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AD REF 544

Dr Roger Bennett gives a taste of what his major study on golf and its environmental impact uncovered...

A positive **be**

Between 1992 and 1997 I undertook a major and comprehensive research programme looking at golf and environmental impact.

The study focused on the issues concerned with the amenity and environmental impact of golf development in England and Wales. The study has been widely acknowledged by the Industry (in its broadest sense) as being the best independent study of its type and one that addressed the real environmental issues and giving clear guidance on the way forward.

In short, the study assessed the impact upon a number of different environment types against the type and nature of applications for golf development that were received by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) during the boom years of golf development in England and Wales (1988 - 1992).

The study also concerned itself with the effectiveness of the LPAs planning framework in terms of its preparation in dealing with an unprecedented number of golf development applications they received between the late 1980s and early 1990s. It also took account of the wider environmental implications of golf development including post-construction management practices.

In particular, the study looked at the effectiveness of landscape impact assessments and whether they fostered and safeguarded the interests of the public. While the focus of the study was on England and Wales it drew on many of the developmental experience of Europe in terms of golf development and the wider environment.

Clearly, many of the environmental issues surrounding course development in particular are often seen as the core issues in the context of world-wide course development. To this end the conclusions and recommendations coming out of the study could, albeit in wider context, be of

value to those individuals and/or organisations directly or indirectly concerned with golf on a world-wide scale.

The study was undertaken at a time of agricultural decline against an almost unprecedented interest in the development of the game in England and Wales. Farmers and landowners who were looking to move out of farming for economic reasons saw golf development as a means to an end, whether it be in terms of self build projects or selling off surplus agricultural land to speculators and/or developers. This in turn raised the profile of golf development and alerted a whole range of groups, associations and individuals to the potential damage a course development might inflict on the wider environment.

Many environmental, wildlife and countryside groups believed the scale of golf development in England and Wales would, on the face of it, pose serious environmental and conservation problems. The study took these issues into account and examined them thoroughly within the research period.

In short, the study at its conclusion did not wholly support the opponents of golf development in their perceptions that development by its very nature was alien to a landscape and caused adverse damage.

While inevitably some mistakes on the part of developers were made in the design construction and post-construction management phases of development, on the whole development in environmental terms during the boom period was not as damaging as the protagonists would have us believe and in many cases the reverse is true.

There is little doubt that golf development irrespective of land environment types does have significant potential to actually increase and enhance the environmental benefit.

Clearly site location, design, con-

struction and post-construction management are major success indicators in terms of the potential of courses in the wider amenity and environmental sense. I have little doubt that if the developer can fully understand the wider issues relating to the environment and the wider community that golf courses can have a positive role to play in conservation in its broadest sense and in fostering good landscape management.

Early dialogue between developer and those that for one reason or another oppose development and the Planning Authorities is crucial if the benefits of development are to come to fruition. One should also consider the golfer, here there has to be a constant need to balance the needs of the golfer with those of the environment in order to fulfil mutual benefit for all those parties involved in development particularly where it affects or is likely to impinge upon our natural and cultural heritage.

The study has a wide range of conclusions and recommendations. Many of the recommendations collectively imply a need for a standard approach in the preparation, submission and judgment of a golf development application. However, the likely impracticalities and associated problems of implementing the process may be difficult, at least in the short term.

Providing LPAs and those other interested parties with clear guidance is key to how to deal with golf development applications in the future. The dissemination of guidance is equally important and techniques and/or methodologies for this should be considered no less important, not least of which in the area of course management.

In my view, course management represents probably the most single important factor in terms of future environmental impact and while

Benefit

good design and construction can lay the foundations full environmental benefit will only be maximised through well thought out and considered management strategies. Courses should have well developed strategic plans which take account of forthcoming years (the strategic plan), and strategic plans need to be underpinned by annual plans (operational plans). At the heart of these plans should be the amenity, environmental and community issues.

By far the most important and significant findings of the study concerned the following issues all of which relate to the amenity and environmental impact of course development:

Planning

- the use of landscape appraisals
- the use of environmental assessments
- the use of ecological appraisals and/or others

Design and Construction

- design quality needs to improve
- design and construction needs to take account of land reversibility
- planning authorities need to work more closely with professional associations representative of golf development and the opponents of golf in order to foster "best practice"
- simpler design and construction methodologies are the future many designers and course constructors would benefit from increased training opportunities relating to environmental issues/concepts

Ecological Conservation

A course's ecological conservation potential will only be maximised through early planning.

Design integration is crucial to the future ecological success of a site. Comprehensive management strategies are needed alongside visionary expectations Course Managers and Greens' Committees need to be envi-

ronmentally aware.

Landscape Enhancement

- many designers and constructors/developers are still not appreciative of this concept. There is a real need to develop and promote perhaps world-wide "good practice".
- a need to develop an ethos that promotes simple design and build practices which take account of the wider landscape. For example, the promotion of green bunkers and florally rich fairway margins and roughs are important visual and ecological features.

Historic and Other Designated Landscapes

There is still a perception held by the golf protagonists that all golf development on such landscapes is harmful this study has clearly shown that golf development can live in harmony with historic and designated landscapes and that mutual benefit can be achieved.

Management

Evidence gathered as part of the research into course management practices suggested that many established courses and a high percentage of newly developed courses had and/or were not managing their courses specifically in the interests of conservation. However, there is strong evidence coming out of the industry as a whole that management practices are beginning to make an impact at operational level in particular.

Restricting the number of rounds per annum (reduces impact on wear and tear), the adoption of organic management techniques where possible and a commitment to the other improvements and protection of habitats within the site can individually but better collectively reduce the course impact upon a particular environment type.

Without clear management strategies the landscape and its natural

resources could fall into disrepair and as Pearce, Markandya and Barbier put it: 'the resource is extinguished or irreparably damaged (source: Blueprint for a Green Economy 1994).

If courses are fully to maximise their conservation potential then strategic management plans which have to be visionary and innovative are needed particularly as one has to bear in mind the many different interpretations that are used when considering conservation. As North reminds us: "Conservation in the modern world is riven with contradictions". Management strategies also have to be broad enough to implement site enhancement opportunities which if successful will undoubtedly make a valuable contribution to the wider environment.

Social and economic criteria also have a role to play if a course is to be managed successfully.

Just as farmers and landowners are seen to be the custodians of the countryside those that own or manage a course could, albeit informally, take on a similar role (a kind of amenity and environmental stewardship).

- this study has shown that this is an area that needs considerable improvement if the potential courses undoubtedly have are to be realised. It is an area that is extremely important if golf is to break down the barriers that many individuals/organisations have relating to its environmental image.
- "best management" practice holds the key management strategies often under-developed.

Water Resources

- too many water features on courses, unless they are tied to sources of on-course irrigation their use and development as features should be considered against a wider environmental background
- a greater need to use and develop

further those grass sward species that have drought tolerance characteristics.

I have only touched on the overall findings of the study in this article, but clearly I have more substantial research data on the above items and more. One issue that became crystal clear during the study relates to independent guidance. Without question this is an important factor in terms of establishing a way forward. As this study was entirely based upon independent foundations it does provide through its conclusions and recommendations guidance that is wholly independent (inclusive of future trends).

Many of the issues surrounding golf development in terms of amenity and environmental impact need to be considered against independent guidance and where it exists "best practice". To this end I am happy for individuals and/or organisations to contact me and I would be particularly interested in helping those individuals, groups and/or associations who believe as I do that golf course development can if the right pathway is steered benefit the wider environment rather than harm it.

For information, I have a particular interest in the management of courses particularly at strategic level and an interest in the planning and wider community potential of golf development.

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Askham Bryan College has a strong golf studies curriculum and has a national reputation for the delivery of golf education from craft level programmes to degree level programmes.

You may think that your local rep has life easy, but a look at the day in the life of a rep might change your opinion...

The grass is always greener

While the vast majority of greenkeepers are extremely attached to their jobs and content with their way of life; regarding golf courses as infinitely superior places upon which to carve a living, there is nevertheless something in their psyche, deep down, that causes them on occasion to cast an envious glance at the other man's lot.

Mild cases of envy are, of course, altogether acceptable human traits. Certainly they cause no harm, while the odds-on bet when it comes to a declaration of which man's grass is greenest, surprisingly often focuses on the machinery dealer. This is not altogether unexpected, for in the eyes of the greenkeeper, the dealer – or more specifically the dealers' representative – on the face of it does appear to lead a charmed existence.

To look into the dealers role and to present a more rounded picture, Greenkeeper International took the opportunity recently to spend a day in the company of a typical dealership – Ernest Doe & Sons – a firm whose solid, long-established foundation has just been celebrated by 100 years of successful trading.

To be fair, Ernest Doe's are an exception rather than the rule, for they employ the largest number of staff in any dealership by far – over 400 at last count – while irrefutably they are Ransomes' largest Professional Products dealers. With 14 branches and over 100 service vehicles, theirs is a web that expands visibly through sophisticated main-frame computer networking; for parts, machinery, accounting, indeed

every conceivable scrap of minutiae is logged and accounted for, plus a holding of over £300,000 in Ransomes' spare parts alone.

Though as old as the century, Doe's in 1998 are as modern as the latest apparatus shown on Tomorrow's World; clearly successful and set fair upon a spirited programme of continuing expansion.

For the purpose of producing this article, the visit was restricted to a single location, Esher, in Surrey, the youngest in a long line of Ernest Doe/Ransomes dealership bases, all strategically placed around the east, south, and south east of England. In serving parts of SW London, Surrey, West Sussex and Kent, the new Esher dealership is unique for Doe's in attending exclusively to the needs of the fine-turf industry. This is the first dealership within the company's empire not to deal also in the farm implements and agricultural machinery upon which much of Doe's success has been founded.

Guided by a general consensus of opinion and a peek at the EEC barometer, which indicates that farming in Europe is in a condition of 'slumber', aided, no doubt, by a strong pound, a decline in world wheat prices and a host of meaningless governmental restrictions, Doe's decision to plump for selling professional turf care products in exclusivity at Esher came as no surprise. Proof of their smart thinking can be seen in the healthy volume of business generated in just nine months since opening.

Perhaps the first question to pose might be 'what is a typical dealer?' Simply stated, the definition is one who buys and sells, thereby making a profit. Yet even the most naïve will appreciate that to succeed in dealing, a high level of investment by way of after-sales support is necessary. Service, repairs, maintenance, spare parts supply, product training, all serve to create the successful dealership make-up.

This typically is the case at Esher, where Branch Manager, Phil Bush, leads a team of nine skilled personnel, while continuing on occasion also to doff his salesman's hat in servicing

and cultivating special accounts. "Busy" is a word that's barely adequate to describe this man's working day, which begins at much the same time as most greenkeepers begin theirs, though for Bush it means a heart-in-mouth scramble round the M23/M25 racetrack, enough to strike terror in all but the very bravest.

Around 7am each morning he begins work on site by supervising the arrival of spares and equipment, delivered daily by Ransomes', aided by the very epitome of a human computer; spares wizard, Sue Kemp. Meanwhile salesman, Brian Ryder, initiates the loading of the first of several pieces of machinery contracted for hire – a Cushman aerator, a compact tractor, followed by a couple of golf cars, later a Ryan Sodcutter – all of which must be on site early enough to justify honest value from their hire. These will be trailer hauled behind a 4x4 Maverick, refreshingly used for its rightful purpose and visibly conspicuous as a proper working vehicle, especially among those who tend to favour 4x4s for fashion alone, never sully their Firestone's on anything that looks even vaguely like dirt.

It is at times like these that one realises the importance of the salesman's place in the maelstrom of everyday events. Indeed, far from having it cushy, the dealers' rep. is often expected to be in a dozen different places at once, which explains why splitting his day into planned segments and forever juggling with Old Father Time is a skill that makes the difference between success or failure.

The retail store must be up and running by 7.30am, the all-important parts salesman topped-up with essential supplies for his van before being dispatched on his rounds, while the workshop crew will be assigned work on essential machinery maintenance; mower blade grinding, the renovation of work-wear machinery, plus all manner of trouble-solving. In these departments there's rarely a dull moment, either.

Finally settled at his desk, Bush begins by surfing through e-mail, checking computer stock print-outs, listening to several overnight recorded



messages and returning each call promptly and impressively, this between taking live telephone calls and at all times demonstrating the wealth of knowledge essential to the running of an effective dealership.

It becomes patently clear to the onlooker that information is the very life-blood of efficient dealing. In stocking a multitude of items – everything from a split pin to a fleet of Ransomes grass cutting machinery – there's no room for indecision. Thus "I don't know" translates more readily into "I'll find out and get back to you."

One is aware also that with a phone that seems never to stop ringing, infinite patience, unquestioned scholarship, product awareness, (both of their own range and those of competitors), keeps every team player very much on their mettle. Each tiny spare part must be understood by number or description, as also must the heart of its working parent. Product training days therefore are an essential part of a dealer's efficiency, and regular training periods are set aside, including tailor-made workshops staged by Ransomes at their Ipswich headquarters.

Forward and following the sales trail now; there are very few people as familiar with the maze of roads encircling London's airport than Brian Ryder. While negotiating uncharted back-doubles, Ryder speaks of his selling experiences, echoing much of what had been uttered earlier by Phil Bush. It's clear they're on the same wavelength, for one remark, "all things being equal, people would rather do business with a friend, so we cultivate friendships," made eminent good sense, yet we agree there are far too many horror stories of 'couldn't care less' attitudes, and these not always confined to the scapegoat public sector, either.

Ryder is firm in his opinion that people buy from those who make it easy to buy from them, so as common practice he and his colleagues work harder at accommodating any special customer requests. In that way, a trust is soon established between prospect and vendor, whether its an issue of price, quality or quantity. "It's a question", Ryder says, "of making people feel comfortable."

There's an element of cold-calling – knocking on doors – in every salesman's day, for this builds the basis for future growth. 'Make new clients but keep the old' is a familiar ditty. Ryder, it appears, is a clever inquisitor, rarely pressing for an order, but probing and pondering over a customer's perceived problems; how they may be solved, how his organisation might well provide the solutions.



From the conception commonly held, it's easy to appreciate why greenkeepers' think of dealer reps as 'having it made'. The comfortable salesman's style is shown at its finest as the afternoon unfolds, with Ryder travelling next to Ashford Manor Golf Club and an appointment with Course Manager, Terry Huntley, an activist in BIGGA's Surrey Section and a skilled practitioner who holds forthright views.

There's an element of chewing the fat, of course, with Ryder showing a keen interest in Huntley's tastefully remodelled greenkeeping facilities. A whistle-stop tour is called-for, with time also to admire Huntley's spirited rebuilding of Ashford's 13th tee. Under such circumstances, commercial conversation evolves rather than being dictated. Huntley's business of the day is lightweight; nothing save a seasonal demand for a piece of kit, which Ryder will satisfy through a short-term rental contract. Yet in Ryder's display of empathy and understanding, the doors at Ashford Manor open yet wider and allow for many future sorties; a juicy prospect, in fact!

More miles now and it's approaching 4.30pm. The next hurdle is dodging through sprawling suburbia and traffic build-up, for there's one call remaining. Will the client still be there? It's best to check, so the essential cellular 'phone is cranked up and a voice crackles over the ether; "Hey, it's good of you to touch base, Brian, we guessed you'd been highjacked!" There's no hint of customer irritation, but for once it seems the clock has won the day, thus an appointment is established – right there and then – for a rendezvous "first thing in the morning." No, wait a minute, I'm sure he said "at first light"!

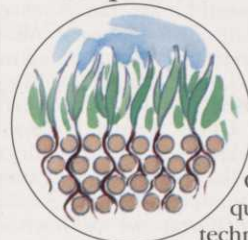
In focusing again toward the purpose of the exercise, the thought occurs that if this is a typical salesman's day, these dealers make their profit the old-fashioned way. They earn it.



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Around the green

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the Sections



Scottish Region
Peter Boyd
Tel/Fax 0141 616 3440

North

The rush of new members has begun in earnest as we welcome the following, from Downfield GC, Alistair Turnbull and Mark Ritchie; from Moray GC, Douglas Lambie, Peter Fisk, Kevin Thomson, Mark Cordell and Stuart Grant; from Royal Aberdeen, Graham Dawson, Alan Stewart, Steven Frost and Martin Fullerton; Andrew Leslie; from Forres GC; Richard Macintosh from Kingussie GC; Andrew Mellon from Stornoway GC, and, last but not least, Craig Campbell, a student from Thurso. Keep them coming.

Members please take note that to save on postage entries for Spring and Autumn outings will be sent out together this year, so put your Autumn entry in a safe place for when it needs to be returned. Please also note that a guest is only allowed to come to one outing per year now, and a guest greenkeeper only once as hopefully he/she will enjoy it so much and join the Association right after.

Two lucky members from the Section will be at Augusta for The Masters this month. Gordon Moir, St Andrews, who is travelling over with the ex North man, Charlie MacDonald, and Ian Carson, Nairn. I am sure they will have a great time as I did two years ago.

I am happy to report that the missing library books have turned up and we have a full complement of books again. Phone Dougal on 01224 740329 for details.

Finally, have you paid for your 200 Club ticket yet? Or at least informed Stewart that you will be paying for it either soon or at the Spring outing. The Spring outing will be at Fortrose and Rosemarkie on Thursday May 14, you better get your entry back quickly to ensure you are in the field.

Iain Macleod

Central

We start this month's report with the terrific news that another 18 new members have joined the Section and we extend a warm welcome to Michael Doris, Allan Paterson, Scott Fenwick and Stuart Stenhouse all Gleneagles; Mark McLeish, Steven Martin, Mark Campbell, Gary Reid, Paul Keyworth, all Carnoustie Links; Ian Spence, Elmwood; Steven Turner, Alloa GC; Gary McLaren, Ian Smith, Leven Links; Shaun Pilling, Dunnikier GC; Lloyd Stevenson, Alva GC; Donal Burns, Brucefields GC; Donald Gardner, Scoonie GC and Darren Laing, from Drumoig GC. If we keep going at this rate we will have no problem of achieving our target of one new member every week, so keep up the good work of encouraging new members to join!

Last month over 30 members enjoyed a visit to the impressive

new premises of Scottish Grass Machinery at Inverkeithing, (this was a pleasant surprise, as only 12 had taken the bother to return their forms). It is the intention of SGM to construct a golf green, tee and fairway demonstration area adjacent to their premises, where machinery can be tested prior to purchase or following servicing. Our thanks and best wishes for a successful future go to David McInroy, Roy Auld and everyone at Scottish Grass for a most interesting day and excellent refreshments.

I recently received a letter from former Section member Stuart 'Sid' Mackie, who is now at Five Lakes G & CC in Essex, he sends best wishes to Kenny Duncan and everyone at Dunfermline GC and to all the greenkeeping staff at Elwood College especially Mike "Eat my doughnuts" Clark and Ian "I'll buy that club from you for £40, but pay you sometime" Butcher. Sid hopes to attend some of our events during the summer when I have no doubt there will be a lot of reminiscing done over a few drams.

A date for your diary is Monday, October 5, 1998, this is when the Autumn Tournament will be held at Crieff by courtesy of the directors of Crieff Golf Club.

I am looking for a venue for the Spring Tournament in 1999, so if anyone is willing to host this event, or has thoughts on where they would like it played, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Andy 'Pele Maradona' O'Hara

is hoping to organise a challenge football match against other sections during the summer, so all you budding stars better keep yourself in tip top condition, as you may be getting that long awaited 'phone call from Andy very soon.

Best wishes and every success for the future, from everyone in the Section, go to Janet Adamson, Janet has been Membership Services Officer with BIGGA for the past two and a half years and is leaving to take up a new position in London. Thanks for everything Janet, hope all goes well in your new employment.

John Crawford

West

The season is here and all courses must be wet but full of growth due to the beautiful temperature over the last few months. Greens have to be good as nobody has been on them, well that's my story. Some dry weather is required but, wait a minute, just as I write this, winter has arrived, snow, frost and cold temperatures, why are we keeping on greens?

Let's get on with business, recently all members should have received a note of the different events and venues for the coming season. I hope this is to your liking. Our suggestion recently was organising a rugby match between Sections, so let's have some more ideas.

The functions have been a success so far, with the game's night at Claremont Bowling Club on



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Around the green

Keeping in touch with news and comment from the Sections

Thursday, February 26. This was attended by 30 people some of whom were only observing. But what a surprise, Robert Bruce (crutches and all) arrived to enjoy some refreshments. Nice to see you on the mend (football at his age) a couple of golden oldies, Jim and John Robb, nice to see them in such high spirits and boy were they on high spirits, good to have a wee talk and see you in such good health. In all, 24 took part in a very enjoyable evening, with event winners, Charlie Goodall and Steven Hogg, winning five out of five events. Their opposites were Brian Hillan and Neil Gibb, we tried to discover what the fee was for such a white wash but no figures were disclosed. The prizes were donated and thanks to John Scotts for his contributions. Thanks to Claremont for once again holding the event, its a good quiet venue, pies and help and Gary Burns for the supply of games. A mention to Gavin Jarvis for preparing the publishing sheets and the tables for results, well done everybody concerned.

The other event attended was the Scottish Annual Conference at Dunfermline College. This proved a very worth while day and thoroughly enjoyable. I would recommend to anybody a full report will be included by the Region Administrator. Thank you Peter for your efforts and returning my wallet.

Remember gentlemen to return your Spring outing forms soon as this is sure to be well attend-

ed, a bus is being considered.

Once again if anybody has a problem or an interesting fact then please let me know on 0141 942 5554, I hope Bobby Granger is back to full health and see you soon.

S Taylor

East

In January a number of Section members attended BTME at Harrogate and yet again this year it was a superb show well run, lots to see, some very interesting seminars with good speakers with very good topics that kept everyone interested. The nightlife was as usual superb with the chance to meet up with old friends and new and discuss things that have happened over the past year. Thanks to HQ for all the organising of the Conference, Show, Seminars well done and also to Peter Boyd, our new Regional Administrator, for his organising of the Scottish Region trip to BTME and I am glad to say he lasted the pace of a very hectic week. It was good to see Elliot and Edwa Small on the trip again this year the only thing I can't understand is why Elliot would not give me his room number in the hotel! (strange). Next month I hope to have a couple of articles from our two patrons award winners Gordon Trotter, Glencorse, and Robert Thomson, Peebles, about their trip to BTME 98, so just remember in 1999 it could be you.

The East Section would like to wish Tom Brannan, Hugh

Murray and Kevin Brunton all the best on their new business venture Greentech (Sportsturf) Ltd.

The first section tournament of 1998 will be at Royal Musselburgh Golf Club on Tuesday, April 28, 1998. Entry forms will be with you shortly so fill them in and get them back before the closing date as no entries will be accepted after this date and the Committee's decision is final. Also, remember this is the second qualifying round for the 1998 Ritefeed Classic. I would like to send the best wishes of the Section to Robert T Bruce, Ritefeed, who, on the Sunday before BTME, in January was playing football for the Scottish Greenkeepers v the English Greenkeepers in the annual match that Ritefeed sponsor yearly in Harrogate when he injured his knee (not even in a tackle). So Robert we hope to see you up and about soon in the East Section and all over Scotland. Subsequently Robert's £2.75 million transfer to Barcelona was withdrawn and he is staying where he is.

Well that's it all for this month the new season is just around the corner so I hope everyone has a good season ahead.

If anyone has any news I can let the Section know about give me a call on 01620 842037 (home) or 0131 4457105 (work) and I will put it in a future article.

See you all next month.
Chris Yeaman

Ayrshire

The Section goes into the new year with our biggest number of members ever - 135. Among the latest new members are Ian Campbell, Mark Campbell, Douglas Neilson, Robert Glasby-Locke, George Payne, Paul Tulloch and Scott McLean. It is also nice to see Charlie White, from Largs, joining again. I hope to see you all through the year.

our committee for the year is as follows: Chairman, Jim Paton, West Kilbride GC; Vice Chairman, Duncan Gray, The Pines Golf Centre; Secretary, Derek Wilson, Irvine GC; Committee, George Brown, Jimmy Johnstone and William McMeikan, all Turnberry Hotel, Harry Diamond; Brian Finlayson, Kilmarnock Barassie; Ian Barr, Beith GC and Robert Bruce, RiteFeed.

The committee will be working hard for you this year to provide a programme of outings, functions, and a seminar which we hope will provide something that you will be able to attend and gain some knowledge or fun at.

The first thing that I would like to address as Chairman is the lack of communication which you encountered last year and to this end I have asked our new committee member, Ian Barr, to organise a regular column in the magazine. Ian's address and telephone number are 50 Dennyholme Wynd, Kilbirnie Tel: 01505 683278.

Jim Paton.

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*Comment From Walter Woods
St. Andrews Links Golf Course supervisor*

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COURSES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

AD REF 130

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Do today's Greenkeepers need advice from an Agronomist?

We appreciate that Greenkeeping has become an extremely skilled profession carried out by highly qualified and committed individuals. The days are long gone where it was necessary for a golf club or sports ground to employ an Agronomist to tell the Greenkeeper how often to cut the grass or how many times a year to slit the greens.

What should you expect from an Agronomist?

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AD REF 584



Keeping in touch with

North West

What a strange month February has been. The month began with warm, dry weather, the grass still growing and the courses looking good with fairways striped, and every thing looking green due to the mild winter. Today, 27 February, the temperatures have dropped, snow, hail and rain seems to be the order of the day, and the wind chill factor is below freezing. Still I suppose we can count ourselves lucky we do not have to deal with hurricanes like those that just hit Florida.

I am glad to see that you have received your fixture lists at last. They were late and I do apologise but it was no fault of mine. After many hours writing letters to golf clubs for permission to play tournaments, time spent with graphic designers and printers to ensure the fixtures were right, folding cards and seminar applications, filling and sealing envelopes and addressing and stamping envelopes. Then came the easy part. I delivered 600 letters to the GPO sorting office on the February 9 and you guessed it,

they got lost. After many phone calls and visits to the sorting office I gave up hope and had to go back to the printers and start the whole process again. This now leaves me with claim forms to fill in hoping to claim back the £423 cost for the second lot of printing, stamps and envelopes.

Now that you are aware of the year's events you will see that we have the spring tournament at Childwall Golf Club on Thursday, May 14. This is also a qualifier for the Regional final of the RiteFeed Classic at Mere Golf and Country Club on Monday 29th June. You will need to register for the spring tournament not later than Friday 8th May. Any entries after this date will not be accepted. All entries including a cheque for £15 must be sent to: Bill Merritt, 225 Utting Avenue, Walton, Liverpool, L4 9RB. Lunch will be served between 12 noon - 1 pm. The tea is from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm.

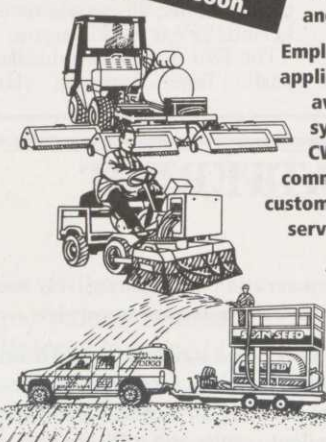
That seem to be it for now but any queries or news, contact me on 0151 724 5412

Bert Cross

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Northern Region
Douglas Bell
Tel: 0151 431 0433

Northern

All the 1998 golf tournament venues have now been confirmed. I am a little disappointed to hear that members are criticising the quality of some of the venues. If they would like to have a go at the difficult task of sorting out this part of the section secretary's workload, please feel free to offer some of your time. The venues, dates and start times are as follows:

Spring Tournament, Bradley Hall GC, Tues, April 14, 10.30 am; President's Day, West Bradford GC, Wed, June 3, 1.30 pm; Roses Match, Swinton Park GC, Wed, August 26, TBA; Invitation Day, Aldwark Manor GC, Wed, Sept 2, 1 pm; Autumn Tour, Bridlington GC, Tues, Oct 13, 1 pm; Winter Golf, Keighley GC, Wed, Dec 9, 11 am.

Anyone wishing to play in any of the above tournaments must

send full payment of £15 in at least one week prior to the event.

A ten pin bowling evening has been organised for May 13, 7.30 pm at Keighley Bowling Centre. Anyone wishing to come along must notify Phil Mitchell on 01535 681933 and send payment of £10/person to 5 Well Street, Keighley, BD21 2DU. This includes two games of bowling, food and small winners prizes. If the evening is a success, similar events will be arranged at different locations.

Congratulations to Alan Court on his new appointment at Bradley Hall GC as Head Greenkeeper. Alan takes up the position after more than twenty years at Huddersfield GC. This should be a challenge for you to get the place in good 'ackle' for this years Spring Tournament.

Anyone with any news from within the Section please contact me at 1 Cockley Meadows, Kirkheaton, Huddersfield, HD5 0LA at home on 01484 317813 or mobile 0411 601420.

Simon Heppenstall

Cleveland

Thirsk and Northallerton GC

have a new 9 hole course built to USGA specification and 60/40 root zone. Also, after six months in play they are in perfect condition, said Head Greenkeeper Bill Rank! Thirsk are delighted with the popularity and claim visitors and income to date, are most satisfactory. Progress is being made with the forthcoming building of a new shed, with help from the lottery fund.

Sorry to learn that George Malcolm had slipped while out walking and has cracked two ribs, causing him a lot of discomfort. We do hope you improve George.

Bob Lawton, Billingham GC is pleased with multicore aerater which has made greens drier and firmer. Keep up the good work Bob.

Geoff Ward, First Assistant at Blackwell Grange GC, Darlington, has been appointed as Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager by Eaglescliffe GC. He takes over from Bruce Burnell in April and they both will work together for three months prior to Bruce's retirement in July.

Cleveland BIGGA Spring

Tournament is to be at Eaglescliffe GC on Wednesday May 6 at 1 pm. It is also the RiteFeed qualifier.

I have been Head Greenkeeper of Eaglescliffe GC since April 1964 and I retire in July 12/98 aged 65

As this is my final news report, I want to say thank you to all our Section members for their cooperation over the years. We have a happy section and I wish you all every success for the future. Thank you.

The new reporter is to be Kevin Heslop of Brancepeth GC, Durham. His home address is: 1 Scription Farm, Brancepeth, Durham, DH7 8DB, telephone number 0191 378 1912.

Bruce Burnell.

Sheffield

On 5th February we held our winter lecture at Rotherham Golf Club. The lecture was attended by around 50 of our members. Our thanks go to David Evans, from Maxicrop, who gave a very interesting lecture on Seaweed, which was enjoyed by everyone present.

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Keeping in touch with news and comment from the Sections

On May 12, Brian Booth, from Rigby Taylor, is running coach trip to the STRI. Anyone who is interested in going would you please contact Ron Ullathorne on 01405 765322. The coach will be leaving from Tankersley Park Golf Club at 9.30 am.

Golf Dates: Spring Competition and RiteFeed Classic Qualifier: Notts GC on April 27, Tee Off at 2.20 pm; Summer Competition (which will be 18 holes only): Worksop GC on July 1, Tee Off at 1 pm

Please note that people booking meals only for golf days and do not turn up will still have to pay for the meals!

Finally, congratulations go to Jeremy Duffield and his wife on the birth of their son recently.

John Lax

North Wales

The first snow of the year has arrived as I write, it makes a change to have some normal weather, I've been cutting fairway rough, well everywhere really, not bad weather for June! At least it looks like a golf course, unusual for this time of

year and yes the competitions have started.

An excellent day was had at the Welsh College on 18 Feb with some very informative speakers, it was well supported by the trade and there was a good turnout of greenkeepers etc, nice one Graham. Keep up the good work.

Your committee would like to know if there are any of you whose club would be willing to hold one of our golf days, they are always well supported and will put quite a bit of money over the bar because we all know greenkeepers are a thirsty bunch after a hard day on the course. We are looking for dates in April/October/December, anyone who wants about 100 greenkeepers hacking, oops, I mean playing around your course please contact me on 01824 710693.

Finally on a sad note Mal Westcott who was the Mechanic/Greenkeeper at Northop Country Park passed away on January 31 aged 60. Our condolences go out to his family, friends and colleagues.

Dave Goodridge



Midland Region
Peter Larter
Tel: 01480 437507

East Midlands

On February 18 the Section paid a visit to The Oxfordshire GC running a free bus for all members. The day was well supported with 35 members attending a very enjoyable and educational day. On behalf of the Section I would like to thank David Gower, Course Manager, for allowing us to visit his fine golf course and a special thank you to Deputy Course Manager, Brian Benzie, for showing us around The Oxfordshire. Also I would like to thank The Oxfordshire GC for their hospitality. Finally I would also like to thank Graham Arnold for his work in organising the coach. If any members have any ideas for future venues I would be pleased to hear from you.

On a sad note, I was extremely sorry to hear of Bob Holt's recent illness and would like to wish him a full and speedy recovery.

Hopefully we will see Bob very soon at Section events, as the days are not quite the same without him.

Brooksby College has again arranged a series of lectures for all greenkeepers. On May 21 the subject is Conservation on the golf course, by Sally Mowsley. The following week, May 28, we visit Leicester City Football Club for a tour of the Filbert Street ground by Head Groundsman, Chris Parry. Both Lectures start at 7 pm and for further details you can contact Paul Greene at Brooksby College.

I would also like to remind all members to ensure that their entry forms arrive back to me before the closing date for any Section event. This is because numbers, meals and Tee-Off times have to be confirmed with golf clubs, therefore late entries cannot be accepted.

The Region has set up a phone line for all greenkeepers who would like to discuss any issue relating to greenkeeping and work related matters, members can either call Paddy McCarron on 0116 273 9189 or Peter Larter on 01480 437507.

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