



Cole spent quite a bit of time on site testing all the materials before they were used at each stage.

The new green is 150 square metres bigger than its predecessor was, and on Andy's advice, washed turf supplied by Rolawn was used.

"We didn't consider seeding because we wanted to get the green in play as soon as we could and while it is more expensive initially to turf it is far cheaper in the long run," explained Rob.

While still considering the time factor Leamington's extra green

meant there was no real pressure from the club to force the green into action quickly.

"It will be a decision between Andy and myself and we both need to agree," said Des, who estimated that while it may be ready in June he would be happy to keep play off until July.

The benefits of the new green have already been witnessed. While the wettest spell in five years flooded many of the other greens, closing the course, the new 11th drained well.

By the beginning of February they had also mown the new green once and taken away ten boxes of clippings.

"We are delighted with the results and with the work of the contractor who also put in a path for us to the left of the green which had we done it ourselves would have been a huge

job," added Des.

The success of the 11th should lead to inroads into the remaining greens which look likely to be done in batches.

"If we decided to do three or four a year we would also do the tees and the bunkers at the same time," revealed Des.

The new 11th tee was built by Rob and another member of the team, Mike Wyatt.

"We didn't want to change the shape or the distance of the hole to avoid the need for the card to be amended but what we wanted to do was level the tee, as they had tended to be quite uneven and we were losing teeing space," said Rob.

"We hired the surveying equipment, took levels from all over the tee and got an average. By working to that it meant we were not left with much excess soil and disrup-

tion was minimal," he explained and the small pile of soil to the right hand side of the tee borne testimony to their work.

Once the tee, which is 50 square metres larger than the original, was levelled the entire team got together and turfed it in half a day.

Alongside the construction work the scrub clearance was in full swing turning a wooded area of dense growth into something in which members would have a better than even chance of finding a ball.

"The membership can now sit in the clubhouse and see the new 11th green that they've paid for whereas before the view was blocked by the growth," said Des.

Another benefit of the work, which is on-going was highlighted by Rob.

"The wind comes from the west and will blow through and dry out the green. It will get much more light and air."

With the bulk of the winter work completed the green's team are looking forward to August when they can move into the new custom-built maintenance facility which will boast everything the modern team could possibly need as well as a much needed doubling in floor space to cope with the existing machinery as well as the new equipment which has been ordered but put on hold until the storage become available.

"We are having a disabled shower put in as, although we don't have any disabled staff at the moment, we don't know in the future," explained Des, who along with Rob, put forward their recommendations for the new facility.

Cold comfort

Staff

Head Greenkeeper
Des Compton
Deputy Head Greenkeeper
Robin Wilcox
Mechanic - Brian James
Assistants - Mike Wyatt,
Shane Wilton and Keith
Hawtin

Equipment Inventory

Cushmans plus Dresser,
Corer and Solid Tine
Spiker
Toro GM 3000D
Toro 216 Reelmaster
Jacobsen Handmower
Jacobsen Tri-King
Husqvana Ride-On
Massey Ferguson Tractor
Iseki Tractor plus Loader
Verti-drain
Huxley's Scarifier
Flymo
Allman Sprayer
Knapsack
John Deere Fairway
Gangs
Ransomes Semi-Rough
Gangs
Strimmers

Equipment on Order

Toro GM Mower
Set of B-Mows and
Litamizer
Massey Ferguson 4000
Series Tractor
Husqvana Ride-On Rotary
Mower



Above: Scrub clearance work continuing Below: Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Robin Wilcox

That forward thinking - admirable at a 90 year-old course which had the rare privilege of witnessing a match between two members of the Great Triumvirate, James Braid and Harry Vardon, to commemorate its opening - extended to last year Des having the cabling for the new TIL irrigation system being laid to the new site as well as the existing.

Des and Rob are fortunate that an excellent staff membership relationship exists at Leamington to the extent that members known as "Grey Nags" and Warwickshire senior players money for tree planting and also water the trees on the course in the summer months.

Des also operates a system whereby he leaves messages on his answer machine in the mornings giving information on the course.

"I give the date and say whether

the course is open, whether we have any winter greens and if we have a trolley ban in place. I also say if I am currently doing a course inspection."

The work which the Leamington & County staff shows that while they may not be the greatest card players in the world they certainly make full use of the winter period.

For the last year the Green Staff has been sponsoring the education of an 11-year-old girl from Ecuador named Mery.

"I heard about an organisation World Vision UK, which sponsors children's education all over the world and got in touch with them," explained Rob.

"I collect money from the staff every month and send off a cheque.

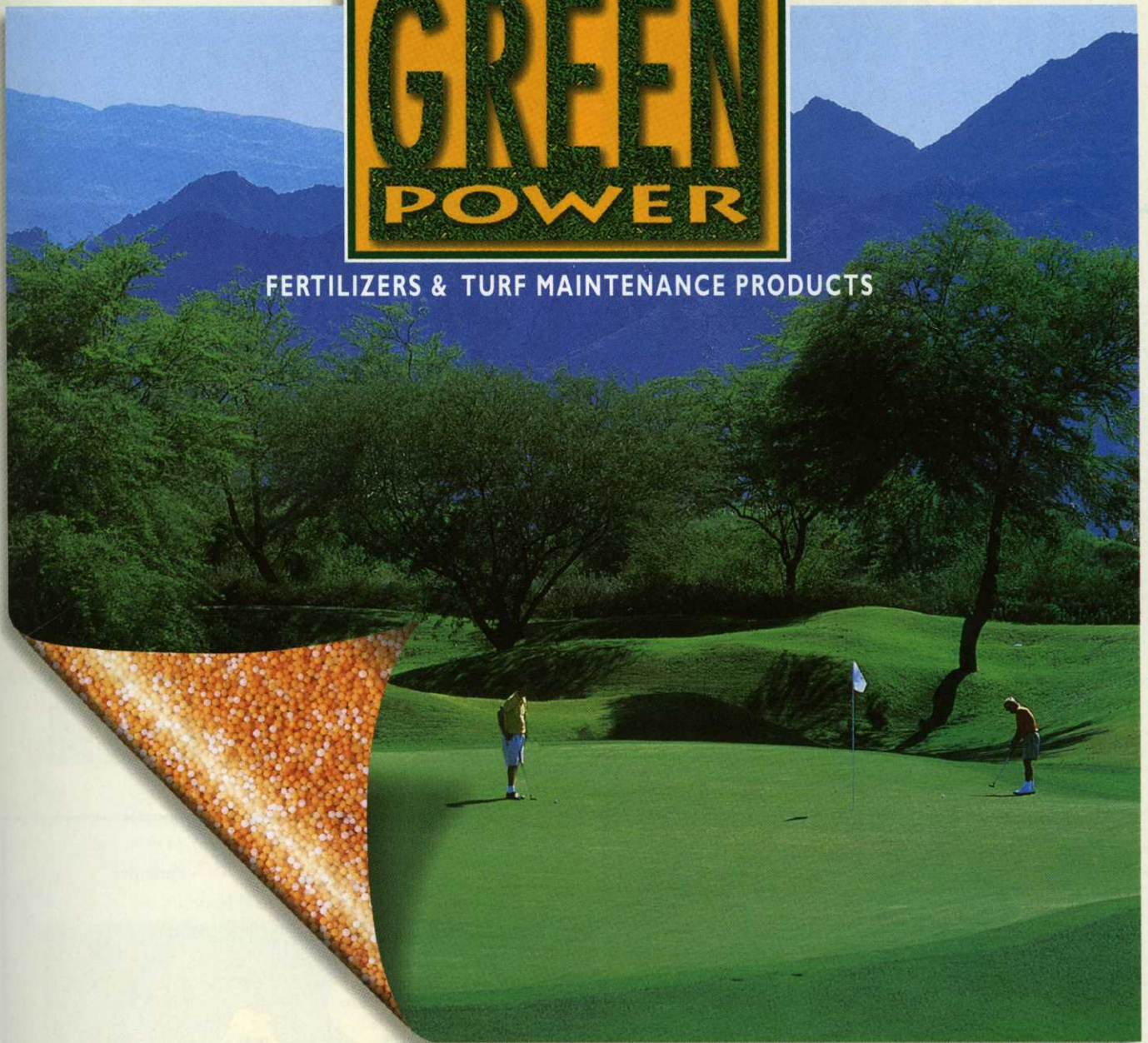


We also send small presents, pictures of us mowing and tell her about the golf course while we get letters and Christmas cards from her," explained Rob, who pointed out Mery's photograph which hangs in the office.

"She'll probably be Ecuador's first female greenkeeper," added Des. "We could even give her a job here!"



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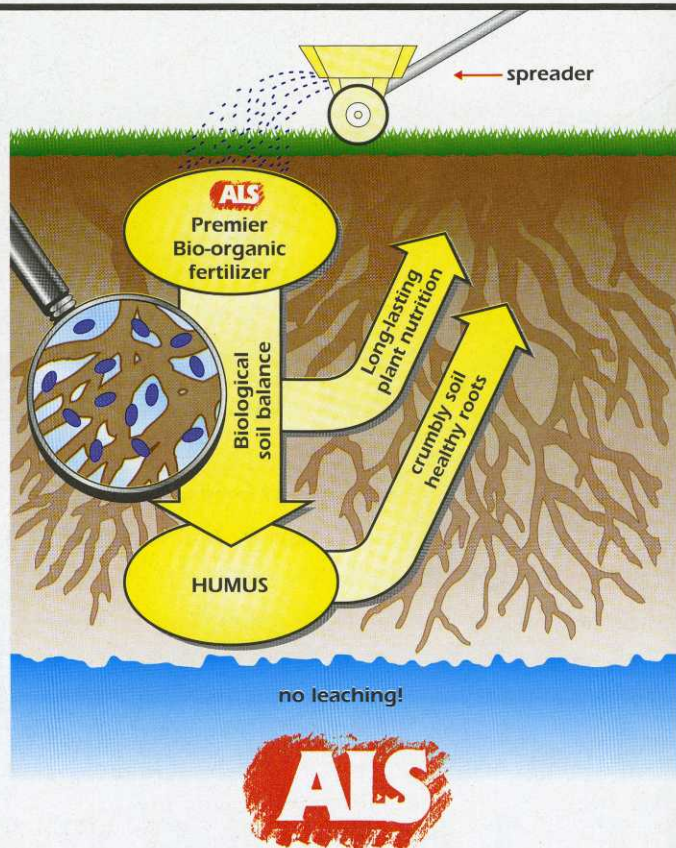
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Subsidised courses a winner

Late last year I attended the BIGGA Regional Course at Airth Castle Hotel on Golf Course Design, Construction and Establishment and would like to congratulate the Education and Training Department on an excellent two day course.

Although it was intense, it was most enjoyable and held in very pleasant surroundings. I find it difficult to understand why so few greenkeepers attend these courses,

they are great value for money at only £75 per head - surely not out of reach of most club's budgets.

These courses are subsidised by the BIGGA Education Fund so that most greenkeepers can afford to attend, so let's not lose these excellent education opportunities due to lack of support.

Robert Hogarth
Head Greenkeeper
Cathcart Castle GC

High praise from Denmark

Chris Haspell, a young Englishman working as a Head Greenkeeper at Falster Golf Club, in Denmark, took the initiative to arrange a study tour to his motherland with a group of Danish greenkeepers. Apart from visiting BTME in Harrogate we had the chance to visit three golf courses. Our group was thoroughly impressed by the beauty and the standards of these courses and particularly by the methods and the skills that were behind their maintenance.

On behalf of the group I would like to say thank you to Anthony Davies, of Prestbury GC; Derek Green, of Royal Liverpool GC and Chris Whittle, of Birkdale GC, for letting us visit and passing on their enormous knowledge with such generosity.

A special thanks also to Keith Kent, of Old Trafford. Obviously class goes hand in hand on that pitch. Thank you to Richard Campey, Peter Cobalt and all the other lads we met for showing

and sharing your wit and knowledge.

On behalf of the Danish Greenkeepers Association (DGF), I would like to express my admiration of BTME and the Learning Experience at Harrogate arranged by BIGGA. The organisation is truly setting a high standard to be followed and it is our wish for the future that we in Denmark will put more work and effort into FEGGA and thereby learn as well as to contribute to fellow European standards and activities.

Cheers Chris. It was a marvellous tour, you're a great ambassador for your country and you reflect what we met in England - warmth, wit, skill and knowledge. Never mind that you support Leeds United. After all, nobody is perfect.

Per Rasmussen
Head Greenkeeper
Copenhagen Pay and Play
Denmark

Thanks for a priceless trip

I am writing to thank everyone from Toro and BIGGA for the outstanding trip to the GCSAA show in Anaheim. It truly was a trip of a lifetime, broadening my horizons to the industry of greenkeeping. The trip was priceless and although it was my first ever visit to the USA, which was an eye opener in itself, the knowledge gained from the show and senior greenkeepers was second to none. The whole occasion was something I'll never forget as we really were 'mixing with the best.'

There were so many highlights it is difficult to name them all, I was totally overwhelmed by the enormity of the whole event. It was really encouraging to see Toro and BIGGA working closely together as through both organisations I have met so many interesting people and I will definitely be participating in more

BIGGA organised events.

Finally, the lasting memory of America to myself will be all the many friends I have now met from the Toro/BIGGA representatives who gave us five star treatment for the whole trip, to my fellow greenkeepers who share with me the desire to continue learning about the industry; Eddie Adams, Mick Wells, Ian McMillan and Alan Owen deserve special mention.

It is a credit to our profession that so many people can mix and strike a friendship in such a short time.

Thanks once again for the memories and I look forward to seeing you all again, as I'm sure we will.

Chris Rawlings
Rodway Hill GC Gloucester
Runner-up in the '97 Toro Student of the Year Competition

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Arnie van Amerongen examines some of the difficulties new continental courses face and some of the pitfalls they must avoid...

Testing. times

Whoever believes that they can make money with golf courses believes in fairy tales. To plan a golf course or even get planning permission is certainly not easy and to make a profit with a golf course these days is very difficult, if not impossible.

With economic crises on the continent, more than half of the courses are losing money or, at most, are very happy just to break even each year.

Every club investor and member would obviously like to have a superb course but this can only be realistic if the financial backing is healthy.

It must be made clear from the start that it is extremely difficult to make a profit in the first three to five years of a club's existence.

Present costs of building a golf course are extremely high and this varies depending upon how much earth the design of the course requires to be moved. Other factors include specifications of greens, tees and fairways and in some cases the level of irrigation required for the course. There are, of course, many other localised factors which influence cost such as land contours, drainage etc.

In the beginning, everyone is enthusiastic about the development of a new course. But inevitably, improvements are necessary in the first couple

of years, due mainly to repositioning/relevelling tees, reshaping greens and more commonly secondary drainage, surface and subsurface. The need for refinements to the golf course are often over-looked in the initial budgeting process and the financial constraints imposed on most projects lead to conflict at post-opening stage, improvements verses green fee income and happy members.

Then financial experts are brought in to make an advisory report on how the course could run with less money and, of course, poorer quality which, as we all know, is false economy.

Golf Course Maintenance companies then come in to tender for the maintenance of the course for one year. They operate in this way. They say how much it will cost to use a greens mower per hour; they work out that cutting 18 greens will take four hours which gives a price for 18 greens. With a previous cutting regime of six times a week for greens they will cut back to as little as three times per week, or 90 cuts a year, or raking bunkers from twice a week to once a month. This all reduces costs but the result is low quality and membership numbers start to fall and visitors cease.

The logical conclusion is that the number of greenkeepers will be

reduced perhaps from six to as few as three, which is like going back to the 1900s.

When I visit a course and talk to the General Manager, he often says that the course is not in very good condition. I then ask why he doesn't employ someone with the knowledge to present the course in better condition to be told that he can't afford anyone.

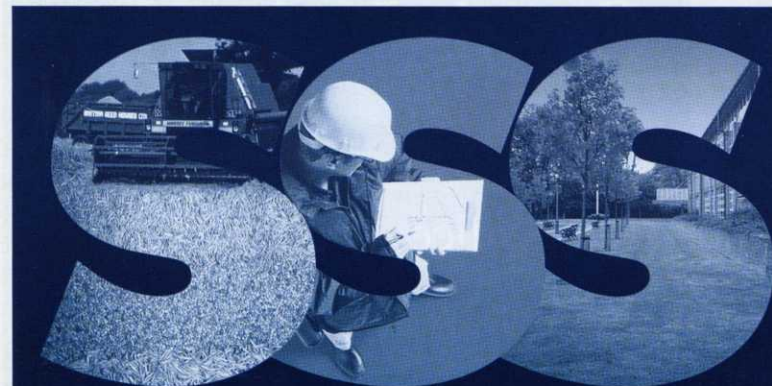
I hear these ridiculous answers all too often. Of course this is the wrong way to proceed, but I'm afraid this is the way we are going, and it will not improve in the future.

I am a great believer in high quality but unfortunately I have come to the conclusion that prices are rising, wages are dropping and the greenkeepers are blamed for poor maintenance when there is too little money to work with.

Often everything is compounded with a white elephant clubhouse with only results in higher project costs and more financial problems.

I really hope before investors of clubs consider building a golf course that they will be sound enough financially to survive the first three to five years even if green fees and memberships are not going as well as expected.

If this is not the case, don't even start to think about getting the project off the ground.



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Profile

Usually the spotlight falls on the Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper at a Club.

Now it is the turn of those whose work often goes unheralded to star.



Name: Andy Wilson

Club: Camoustie Golf Links

Position: Assistant Greenkeeper

Age: 34

1. How long have you been a greenkeeper?
18 years.

2. What education are you currently undertaking?
None

3. Which one task do you most enjoy doing?
Cutting Greens

4. Which one task do you most dislike doing?
Verti-draining

5. What job other than greenkeeping might you have ended up doing?
None

6. Who has been the biggest influence on your career?
John Philp, with his enthusiasm for improving greenkeeper standards

7. What would you do to improve the life of a greenkeeper?
Administer laws forbidding members from criticising the greenkeeper

8. What are your hobbies?
Football, golf and most other sports

9. What do you get out of BIGGA?
Meeting people and exchanging ideas

10. What do you hope to be doing in 10 years time?
Sitting on a warm beach spending my lottery winnings!

UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE UPDATE

Education

This month, Ken Richardson gives details on how you could win £5,000, a trip to Orlando and a Toro Greensmaster

The winning way

Although we are still dealing with queries about this year's Learning Experience, which, thanks to Ransomes, gets better each year, we are planning the Learning Experience 1999. Some speakers have come forward already and I will be writing to others shortly, however, if there is a subject that you would like to see presented/discussed or a particular speaker that you would like to hear or if you would like to speak yourself, then please contact me as soon as possible. This month also sees planning commence for the 1998/99 series of Regional Courses and the 1998 Aldwark Manor Courses. Details will appear soon but if you have ideas on subjects and/or speakers that you would like to see presenting courses in the Regions then, again, contact me as soon as possible.



The BIGGA Golf Course Ecology Award

Following last year's successful competition, won by Hankley Common Golf Club, Amazone Ground Care and Rhône-Poulenc Amenity are joining us again to run the BIGGA Golf Course Ecology Competition. This competition is designed to reward those clubs that integrate ecological management with normal golf course management practices to ensure that golf and the environment are compatible. Full details have been sent to all golf clubs and head greenkeepers, however if you have not received your copy then contact BIGGA HQ and we will send out full details by return of post. Entries must be returned to BIGGA by 1 May 1998. Why not enter and your club could win the first prize of £5000. All clubs visited by the judges will be offered the chance to

purchase a copy of the detailed report on their course, which will also include an action plan.

The TORO Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping

With prizes like a TORO Greensmaster triplex ride on mower, a two week trip to the USA, prizes for the winners greenkeeping team and for the runners up, this competition proved to be popular with both greenkeepers and their golf clubs in 1997, especially, Ian McMillan, from Hankley Common, last year's winner. Nomination forms have been sent out to golf clubs and Head Greenkeepers but if you need a copy then contact BIGGA HQ. Get your nominations off as soon as possible and we will send out entry forms to all nominees. All entry forms must be returned to BIGGA HQ by 29 May 1998. The National Final will take place, in Harrogate, on 25 and 26 October. Please note that Master Greenkeepers and winners of the ICI/Zeneca/Miracle Premier Greenkeeper Competition are now eligible to enter.



The TORO Student of the Year Competition

Now in its ninth year, the search to find the TORO Student of the Year has begun. Competition details and entry forms have been sent to colleges and training providers and all entries should reach BIGGA HQ by 29 May 1998. The main points of the competition are:

1. The winner receives the TORO scholarship to the USA and visits the TORO factories and the GCSAA conference and show in Orlando, Florida.

2. The winner's greenkeeping lecturer wins a visit to the GCSAA conference and show in Orlando, Florida.

3. The two runners-up win an all expenses paid visit to the 1999 Learning Experience, at Harrogate.

4. Regional finals will be held in six locations during late July and, up to eight students will be selected for the National Final which will take place on 25 and 26 October 1998.

National Education Conference and Seminar Programmes

Videos and written transcriptions for the Learning Experiences 1998 are still available. Contact Sami at BIGGA HQ for more details or to ask for an order form.

Refund of education/training fees

Applications for a refund of education and/or training fees are beginning to arrive at BIGGA HQ. However, funds are still available for those wishing to claim a refund. To be eligible for a refund, you must meet the following criteria:

a. You must be a member of BIGGA and have been a member for at least two years.

b. You must have paid your own fees and be able to provide proof of payment eg. receipt/credit card slip or statement.

c. 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.

d. If you are starting a course in 1998, you may apply for a refund to be paid on course completion as in c.

e. The Course must not be subsidised, already, by BIGGA.

f. 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. Contact BIGGA HQ for an application form.



In the first of our new monthly finance columns, Geoff Steel offers help to those with pension problems...

Brass facts

Over the forthcoming months I will be offering you some thoughts and ideas on what to look for when considering aspects of financial planning.

Nowadays, there does not seem to be anywhere you can go for advice without someone trying to sell you something. As most people you speak to are tied to one company, so how do you know you are getting a good deal?

I intend to explode the myths surrounding financial matters, to explain the basics of terms you may often hear but not understand. I will be considering all aspects of your money from mortgages, loans and credit cards, through to savings, investments, pensions, life insurance and healthcare. I will advise you of the pitfalls to watch out for when looking after your money and the advantages of seeking out the right product for you.

If there are any concerns that may be of interest to you which you think may also affect your colleagues, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will provide guidance on the issue.

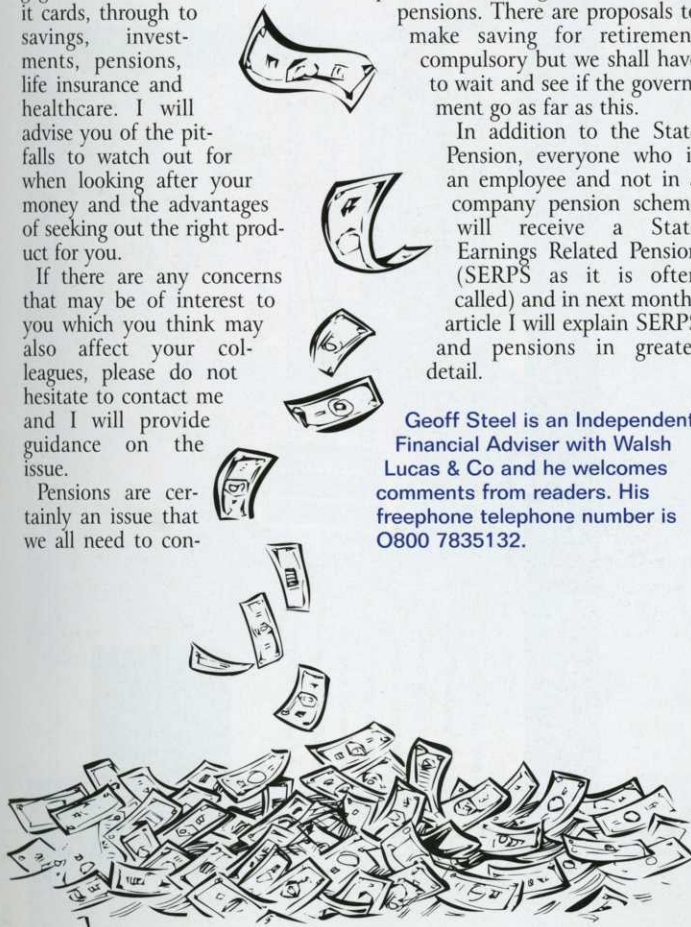
Pensions are certainly an issue that we all need to con-

cern ourselves with. The basic state pension was worth about third of the average wage in 1984. The government then changed the way the State Pension increased and it is now worth less than a fifth of the average wage. If you were to retire today with no other benefit, you would receive £62.45 per week or £99.80 per week as a married couple. The present government have no intention of increasing the value of the State Pension and its value will gradually deteriorate in relation to wages.

The emphasis is now that we all need to provide for ourselves in retirement and plans are being prepared to encourage us to save for pensions. There are proposals to make saving for retirement compulsory but we shall have to wait and see if the government go as far as this.

In addition to the State Pension, everyone who is an employee and not in a company pension scheme will receive a State Earnings Related Pension (SERPS as it is often called) and in next months article I will explain SERPS and pensions in greater detail.

Geoff Steel is an Independent Financial Adviser with Walsh Lucas & Co and he welcomes comments from readers. His freephone telephone number is 0800 7835132.



1998 Volvo PGA Championship: Wentworth

Bunker Rakers required!

The PGA European Tour have invited BIGGA to organise a bunker raking team on a daily basis, for the final two days of play of the 1998 Volvo PGA Championship.

If you are a Full Greenkeeper member of the Association and would like to be considered for either Sunday, May 24, or Monday, May 25 (or both days), then contact John Pemberton at BIGGA HQ on 01347 838581 as soon as possible.

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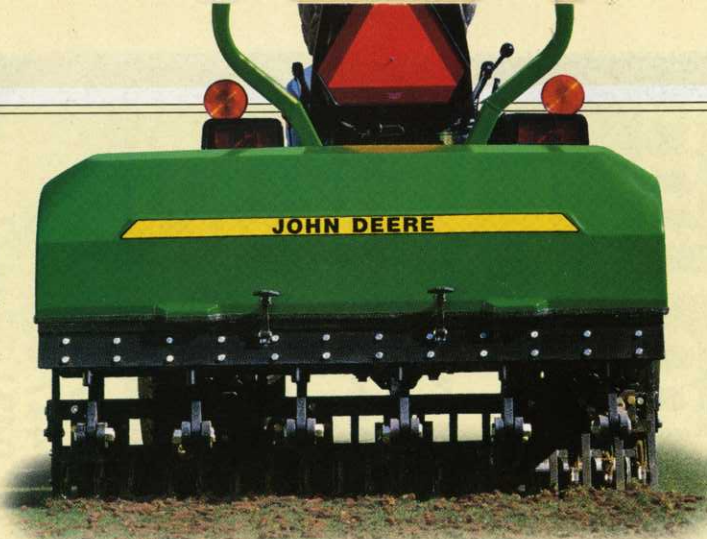
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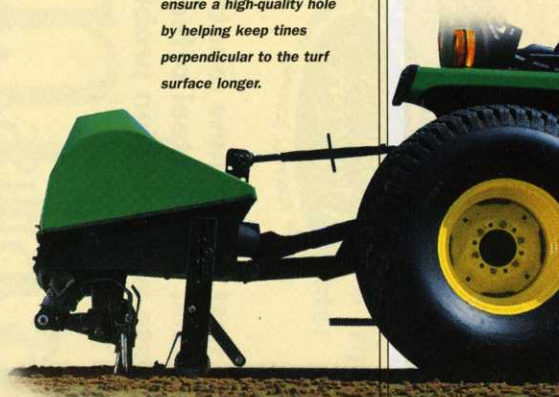
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forgiving, and easier to maintain. Plus, mounting geometry and "flexi-link" supporting arms ensure the tines stay perpendicular to the ground longer for a cleaner hole. The bottom line – the Aercore 1500 can punch up to 900,000 high-quality 10-cm (4-in.) holes an hour. The Aercore 1000 – right behind at 600,000. They just get on with the work.

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