurched forwards and a local told us that the nearest petrol station was only four miles down the road.

Four miles – it must have been eight, or it felt like it! The bus spluttered and tumbled on ever forwards "It will be ok. as long as we don't have to go uphill," our driver inspired us! At last the petrol station was spotted and just as we pulled onto the forecourt the petrol finally ran out.

Hardly believing our good luck we coasted to the nearest pump. Hooray! we had made it, – well, not quite – the petrol cap was on the wrong side of the bus and the filler would not reach. Out of the bus my trusty team and push! After some delicate manouvres the petrol cap was linked with the filler and we actually missed hitting anything on the way. How, I shall never know.

We left the petrol station to the delight and astonishment of

# Humphries'

# Heroes



everyone on the forecourt who sent us off with laughter and applause which would have done justice to the last night of the proms! Having negotiated the one way system several times and from different directions, we finally found ourselves behind the Irish team who had the sense to stop and ask directions! We stuck to them like glue in what sounded like first or second gear (Genevieve had nothing on this old crate!) and eventually arrived at our hotel where we were met with a delightful staff, wonderful food and a view that was nothing less than magnificent.

Practice day dawned with a cloudless sky, warm sunshine and no wind whatsoever – just per-

fick! What a lovely course Ganton is – completely natural and beautifully cared for – a real joy to play.

Competition day dawned. After having tucked my team up the previous night with hot chocolate and bedtime stories at 10pm. (believe that and you will believe anything), they all turned up bright eyed and bushy tailed (with the exception of the one who crept in to the hotel at 6.45am thinking he had arrived unnoticed!) and played out of their boots

The South West & South Wales Region won the Region Shield for the first time ever – a wonderful achievement over such a tough course. We also took first prize in divs. 2 and 3 and 3rd place in div

I and also won the nearest pin on the 5th. I have not named individuals on purpose. These will appear in the official results. The achievement was, I believe, a team effort and the glory should reflect on all who took part. I was especially proud of the player who finished the first 18 holes in the growing cold, wet and dark at about 5.30 having had a very poor round and still completed the last nine of the 27 holes for the sake of the team result.

A great dinner followed and whoever follows Hayter as sponsor has a tough act to follow. Much celebrating continued into the very early hours (so I hear!).

It was a very quiet journey home!



South East



Northern



Scotland



**A gaggle of Regional Administrators? A Regiment of Regional Administrators? A file of Regional Administrators? Whatever! Kim Macfie and Neil Thomas flank Regional Administrators old and new**

## Alternative awards

### The Sellafield Shield for Services to the Environment

The South West and South Wales Region who attempted to fuel their mini bus with fresh air.

### The Golden P45 for Career Move of the Week

The Editor of a popular greenkeeping magazine who managed to pour the main sponsor's gin and tonic down the trousers of next year's National Chairman.

### The BIGGA Medal for Outstanding Achievement

Dave Spurden and his team who ensured that few, if any, tournaments will be played on a better prepared course in 1997.

### Rookie of the Week Rosette

Paula Humphries, who guided her team to a first victory on her debut in the event

### The "You Bet" Consolation Bit of Plastic

The entire field, who narrowly failed in an attempt to play a full round of golf quicker than a decent athlete could run two marathons.

### The BIGGA Standing Ovation

To Kim Macfie and everyone at Hayters who have been such wonderful sponsors for the past five years.



**Individual winner Nick Webber collects his trophy from Tony Bourke and Pat Murphy**



**Kim Macfie presents Neil Thomas with a memento to mark the end of the Hayter Challenges**



**Neil Thomas and Pat Murphy present Kim Macfie with a token of BIGGA's appreciation for all of his work over the last five years**

# HAYTER CHALLENGE

## the final final

### RESULTS

#### HAYTER TROPHY

- 1. South West and South Wales 943.**  
Richard Daly, Laughlan Millar, Chris Bland, Anthony Knight, Phil Wentworth, Martyn Parrish, Anthony James, Jason Cooper and Matthew Hawker. Non-playing Captain Paula Humphries
- 2. South East 963.5**  
Andy Sheehan, Neil Gilham, David Murdoch, Ian Sutcliffe, Jonathan Selwood, Jonathan Hill, Martin Mison, Trevor Hindmarsh and Barry Jackson. Non-playing Captain Derek Farrington.
- 3. Midland 969.5**
- 4. Northern 990**
- 5. Scotland 994.5**
- 6. NIGGA 1033**
- 7. GCSAI 1048**

#### BEST NETT 27 HOLES

- Nick Webber (NIGGA) 102  
Best Gross David Murdoch South East 118

#### Over 55s

- Andy Keenan NIGGA
- #### Under 21s
- Greg Hunt Midlands  
Longest Drive - Nick Webber  
Nearest the Pin - Chris Bland SW & SW

#### Category Winners

##### 0-9

1. Nick Webber NIGGA 102
2. Andy Sheehan South East 111
3. Paul Fitzgerald GCSAI 111

##### 10-18

1. Anthony Knight SW&SW 106
2. Julian Chesson Midlands 114.5
3. Greg Hunt Midlands 114.5

##### 19-28

1. Anthony James SW&SW 111
2. David Nelson Scotland 114.5
3. Barry Jackson South East 119

**Four Qualifiers for Hayter International Cup in Atlanta, Georgia, on October 10-16, 1998 are:** Andy Sheehan, England; Russell Lewis, Wales; Derek Wilson, Scotland and Nick Webber, NIGGA



**NIGGA**



**GCSAI**



**Midland**

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See the Hayter LT324 at your local Hayter dealership or contact:



**"Oh no! They've recruited another idiot for me to train!" A cry from the heart of far too many experienced greenkeepers who are expected by their clubs to make a 'square peg' recruit into a 'round hole' greenkeeper and are mystified as to why entirely unsuitable people are being taken on by golf clubs every year. Frank Newbury, who has been running management courses for BIGGA members since 1989, turns his attention to how, in many respects, only greenkeepers can help their clubs remedy many of the unnecessary problems associated with recruitment and selection. Frank makes a strong case for the essential involvement of greenkeepers at some or all of the key stages in the selection process and offers an essential list of '10 how to's' or key ways in which greenkeepers can help themselves and their clubs to start getting recruitment right in future.**

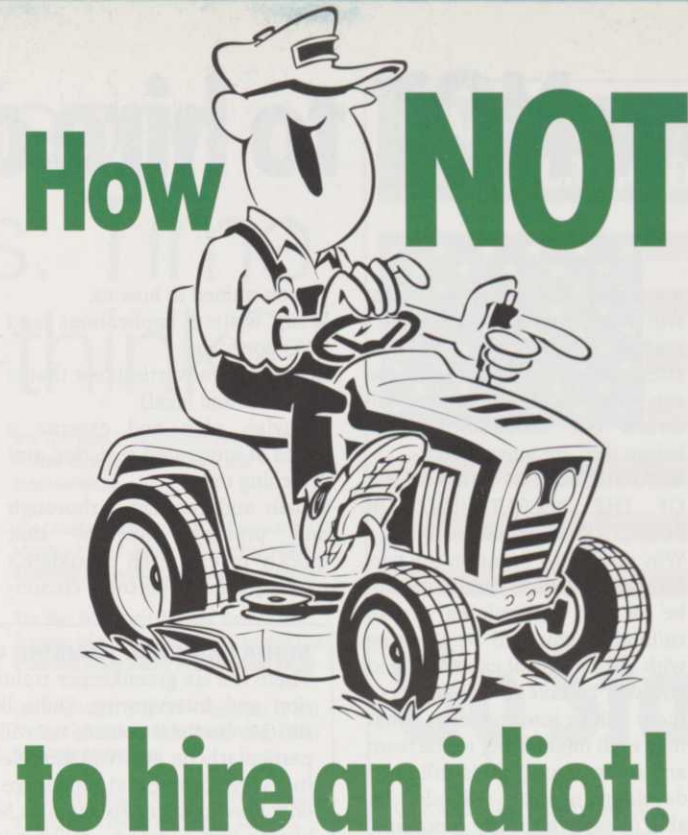
**"Recruiting someone is a £1 million decision - we had better get it right"**

Some years ago it was calculated that the average cost of a skilled worker over an entire working life amounted to £1 million or more. All costs were taken into consideration including 45 years salary and employer's pension and N.I. contributions as well as accommodation, equipment and training costs. If recruiting someone is a £1 million decision - we had better get it right.

Some employers are apparently happy to make this very expensive decision on the strength of an interview lasting only 20 minutes! Some have longer interviews but clutter them up with information about the job and the club. This less important "telling" part of the process takes valuable time away from the "asking" part when really probing questions can be posed and other methods used to test the suitability, resilience, durability and potential of each candidate.

**"The candidate was really good at the interview but only lasted a week in a job."**

Unfortunately a candidate's unsuitability is not always evident at the time of selection. They may do well at the interview, they may seem keen and enthusiastic, they may have an impressive list of written qualifications and the candidate may even be a great golfer! All persuasive reasons for taking someone on - and all wrong as far as suitability for the



**BY FRANK NEWBERRY**

job is concerned. Many greenkeepers speak to me of their so-called best qualified people: "The candidate was so good at the interview but only lasted a week in the job". Some did not even last a week in the job and some left after only one day!

**"Interviewing is the least effective method of selection"**

People behave differently when being interviewed. Many are on their best behaviour, they want the job and will say anything to reassure the selectors. Many excellent greenkeepers are not so good in interview situations and do not present themselves as well as much less able people who have the gift of the gab. Result? Too often we hire the ones who "did well on the day" ie the good talkers. Over the years personnel professionals have gradually formed the opinion that interviewing is the least effective method of selection. Aptitude tests, group work (where appropriate) and practical exercises have proved to be a much better indicator of a person's suitability for a particular job and thankfully, as many clubs promote people from within, the right tests provide a good test of a person's future potential as well. Interviewing, for all its limitations will always be a part of the selection process. People will always want to meet and talk to the person they may well take on as an employee. However, it should be noted that a secretarial recruitment agency in London once claimed that seven out of eight people get through the job inter-

view because the employers felt "the candidate had a nice face". This "nice face syndrome" goes beyond appearance and probably includes social skills. Whatever it is it seems to persuade people that a "nice face" is one that will fit easily into a work team. Heaven help those of us who do not have particularly nice faces!

**"He's useless but he is the Chairman's son - how could I have rejected him?"**

Other issues can cause the wrong candidate to be taken on. For example what should you do if only one or two candidates apply and neither is really much good? What do we say to the Course Manager who said to me once "He's useless but he's the Chairman's son - how could I have rejected him?" The answer to the first question is easy. If we are investing up to £1 million we may just need to look at our advertising and try again.

**"The wrong person in a job can have a catastrophic effect on the work performance and on the morale of the entire work team"**

As far as the Course Manager (above) is concerned the problem is much bigger (for him) now than it was at the time the interviews took place. The wrong person in a job can have a catastrophic effect on the work performance and on the morale of the entire work team. Sadly, these serious problems can be long lasting if the unsuitable person is not removed quickly or put onto work he or she can do reasonably well. Work teams do not

like passengers so it is vital to get the right person for each job.

**"TOP TEN things greenkeepers can start to do IMMEDIATELY to help themselves and their clubs to get the RIGHT people in the RIGHT jobs"**

You may already be doing some or all the 10 activities listed below. If not, and you would like to develop your abilities in each of the areas mentioned, then you should consider attending one of the RECRUITMENT, SELECTION and INTERVIEWING Courses currently being run locally by BIGGA. See the list at the end of this article for venues and dates in October and November 1997.

**GREENKEEPERS SHOULD:**

**1 HELP THE CLUB TO DEVISE JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR EACH GREENKEEPING JOB**

Why you? Who knows the demands of the course and the job better than the person doing the job?

**2 HELP THE CLUB TO DEVISE THE EMPLOYEE SPECIFICATION FOR EACH JOB?**

Why you? The employee specification lists the qualities and skills of the ideal candidate for the job so the interviewer has something to compare the candidates with, and who else knows the type of person for the job better than you?

**3 HELP THE CLUB WRITE THE ADVERTISEMENT**

Why you? Well, you will have helped write the job description and the employee specification upon which the advert will be based and you know what would attract you to a job. A warning for you - do not just copy anything from the back of this magazine. Some of the adverts are very good but not all of them.

**4 SCOUT THE COLLEGES FOR GOOD STUDENTS**

Why you? Well you want the best people coming through and the good students want to work at a club where they know someone, and where they will feel valued. You may have attended one of the colleges or you may have friends, relatives or work-mates there now. Same goes for schools, sports clubs etc.

**5 GET TO KNOW THE GOOD GREENS STAFF IN YOUR AREA**

Why you? Well they may be more likely to confide in you (not in their club) about their career aspirations. Are they looking to move? If not then when might they be interested in a move (to your club when a vacancy arises)?

**6 HELP THE CLUB TO DEVISE A SUCCESSION PLAN FOR ALL KEY POSITIONS**

Why you? If the club has an idea



# How NOT to hire an idiot!

who will fill vacancies internally they can keep external recruitment to a minimum. Each job will have an understudy waiting in the wings if anything should happen ie the current job holder gets promoted or leaves the club. If you help devise the succession plan then you can plot your own career path in the club.

## HELP THE CLUB TO DEVISE A MANPOWER PLAN

Why you? Well if you are helping with the succession plan the obvious development is to be one step ahead looking at when vacancies are likely to arise and how long it will take to train people up to the required standard at each level. You will also be in a good position to indicate what needs to be done to enable everyone to be able to do everyone else's job - which brings us back to your career path. Which job do you really want?

## HELP THE CLUB TO DEVISE SUITABILITY TESTS FOR CANDIDATES

Why you? Back to your knowledge and expertise again. There

are simple suitability tests that will demonstrate a candidate's manual dexterity, physical strength and mobility that you can put together which will screen out unsuitable people before they are interviewed.

## PARTICIPATE IN EACH STAGE OF THE RECRUITMENT OR SELECTION PROCESS

Why you? Your input on the performance of each candidate will be vital in determining overall suitability. You will be working with the successful candidate and you will be able to tell which of them will fit into the team, what they each might bring to the team and what (if any) skills still need development. You will also be able to say who is the most suitable person when a number of candidates are qualified ie a tie-break situation.

## LEARN INTERVIEWING AND SELECTION TESTING SKILLS

Why you? Three reasons:

First, so you can help the club by taking your full part in the £1 million decision.

Second, you may be the only

person trained in how to:

■ sift written applications and NVQ portfolios

■ devise an advertisement that is effective (and legal)

■ devise, plan and execute a series of integrated selection and screening tests

■ plan and conduct a thorough and probing interview that quickly reveals each candidate's past experience, personal circum-

stances, individual disposition, relevant skills, reasoning ability, problem solving skills and social skills, including those times when the candidate is under pressure

■ review and evaluate each candidate and rank them in order of suitability, prior to job offer.

Third, with the skills listed above you will also make yourself a much more attractive candidate for better paid jobs!

### BIGGA REGIONAL TRAINING COURSES

There are six greenkeeper training courses on Recruitment, Selection and Interviewing Skills being run locally this Autumn by BIGGA. On these courses we will cover the ten areas above focusing particularly on practical interviewing skills, and selection methods. In a very positive and supportive atmosphere greenkeepers learn not only how to interview but also how to be interviewed! If you would like to join a group of like-minded greenkeepers on one of the regional courses listed below contact the BIGGA Education Officer Ken Richardson at BIGGA HQ as a matter of urgency.

Good luck and happy recruiting!

Regional Course Dates.....	Town
21-22 October 1997.....	Crawley
3-4 November 1997.....	Moretenhampstead (Taunton)
10-11 November 1997.....	Corby
18-19 November 1997.....	Dublin
26-27 November 1997.....	Accrington

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Essential for greenkeepers, groundsmen, county councils and corporations or indeed anyone responsible for the upkeep of large grass areas.

### CAN YOU AFFORD TO MISS IT?

**Dates are 5th and 6th November 1997**

Phone, fax, e-mail or write for your free invitation to:

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