

## Greenkeepers narrowly avoid tragedy as river wreaks havoc

# 'When I fell in I just went straight to the bottom. I was fighting for my life. I was taken about 100 yards down the river.'

A routine journey across a causeway linking the King James VI Golf Club to Perth ended in near tragedy for two greenkeepers.

Head Greenkeeper Bruce Somerton and assistant Kenneth O'Donnell were crossing the causeway in a tractor and trailer from the club, which is on an island in the middle of the River Tay, when the powerful current took over.

Bruce, 33, was swept 100 yards downstream and only survived because he was able to free himself from his jacket which was dragging him under. He was eventually tossed onto the bank by a whirlpool. Ken, 27, a non-swimmer, was trapped until police in a rescue boat were able to pull him out.

It was low tide and the 30 yard long causeway was three feet deep in water when the daily crossing was attempted but, when they realised that on this occasion the current was too strong, they tried to reverse. Unfortunately, just as they began to retreat the force of the water knocked the trailer over and the tractor, with Ken still in the cab, was left balancing precariously.

With emergency services on standby on each bank, a police launch was used to rescue Ken. A safety line was attached and an officer climbed onto the top of the trailer and towards the cab. A life jacket was passed to Ken who was then able to climb out of the window and be hauled aboard the launch.

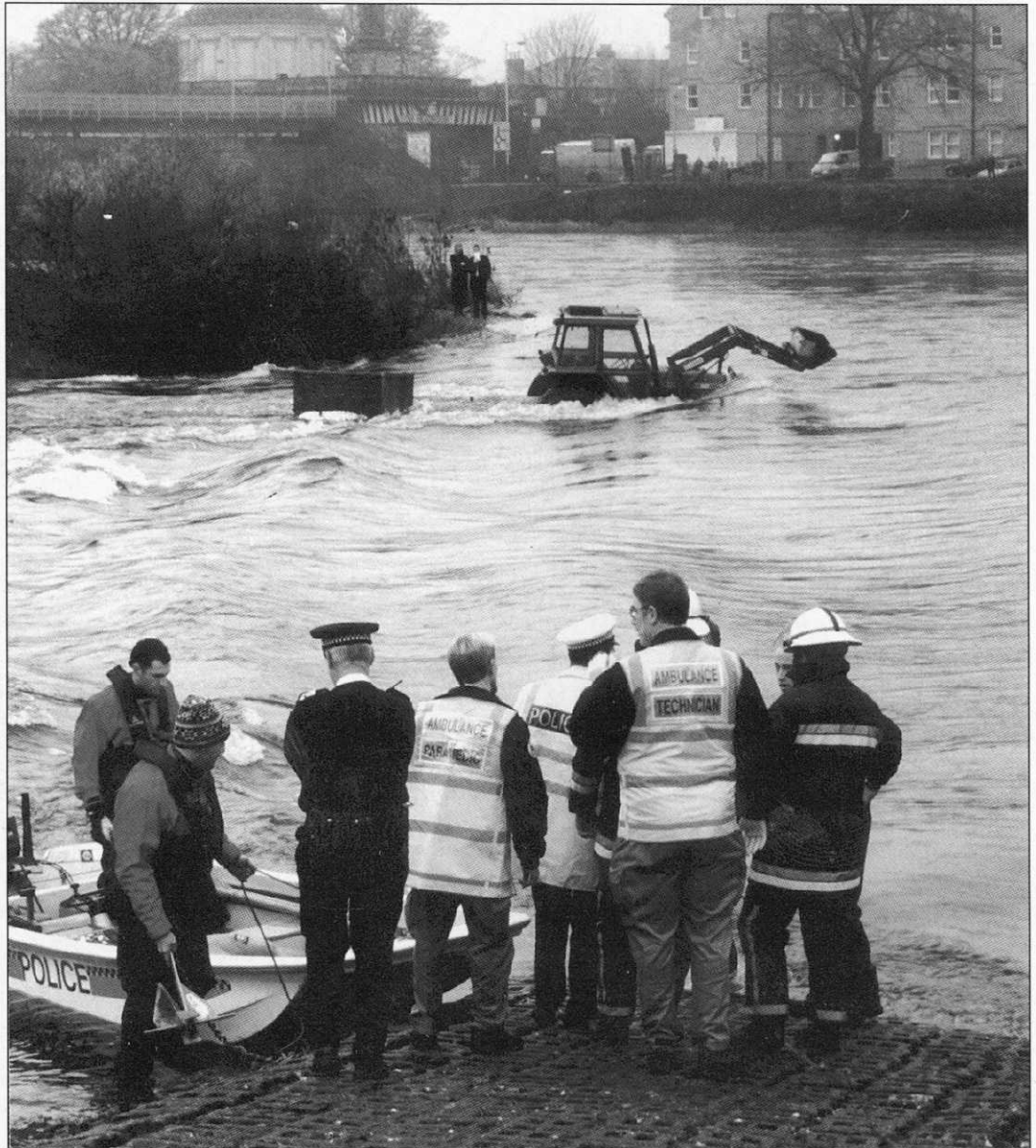
"We were trying to get across but the water was just too powerful and it knocked the trailer over," said Bruce.

"When I fell in I just went straight to the bottom. I was fighting for my life. I was taken about 100 yards down the river and had to take off my body warmer because it was dragging me down."

Both men were taken to Perth Royal Infirmary but later released.

The tractor was eventually winched ashore but the trailer, which contained turf cutting machinery, was washed downstream and believed lost.

Picture courtesy of DC Thomson and Co Ltd.



## Pattisson's pledge for new year

Pattisson's have relocated to new premises in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, from their original home in Luton, Bedfordshire.

"It is never easy to find the right premises, it is just like finding the right house to move into – somewhere that has the right location and a decent enough building that you enjoy going to every day," said Mike Hinch, Joint Managing Director.

"Moving the company in the height of the season obviously caused many problems, but when the right premises came up we had to move quickly. I can now say that the company is back on track and stock levels are healthy."

Pattisson's distribute through a successful direct van sales operation and an established dealer network.

"We have worked closely with

our dealers and embarked on a rigid pricing policy to ensure that we can sell our products at the right price whether it is through our own salesman or through a dealer."

"It has been a tough year for us but we are hoping that the close relationships that we have with the greenkeepers and organisations like BIGGA will ensure the industry moves onwards and upwards."

# Last minute seminar changes at BTME 98

The Institute of Agricultural Engineers have, unfortunately, had to cancel their seminar, which was due to take place on Wednesday, 21 January, between 10am and 12 noon.

However, thanks to a combination of luck and forward planning together with the excellent support of speakers and Jacobsen EZGO Textron, I have managed to organise an even better seminar. Seminar A on Wednesday 21 January will now be:

10 am-10.40 am: TREES, THEIR NECESSARY MAINTENANCE, GOOD AND BAD PRACTICE, by John Nicholson, Associate Consultant, Eamon Wall and Co.  
10.40 am-11.20 am: REEL GRINDING, by Don Laschansky, Managing Director, Foley.  
11.20 am-12 noon: GREENS MOWERS, by David Withers, National Accounts Manager, Jacobsen EZGO Textron.  
12 noon-12.40 pm: THE PRINCIPLES OF TOP DRESSING, by Scott Kinkead, Managing Director, Turfco.

Remember that I have had to move the Seminar by Jaime Ortiz Patino from Wednesday, 21 January, at 1pm to Thursday, 22 January, at 1pm.

Unfortunately, it is now too late to book a place on the National Education Conference and all three Workshops are completely full.

However, you can book places on Seminars, on the day, at Harrogate. Anybody wishing to book a place on their choice of Seminar, should contact Sami Collins on the Seminar Registration Desk in Hall G. Thanks to the continued Support of Ransomes Simms and Jeffries, the Learning Experience 1998 has something for everyone at very affordable prices. Remember, training and education should continue throughout your career. Better trained greenkeepers leads to better golf courses and to an improvement in the status of the industry.



## Education Update

BY KEN RICHARDSON

### BIGGA Refund of Fees Scheme

As I have announced in previous editions of *Greenkeeper International*, the BIGGA Refund of Fees Scheme commenced in January 1998.

To be eligible for a refund, you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be a member of BIGGA and have been a member for at least two years.
- You must have paid your own fees and be able to provide proof of payment eg receipt/credit card slip or statement.
- You must have completed a course, or component part of a course, and be able to provide evidence of completion eg certificate/end of course report etc.
- If you are starting a course in 1998 you may apply for a refund to be paid on course completion as in (c).
- The course must not be subsidised, already, by BIGGA.
- The course must be relevant to your job as a greenkeeper.

Members will be able to claim 80% of fees paid up to a maximum of £200. Application forms will be available in the February Edition of *Greenkeeper International*, on the BIGGA Stand at BTME and from BIGGA HQ. Applications will be dealt with on a first come first served basis. For further information, contact Ken Richardson or Sami Collins at BIGGA HQ or at BTME.

### Health and Safety Training

Training in a range of Health and Safety subjects can be arranged through BIGGA. These include, Chain Saw Competence, Pesticide Application and First Aid. Contact Ken Richardson or Sami Collins at BIGGA HQ for details.

# Pesticides training for sprayer operators

Pesticides legislation first came into effect in 1986 with the Food and Environment Protection Act (FEPA) and was followed a year later by the Control of Pesticide Regulations.

Add to this COSHH Regulations in 1988 and you would think a decade later everyone involved on Greenkeeping would have been trained and, where necessary, certificated.

So who does this concern?

Well, anyone using Pesticides – i.e. Herbicides, Fungicides, Insecticides or Growth Regulators must be trained and competent to carry out the work.

Three categories of people must hold National Proficiency Test Councils (NPTC) certificates namely: 1. Those born after 31 December 1964. 2. Those who act as contractors ie on land not managed by their employer. 3. Those who supervise someone else without a certificate.

If you fall outside these categories then, technically, you don't need a certificate but it is recognised by HSE as the best proof of being competent.

So how do you get a certificate?

The easiest way is to attend a recognised training course. This should prepare you for the necessary tests. An ATB-Landbase course would be as follows:

Most training courses will take a minimum of two days.

Day One – Safe Use of Pesticides. This covers all the background needed by any spray operator. It covers:

Knowledge of Legislation; Interpreting the product label; Selecting suitable protective clothing;

Storage and transportation; Disposal of pesticides and containers; First Aid; Environmental Issues.

Of course anyone working on golf courses and greens will have the added problems that paying customers and public cause. Its difficult to fit in spraying around clients who start at first light and finish at dark! This course prepares the trainee to be take the NPTC test PA1.

Day two will deal with what ever type of equipment you use. Most commonly for greenkeepers will be knapsack sprayers or CDA's (Controlled Droplet Applicators).

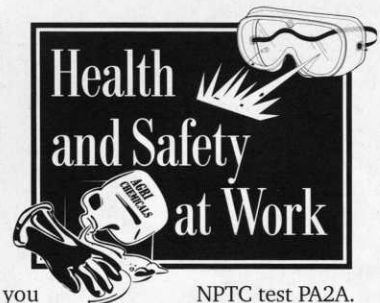
The course covers:

Checking over the sprayer Calibration/Accurately spraying an area (with imitation Pesticide/Disposal of Washings and Decontamination

This course prepares the trainee for NPTC test PA6A.

Some people may use small

tractor mounted sprayers and a course programme similar to the previous one is written to link in with the



NPTC test PA2A.

Anyone with little or no experience might expect to double the training period to four days and, of course, supervised practice is advisable for everyone prior to taking a test.

The testing is not carried out on the training course but arrangements are usually made with the local test committee secretary so the tests take place one or two weeks later.

So that's the outline for anyone needing full training. Of course, many operators have been trained over the last decade and to keep up with changes in both legislation and technical developments a one day refresher course is a useful idea.

■ For further information on training courses and consultancy contact ATB-Landbase (Jean John on 01282 831973 or Andrew Morton on 01430 860057).

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# Spain hosts

NEIL THOMAS reports

The attractive village of Mijas, in the hills above Fuengirola, provided the base for delegates for the first FEGGA Conference held during the weekend of 21-23 November. Eleven member Associations of FEGGA were represented at the Conference with each Association providing speakers to cover papers on the education and training of greenkeepers as well as environmental considerations in their respective countries. From the welcoming barbecue on Friday evening and through the weekend it was noticeable how quickly the different nationalities intermingled, old friendships were renewed and new ones forged. Language did not prove a problem as there was always someone with linguistic ability around when a difficulty arose!

The Conference was held courtesy of the local Toro distributor and the facilities made available were truly excellent. Special thanks are due to Toro for their support of the Conference and in particular to Bob Buckingham, Franco Marcolongo, Christian Grisard Van Roey and Ignacio Miranda. Bob, who had liaised throughout on the organisation of the Conference, found that he had to be in South Africa rather than Spain at the last moment and Franco took over in his absence doing an excellent job in making delegates feel welcome.

It now remains for the FEGGA Board to take stock of the Conference. Sunday morning proved the opportunity for delegates to put forward their views on the way forward for FEGGA and a common concern was the need for establishing uniformity of educational standards in Europe with help being provided to those Associations who lacked both resources and governmental support. On environmental issues, FEGGA's representation on the Brussels based Ecology Unit will be important as representation on behalf of the greenkeeping profession in the respective countries will be vital during the ongoing environmental debate.

Some 18 months on since the formation of FEGGA, this proved to be an instructive conference ably chaired by FEGGA Chairman, Dean Cleaver - no easy task when people spoke with "many

In Germany training and further training have only a recent history - since 1988 when a few German greenkeepers set the wheels in motion. In 1989 the Deula Rhineland was engaged as a training provider. Training is carried out in a series of three, three week intensive courses outside the growing season. One week is run as a practical in summer at several golf courses. These training courses serve to convey both theoretical and practical knowledge. Between these courses, the greenkeeper must work on a golf course for at least one season. During the respective season, a correspondence course consisting of three lessons is also undertaken providing a link between theory and practice. The qualification can be compared with level three of the British training system and since 1990, 386 students have sat the exam.

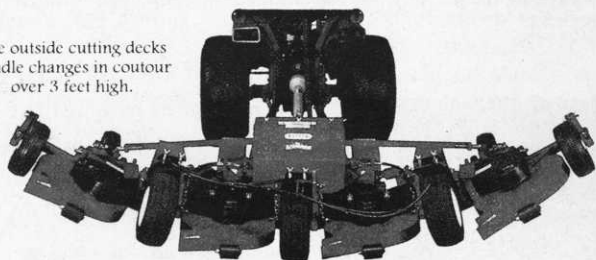
Further training for Head Greenkeepers is now in place. Only those people who have successfully completed the qualified greenkeeper training course, and can then prove at least three years work on a golf course, can apply to do this higher course on successful completion of which the title 'Qualified Head Greenkeeper' may be used. It is expected that the first exams will take place at the earliest in 1999. In the next three years about 40 greenkeepers are expected to take part. The qualification will be comparable to level four in the United Kingdom.

In Sweden the educational programme is organised jointly by the Swedish Golf Federation and Swedish Greenkeepers' Association. There are three courses of increasing levels of difficulty ie Basic Knowledge - four weeks, Further Education - two weeks and Higher Greenkeeper Education - six weeks. The first two courses finish with a written examination, while the higher course has weekly tests as well as a project to be presented in the final week.

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# FEGGA's first conference

tongues"! Delegates departed a little wiser and enthused at the prospect of European co-operation in the future and the strength which the profession will gain from speaking with a common voice and in significant numbers.

Many papers were presented and there was much talk during the weekend. Some conference snapshots may be of interest to readers whilst individual papers can be made available on application to the FEGGA Office at P O Box 42, S-139 21 Varmdo, Sweden, Tel. 46 8 570 196 10, Fax. 46 8 570 198 10.



FEGGA representatives at last year's BTME

➤ In Spain, 20 years ago there were 25 golf courses – mainly country clubs. Today there are over 250 golf courses. Spanish greenkeepers suffer from a lack of information and difficulties in translation. The last Association conference attracted 120 members. Support from golf clubs in Spain is vital to assist greenkeepers with their education while there is a need for technical programmes focussed on turf grass management.

➤ In France, golf courses with more than 10 employees are required to devote 1.5% of their wage bill each year to training. Wouldn't that be wonderful in the United Kingdom?

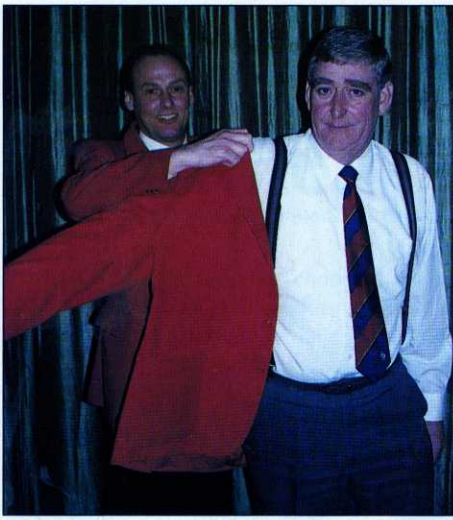
➤ In Switzerland, the position is complicated by language! 64% are German speaking, 19% French speaking, 8% Italian speaking, while 1% are Romansh speaking and 8% speak other languages. In 1980 Switzerland had 29 courses, today there are 59 with 30 new projects in the pipeline. The SGA has 159 members, 64 being French speaking and 95 German speaking. The SGA works closely with the GTC and the Training Manual has been translated into French and German enabling members to pursue training where desired through the framework of the GTC.

➤ In Belgium, there are 61 golf courses with Dutch, French and German being the main languages. It is interesting that 14 Head Greenkeepers from the USA are employed in Belgium. Greenkeeper training is very much in embryo form with one day training courses for Head Greenkeepers arranged during the winter. However, a one year course for greenkeepers was introduced in September 1997 and a similar course for Head Greenkeepers will be introduced in September 1998. The Association in Belgium is for Head Greenkeepers only.

➤ In Norway, the Association was formed 10 years ago with eight members. There are now 150 members and 60 golf courses with a projection of 150 courses within the next 10 years. An educational plan is lacking but a week's seminar is held every year in the second week of January. For 1998 this will be held in Spain and has attracted 80 members (there must be a moral here!). Additionally one day seminars are organised as well as meetings on golf courses.

➤ In Finland, golf courses are a relatively new industry with the main boom occurring in the 1980s. From less than 20 courses in 1989 there are now more than 90. The FGA with 250 members has an average of three members on each course. Generally courses are frozen every winter, opening in March with the main season from May to October.

➤ In Iceland, there are 30 members of the Association and no educational programmes. The Association was founded in 1994. Some 50 greenkeepers have been educated through a close association with Elmwood College. Occasional seminars are held and at present there are 50 golf courses in Iceland.



January: Taking over from Dean Cleaver

**BTME** brings to an end the Chairmanship of one of the busiest men ever to have donned the famous red blazer.

If you are a member who has not encountered Pat Murphy during the last 12 months you must be one of the few, because there is no part of the country in which he has not set foot and few events which he has not been able to attend.

"It has been a great honour to have been Chairman of BIGGA over the past year but I am genuinely exhausted and looking forward to a holiday next year," explained Pat.

"There has been only one occasion during the entire year that I have had an uninterrupted three week spell at home. As well as all over Britain and Ireland I've been to Las Vegas, Sweden, Spain and Germany and can honestly say I've given 100% to the Association."

Asked to select some of the highlights of his hectic year Pat mentions last year's BTME when he took over from Dean Cleaver as Chairman.

"The most nervous I felt all year was when I chaired the National Education Conference on the Monday of BTME week and once I'd put on the Blazer it was just non-stop meetings and photographs."

Hot on the heels of BTME was the GCSAA Conference and Show at Las Vegas where Pat got some inside information on preparations for the Ryder Cup later in the year.

"I was seated next to Jaime Patino, President of Valderrama, at the Gala Dinner and was most impressed when he told me that he was bringing in the QE2 to act as a floating hotel.

"I also got the chance of attending a world heavyweight boxing match – the infamous one between Lennox Lewis and Oliver McCall, who broke down in tears and didn't want to fight."

If he was already becoming accustomed to the good life this was added to by a luncheon on behalf of the AEA at the Savoy Hotel in London.

"I was also particularly pleased to have been

# A year when your feet don't touch the ground...

Looking back on Pat Murphy's year as BIGGA Chairman



Turning the first turf on Berkshire College's new training facility

"The funeral of David Spurden, who was tragically killed just a week after he had prepared Ganton so superbly for the Hayter Challenge Final, was an extremely sad occasion."

Another notable occasion was BIGGA's 10th Anniversary Tournament at Aldwark Manor, which looks set to become a regular fixture and The Open Championship at Royal Troon.

"The Open was fantastic. I was introduced to Colin Montgomerie and his wife at the Association of Golf Writers' Dinner where I also met Jaime Patino again. The Open was also one of the several occasions when I met

our President, Viscount Whitelaw, during the course of the year.

"I can honestly say I must have been the most envied greenkeeper in the country when I got to hold the famous old Claret Jug during our traditional photograph with the new Champion. Justin Leonard turned to me and said 'Get a grip of this' It's a moment I'll treasure for a long time."

able to attend every Hayter Challenge Regional final in what was the last year of the Hayter sponsorship. Unfortunately it rained at most of them, which was a recurring theme all year. We are indebted to Kim Macfie and everyone at Hayter for their marvellous support over the last five years."

The Hayter also had a connection with the saddest occasion Pat attended during the year.



Another of Pat's duties was to present Hankley Common's Ian McMillan with the second half of an unprecedented double.

Ian had already been presented with the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping – ironically the only event in the entire year which the Chairman was forced to miss – when Pat travelled to Hankley Common to present him with the BIGGA Golf Environment Award, in association with Amazone and Rhône Poulenc.

“It was a superb achievement and Ian was a worthy recipient of two excellent prizes in two magnificent competitions.”

One common denominator at every event Pat attended was the warmth of the welcome.

“Everywhere I went, from Saltex, where I judged the stands, to the IOG Show in Dublin and Scotsturf in Edinburgh I was treated like a King and I can only thank everyone for their superb hospitality.”

Another stand out in an outstanding year was turning the first sod on the new Academy course at Berkshire College and the planting of a tree on the course.

Overall, and looking back, Pat takes satisfaction from the progress of the Association over the last 12 months.



Receiving a Westurf memento from Richard Whyman

“I'm delighted that we have now formed two new Sections in Northern Ireland and, having visited them on several occasions, I am sure that with the enthusiasm and talent available among the members they will both go from strength to strength.”

Another development over the last 12 months has seen everything put in place for the building of BIGGA's new Headquarters.

“I felt incredibly privileged last month to be the man to sign the piece of paper to confirm the purchase of the land at Aldwark Manor on

The Open was one of several occasions Pat met up with Viscount Whitelaw

which the new offices and training facility will be built. I'm looking forward to turning the first sod later this month,” said Pat.

“At the beginning of my year the two immediate Past Chairmen, Barry Heaney and Dean Cleaver, tried to give me an idea of what to expect but, to be honest, nothing could really have prepared me for the year I have had.

“I certainly couldn't have done it without the backing of Shipley Golf Club and I'm indebted to everyone at the club for their tremendous support over the last 12 months. Not only were they happy that I had whatever time off was required to give the Chairmanship 100%, members were also keen to know about some of the experiences I had.”

Another factor which enabled Pat to devote the necessary time was the work of his own team at Shipley. “I was always available on the end of a telephone but they have done a superb job and the course has been in excellent condition all year,” he said.

During the year Pat has had constant involvement with Headquarter's staff and this reaffirmed his belief that the Association is extremely lucky to have the highly professional staff it does.

“It all reflects well on the Association and I'd like to thank Neil and his team for all their help during the year.”

Gordon Child becomes the new National Chairman at BIGGA's AGM during BTME and Pat is sure he could not be handing over to a better man.

“Gordon has been a superb ambassador for the Association, as Board Member and long time South West and South Wales Regional Administrator since the Association was formed and it is an honour he thoroughly deserves. I'm sure he will do an excellent job. I just hope he lasts the pace!”



Meeting up with BIGGA's Kubota Cup team at The Belfry



The Golf Environment competition: a big success

# A lab with letters after its name

**European Turfgrass Laboratories in Stirling is the only lab outside America to hold an A2LA certificate.**

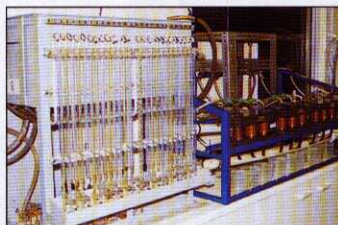
**E**uropean Turfgrass Laboratories has become the first lab outside of the United States, and one of only five in total, to receive accreditation from the USGA.

The Stirling-based lab was formed in 1996 out of a partnership between three agronomy consultancies, Grass Technology International, Professional Sportsturf Design and McMillan-Shiels and it is run by a full time staff of three.

The six directors of ETL, who are among the best known names in their respected fields, are John Souter, Eddie Connaughton, John Hacker and Mike Harbridge – who also acts as Lab Manager, Jack McMillan and George Shiels.

Prior to the setting up of the lab, each of the three companies was using a separate facility.

"We used the labs at Myrscough College, George had his own lab as did GTI and we



thought that we would benefit from pooling our resources," explained John Hacker, as we spoke in the lab based to the rear of Souter of Stirling's premises.

"Although we are in competition as consultants, we've all been in the business a long time and hold each other in high esteem,"

"There is something to be gained by us all in having this independent facility. We are confident that it works effectively," he added.

Lab Supervisor is Ann Murray who works with technicians, Audrey Mackintosh and Sharon Bruce. The equipment she already had from the GTI lab was pooled with that from George Shiel's own lab in Woking.

"We now have two of every-

thing which enables us to do a whole lot more and we extended the premises quite a bit into a larger Portakabin than we had previously occupied," explained Ann.

When the lab was started ETL contracted Neil Howard, whose initial PHD work established the USGA spec back in the '60s, and he came over from the States and worked with them for about ten days. He has since been retained by the lab as a consultant.

"We decided to do this before we even went for the accreditation because he would be able to give us a good idea of how close we were to the standard required and how much work we may have had to do," explained Ann.

"What he did discover when he looked at our testing was that we were not that far out and that we were within the margin of error."

The process involved in achieving the A2LA accreditation recognised by the USGA is long and arduous and not a little expensive.

"We had to put together a qual-

ity manual which contains everything about the company – where it came from, how it runs and details on all our testing procedures," explained John.

Once the application had been made, a date was given for an assessor from the States to visit the lab and this visit was made last March.

"He looked into everything in great detail going through every file to check how the business ran and what we did. It was a full audit.

"We had to perform certain tests for him and he even went so far as to ask how we knew the weight we dropped for the compaction test was three pounds. I told him that we had specified three pounds to the engineering company who had made it for us but he insisted we take it to bits and weigh it. Fortunately it was three pounds," said Ann.

"We were happy with what we were doing but there is nothing like an external person to look at you to sharpen you up. Also, there were certain things we were

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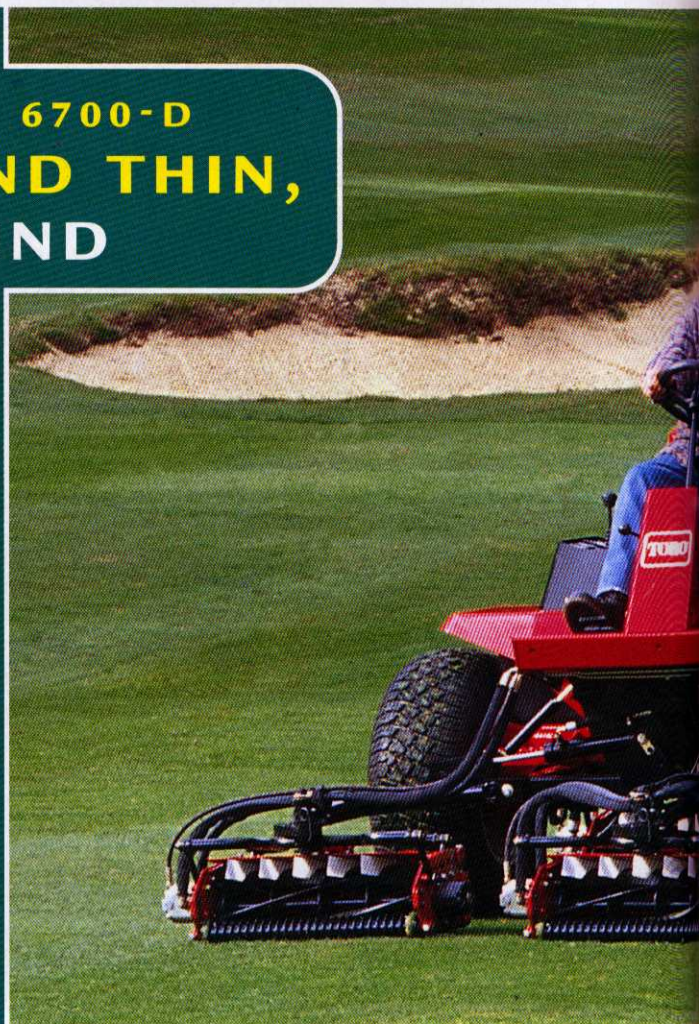
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**Ann Murray, centre,  
with Sharon Bruce, left  
and Audrey Macintosh**

doing to the British standard which weren't the same as the USGA so we had to change to the USGA so it would not be listed as a deviation."

The examination was certainly more thorough than Ann and her team had expected.

"I didn't think it would be a cake walk but what we said at the end of the week was that they'll be coming back in two years to

re-assess and we'll be ready for them then," said Ann.

Perhaps the main difference between an accredited lab and one which isn't is not the quality of the results but in the recording of each stage in the process.

"It is very important that there is a paper chase from the product coming in the door to the paper going out of the door and that it goes all the way through,"

explained John.

"Other labs might be very similar but might not be able to back track a result the same way as we can."

The day the confirmation of ETE's accreditation popped through the letter box was a great one indeed and grouped the lab – alongside Brookside laboratories Inc, in Ohio; N.W. Hummel and Co, in New York; Thomas Turf

Services Inc in Texas and Turf Diagnostic and Design in Kansas – as the only five accredited USGA labs in the world.

The benefits to the three shareholding companies are great.

"First of all Ann and her colleagues are keyed into what we want. When we ring up they know exactly what we are after. Also a few years ago if we had sent something to a lab it might have been a five or six week turn-around. Here we can get them back within the week," said John.

About 75% of the lab's work comes from the three shareholding companies with the rest coming from other clients.

They also take part in comparative testing for universities in the United States including the Western State testing programme and work for Pennsylvania State.

"We see the results and can tell where our results fell within the band. You always want to be in the middle," laughed Ann.

It is one of the few occasions the lab, which strives for excellence, would ever settle for mediocrity!



# PHOTOCAST TEE SIGNS



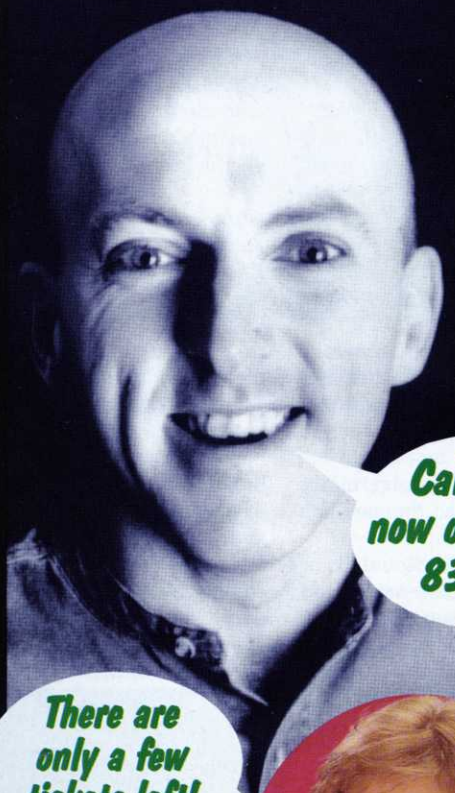
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# Banquet goes into extra time!



Call Sami  
now on 01347  
838581

There are  
only a few  
tickets left!



Join us at  
**The Harrogate  
International Centre, on Thursday,  
January 22, 1998 for an evening of  
top entertainment with funnyman Lee  
Hurst and the sensational Linda Nolan**



If you haven't reserved your ticket for the BTME banquet, then you'd better hurry as there are only a limited number left! Don't miss out on a five-course meal, live band and fantastic entertainment, which all makes for a fabulous evening of fun!

**MAKE A DATE FOR THE EVENT OF '98!**