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Terry Ryan, Sales and Marketing Director of Rolawn (Turf Growers) Ltd, charts a course to the top ten questions every turf grower must answer. Straight in at number ten...

The hit parade



British greenkeepers and Course Managers have always been an inventive and adaptable group. These days their broad based skills are being enhanced with improved training. This has led to the development of the professional greenkeeper/manager who is capable of tackling an increasing number of projects on the course.

It is now customary for Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers to have responsibility for controlling budgets which represent large amounts of expenditure for their individual clubs. Whether it's Wentworth or Worksop the principle is the same and the pressure is on to deliver value for money and a golf course that can take year round play in its stride.



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The hit parade

If you choose turf make sure of value for money and a result that will get you noticed by the greens committee and club members for all the right reasons

To convey my idea of what constitutes value for money I invite you to invest five minutes and play a little game. You might learn something that will stand you in good stead for the rest of your career. Jot down on a piece of paper the names of ten famous companies. They can be from any industry from retailing to airlines. You decide. My only condition is that they must be famous and highly respected. Who is on your list? I put down Marks and Spencer, Virgin, BMW, Kentucky Fried Chicken (well I do spend a lot of time on the road), Tetleys (surprise, surprise), Shell, Ford, Sainsburys, Kodak and Sony.

Now ask yourself this... what stands out about these companies, what is it that they all have in common? Despite their very different backgrounds and industries, they have a common distinguishing feature. Of course they are all instantly recognisable, respected by their customers and they are profitable. So it's more than fame and fortune that links them.

If you are stumped the answer appears at the end of this article.

I have regularly been asked by greenkeepers what is the best way to identify good quality turf for use on greens and trees. Like most greenkeeping professionals the questioners usually have a copy of the current STRI turfgrass seed guide close at hand. This is because they recognise that it is an invaluable aid that makes an excellent starting point.

Sometimes even the obvious needs stating, so my first trip is to read the section on page two headed "using turfgrass seed 1998". This section states "cultivars at the top of each list my not be the best cultivars for every use". Bear in mind also that, whilst they do test individual cultivars extensively, even the STRI don't test mixtures made up of different seed types and that the turf you buy will usually contain at least two cultivars in the case of greens' turf, and usually at least four in the case of tees turf.

Having made these points it would be an unwise greenkeeper who did not actively seek out turf with seed types which are highly rated by the STRI. My point is that if you decide to use turf you will not be buying seed alone.

Whether to use seed or turf on a golf course depends on many variables such as application, the time available, the budget, and the best way to achieve your objective. As we all know top quality turf at the right price will get your green or tee back into play far sooner than seed. However poor quality turf that fails to perform is a highly visible and costly mistake. So you should certainly be price conscious but don't ever buy turf on price alone.

At first it may seem that there is no contest between seed and turf when it comes to price. In our industry no two situations are the same but you won't be surprised to learn that I strongly believe that cultivated turf has a strong case when it comes to cost. Getting a tee or green into play months (perhaps a year) sooner is a genuine and demonstrable benefit to any club competing for golfers green fees and especially to one where competitions and society days are a regular source of income. This may be obvious to you and me, but how often is this point actually discussed in committee?

As well as needing many months less time to come into play, turf also needs less water to get established than seed. Immediately after installation the water requirements of both options are much the same. However, in most cases (other than drought) turf only needs light watering for the subsequent three weeks or so. This is because grass blades shade bare soil from the sun thereby minimising evaporation which is considerable in warm (let alone hot) weather. This shading effect leaves much more of the water for its intended use. Cultivated turf can also win whatever the time of year because it offers the option of year round

THE TOP TEN

Terry Ryan,
Sales and Marketing
Director of Rolawn
(Turf Growers) Ltd

installation, even on frozen ground (however) this is not recommended when the ground is frozen to a depth of 50 millimetres or more).

It's also worth bearing in mind that cultivated turf is capable of accepting heavy rain without erosion or damage. This could be very important to those golf courses with a large number of raised tees. With up to 90% of the weight of a grass plant in its roots, turf is an efficient erosion prevention material. It seems odd to spend money on expensive root zone material and incur labour costs then take the risk of it being washed away by heavy rain. Especially when there are members waiting to play and societies wanting to part with cash.

Uniformity in the finished sward is also important. Turf has a head start here because you can visit the turf farm and see for yourself what the finished seed mixtures will look like. Most cultivated turf producers should be able to provide you with turf that has 99 to 100% uniformity. If you are considering spending hundreds, even thousands of pounds on turf, make it a golden rule to visit the turf farm, this is because just like wine makers turf growers are subject to the forces of nature and not every year is a vintage year. Samples are fine as a general indicator but there is no substitute for walking on a full field or two to evaluate what it is that you will actually be buying and living with for very many years.

If you choose turf make sure of value for money and a result that will get you noticed by the greens committee and club members for all the right reasons.

The answer to the famous names game? The one thing they all have in common is that none of them is renowned for being the cheapest company of their kind. Just one of the best.

So here they are, the ten key questions every turf grower must answer.

If they can't answer these think about spending that precious budget elsewhere.

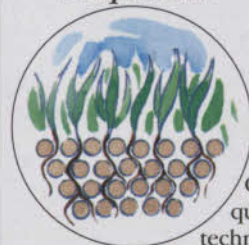
1. How old is the turf you are offering me? (the correct answer is 12 to 18 months - old turf is bad turf)
2. How can you prove to me what the age of your turf is?
3. Can you give me a certificate from an independent source to prove that the seeds you use have been tested for purity?
4. What are the names of the cultivars that you have sown in your turf and in what proportions have they been sown?
5. What is your estimate of the proportions of each grown species in the finished turf, how does this relate to what you have sown and how can you verify this?
6. What is the soil type that the turf has been grown on and what is its pH?
7. Can I have an independent analysis of both the soil type and the pH?
8. Can I visit your production fields at short notice? (The easy answer is "yes", if it is say "fine I will see you in the morning then").
9. When you arrive at the turf farm and walk on to the turf... ask on what date the turf was last fed and what with - important this - if you want to anticipate the turfs immediate requirements in its new location.
10. Can you take me through your quality control procedures? (Here you are looking for things like product traceability, detailed records of maintenance and feeding etc. and some form of independent testing).



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Scottish Region
Peter Boyd
Tel/Fax 0141 616 3440

West of Scotland

Well hello again, and after a few months of nothing, I'm back. Sorry about the absence but there wasn't a lot happening out there. There are a few things to bring to your attention this month though.

At the recent Scottish Outing over West Kilbride, the West Section tried in vain to retain their team trophy and although a reasonable turnout was evident, their performances were distinctly below par. Ayrshire came out easy winners, so maybe next year.

Jim Paton and his staff produced a very fine course, plenty of rough and out-of-bounds to which I fell foul. Thanks are extended to him for his efforts and the clubhouse staff for attending to our needs. Thanks also to the members of West Kilbride for extending courtesy of the course to the greenkeeping fellowship. Special mention must go to Peter Boyd for his hard work on the day completing the cards, starting and booking in. Well done Peter.

A new piece of news as well, my playing partner on the day was Elliot Small and we had an excellent game. I then discovered his new role due to the resignation of George Brown as Vice Chairman of BIGGA because of work commitments. Elliot is now the new Vice Chairman. Congratulations and I hope everything goes well for him. This year sees the retirement of another prominent member of the Association in Jim Nielson, Murrayfield Golf Club. Jim is at present the Chairman of the Scottish Region and has been Past Chairman and Secretary of the East Section. I hope he enjoys his retirement and his golf now. Best Wishes from the West Section.

Now for Section business. The outing at Cathcart may well have passed by the time this reaches you - if not it is September 10 and entries should be high as this is a new venue. I'm sure Robert Hogarth and his staff will be working all hours to have the course in trim, but it depends on the weather though, and I hope it is better than recently. The five-a-side tournament will have passed by now and a report will be in next month. Tickets for the Annual Dinner at Victoria's will be available at the Autumn outing - places are restricted to 60 and a £5 deposit is required. A different venue and format is planned so come along and enjoy yourself. The AGM for the section will be earlier this year although a date has not been set. Early October is likely. A game's night will follow as usual so be sure to come along as it is usually a good night. That's everything folks.

Stuart Taylor

North

Yet another three new members to the Section this month. We welcome Michael Carson, Caird Park; Ian Cowper, Tain, and George Clubb from Royal Dornoch. That is all five of my staff as members now, so anyone with non-members at their course get working on them as I did, they don't know what they are missing unless you tell them.

The two lucky winners of the Patron's Award this year are Stuart Hogg, Fortrose, and Ross Macleod, Tain. They win an expenses paid trip to BTME 1999 next January. All they had to do was attend more BIGGA events than other members, so next year it could be you if you attend events in the Section, Region and Nationwide. The first event to count was this month's Autumn outing at Alford, and the next one is the Section AGM at Moray GC, Lossiemouth on Thursday October 29 with golf laid on before hand, details will be sent out nearer the time. Another counting event will be the Section One-Day Conference, on Wednesday, November 25, at Craibstone, Aberdeen. Speakers lined up are Carol Borthwick, Elmwood College, on the role of the Assessor, Maurice Gray, SAC Craibstone, on the new golf course they have just built, Liz Thom an Archaeologist, a Representative from Envirogreen on the safe disposal of Pesticides etc, a Representative from Green-Releaf™ on beneficial microbes and how they can be utilised to assist the greenkeeper produce first class conditions, and, last but not least, one of our Scottish members is going to take us through the history of greenkeeper associations in Scotland. A wide and varied programme I am sure you will agree. The cost for the day, including lunch and coffee, has not been set yet but should be under £20 for BIGGA members, a bargain or what! We need a good turnout for this event to avoid losing money, so please come along and bring your Greens Convener, etc. Details will be in the post shortly or the programme and entry form will be in the October magazine, so let's make a great day of it. Finally, if anyone has seen the Summer, please tell it to come up North for a while!

Iain Macleod

Ayrshire

The Autumn outing has been confirmed for Loudoun Golf Club on Tuesday September 22 at a cost of £16.00. The day will consist of the usual format of morning coffee, Texas scramble, lunch, afternoon medal completed with high tea and presentation of prizes. Derek Wilson is on hand to accept your entry, he can be contacted on 01294 276177 so get your entry in for an enjoyable day.

As I pen these notes I am presently clearing out my desk at Beith Golf Club after enjoying a two week hand over period with my old colleague

from Routenburn Golf Club, Marshall Sloss.

I'm sure Marshall will continue to further develop the course at Beith and our best wishes go to him in his new position. I am moving back over the B760 road this time to the Kelburn course with Largs Golf Club. I am thoroughly looking forward to meeting some old and new acquaintances in Largs and the challenge that awaits me in my new position.

I send my apologies to Mark McBride at Beith Golf Club that I was unable to attend the Beith outing there due to my job move. I look forward to catching up with you soon Mark.

Next month's notes will be from our Chairman, Jim Paton. He can be contacted on 01294 823210. I shall be somewhere on the island of Minorca. What did you say! New job and foreign holiday as well. I'm glad my wife had it all booked prior to my appointment. See you soon.

Iain Barr.



Northern Region
Douglas Bell
Tel: 0151 431 0433

North West

I can't let this month's news go by without mentioning The Open at Royal Birkdale. This must be one of the best Open venues for viewing and with the removal of many pine trees and scrub, this has improved the course immensely. The course was in perfect condition, with slick greens cut at 1/8th inch, firm but receptive. The fairways were exceptionally green for the time of the year, (due to the excessive amount of rain) and how nice it was to see them cut in traditional style, lengthwise, instead of looking like a patterned quilt. Chris Whittle, the Head Greenkeeper and his staff, worked hard on creating the rough which had been allowed to grow, creating a further hazard for the players and making the fairways look narrower than they were.

The course proved itself in more ways than one. Firstly, none of the players ran away with exceptional scores, which proved the difficulty of the course. Secondly, and most importantly, the course stood up to the heavy rain that we had for three of the days. The greens showed no signs of flooding, even though squeegees were at the ready and this can only reflect the great work done by Chris and his staff in preparing the course to perfection. I would like to thank the Greenkeeping Support Team for their help, especially the guys who turned out early for raking bunkers and the guys who stayed late for divoting.

Steve Hopkins is on the move from Knutsford GC. Steve will be taking over as Head Greenkeeper at Stand GC in September when Eric Palin retires after, I believe, about 35 years.

Just a reminder that we have the Autumn Tournament at Dean Wood GC, on Thursday September 17. You will need to register no later than September 10. 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 12noon-1pm. The tee is available from 1.30pm and tee times will be allocated on the day. That's it for now, any news or queries ring me on 0151 724 5412.

Bert Cross.

Cleveland

Once again very little news for last month. Brancepeth GC Green keepers' shed was broken into and £9,000 of gear was stolen. The thieves stole the gear at 2.45pm on a very sunny afternoon. Of course, the police said you can forget about getting any of it back. Now there's faith in the system. Up here the police are still looking for Dick Turpin. On a much lighter note, congratulations to Roger Shaw, Course Manager at Ramside GC and his lovely wife Olwyn, on the birth of their second child, a little baby girl who is called Helen and is a healthy 7lb 14. She'll make a nice playmate for Andrew. Both mother and daughter are fine. Roger told me there will be no more now. Of course this was said in confidence but I know it will go no further. Just don't mention shears when he's there.

Well the next time you read my column we will have played our Autumn Tournament which is at Teesside GC on October 13, tee off time 10am. I hope some one will have some news for me, as its hard enough trying to find something to write about.

Kevin (Scoop) Heslop

North Wales

Summer, what's all that about then! It's now the beginning of August and I think we've all had drier winters, I think my mowers have done the equivalent of two seasons cutting this year, I haven't used the irrigation except to see if it still works. Wetting agents? I need drying agents! Fusarium on the greens in July and August, well there's a novelty, I mean I've been in the profession 25 years and never witnessed that before. The only "furse" I usually see on the greens at this time of year is ex-police on index-linked disability pension! Ooh er social comment!

As you can most probably tell, I ain't got much to write about this month, no one's been in touch with any information except the Welsh College. In line with GTC policy for personnel development the college will be offering guidance and support to mature experienced greenkeepers wishing to progress to Level 3 to enable a higher level of work place assessment. This course would be specifically designed for the individual greenkeeper to bring forward evi-

dence from the work place for accreditation of prior learning. Anyone interested should contact either Phil Davies or Graham Wright at the college on 01352 841000.

Well, I'm on holiday next month so don't expect any Section news, unless there is anything really important. As you read this I'll be in an alcoholic haze somewhere in Ibiza. Now where're my wellies. See ya.

Dave Goodridge

Northern

Due to the original President's Day Tournament having to be cancelled due to inclement weather, another date and venue was soon arranged by the Section's President, Mr Mel Guy. The competition was eventually played on July 29 at South Leeds. The weather once again started miserably with rain for the first few groups going out. Eventually the rain cleared up and the sun managed to show its face at times.

The results for the day were as follows; Division 1, 1. Richard Harris; 2. Dave Collins; 3. Glynn Hewitt. Division 2, 1. Robin Smith; 2. John Waite; 3. Alan Baxter. Division 3, 1. Richard Smith (winner of the Bill Mountain Trophy); 2. Andrew Smith; 3. Jim Brown. Trade Prize, 1. Andy Law. Many thanks to Mel for arranging the competition and also for sorting out the prize table. Thanks to everyone for playing at such short notice and making it into such an enjoyable day.

Only the Winter golf on December 9 at Keighley Golf Club remains to be played. This will be followed by our Annual General Meeting. Anyone wishing to book a place please contact me in good time, as these will be limited. Anyone with any information from within the section please contact me at 1 Cockley Meadows, Kirkheaton, Huddersfield, HD5 0LA or phone on 0411 601420 or 01484 317813.

Simon Heppenstall



Midland Region
Peter Larter
Tel: 01480 437507

Midland Region Seminar

Midland Region Seminar, November 18, 1998 will be held at Mentmore Golf & Country Club, near Leighton Buzzard, commencing at 9am. The programme and attendance applications will be sent to BIGGA members in the Midland Region inside this issue of Greenkeeper International magazine.

If members want additional copies of the programme or do not get a copy, please advise the Midland Regional Administrator. The speakers and subjects will be; Eddie Seaward, Head Groundsman at Wimbledon Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, Preparing Wimbledon; Billy

McMillan, Course Manager - Wildwood Golf Club, A Golf Course from Seed to Play; John Farrington, Bailey's of Norfolk - Soil Analyst, Soil Analysis in relation to production of compatible turf dressing; John Westrope, Groundscare Manager - Farming & Agricultural Finance Ltd, Budgeting for New Machinery; John Mullins, Supaturf - Regional Sales Manager, Water Management; Steve Lucas, European Product Manager - Fulcrum, Bacteria in the soil; Jon Allbutt, Health & Safety Expert, Risk Assessment - Where did we go wrong?; Tracey Maddison, BIGGA Membership Services Officer, Membership Services Explained.

Peter Larter

BB&O

The summer golf day at the Oxfordshire sponsored by Avoncrop Amenity Products proved very successful despite our continued bad luck with the weather. Although David was kind enough to allow us to play from the normal tees of the day, Brian was not so forgiving with some of his pin placements causing me much embarrassment! Somebody once told me you should never laugh at another golfer's poor shots. Well obviously my playing partners, Adrian, Brett & Vincent don't abide by this unwritten law because they were almost crying with laughter as I attempted to finish out on the 10th. Having almost holed my second shot from the fairway a solid par looked odds on, however, four putts later a 6 was the outcome I actually three putted from inside a foot! Despite my own misfortune there were some great scores posted and the eventual winner shot 77 gross which was fantastic golf in the testing conditions; 1. Paul Young, 37pts, 2. David Gower, 36pts (last seen riding a horse & wearing a sombrero)! 3. John Scoones, 31pts, 4. Justin Lee (speaks fluent Mexican)? 5. Jim Payne, L.D Paul Young, NP 13th Peter Critchley (superb golf shot over the water), NP 18th Bob Woodward, Wooden Spoon, Matthew Pullen (Pts withheld to save blushes), Best Trade, Tim Webb.

Many thanks to the Oxfordshire for their hospitality shown on the day. The course was fantastic as always which is great credit to David Gower and his team. The food was second to none, thanks to Penny for organising the menu, it really was first class.

Finally, many thanks to Colin White from Avoncrop Amenity for providing all the fabulous prizes, not only to the winners but every competitor was given a keepsake to remember the day, that was a nice touch indeed. Next event is at Harleyford (Marlow) on October 1.

Lindsay Anderson

Midland

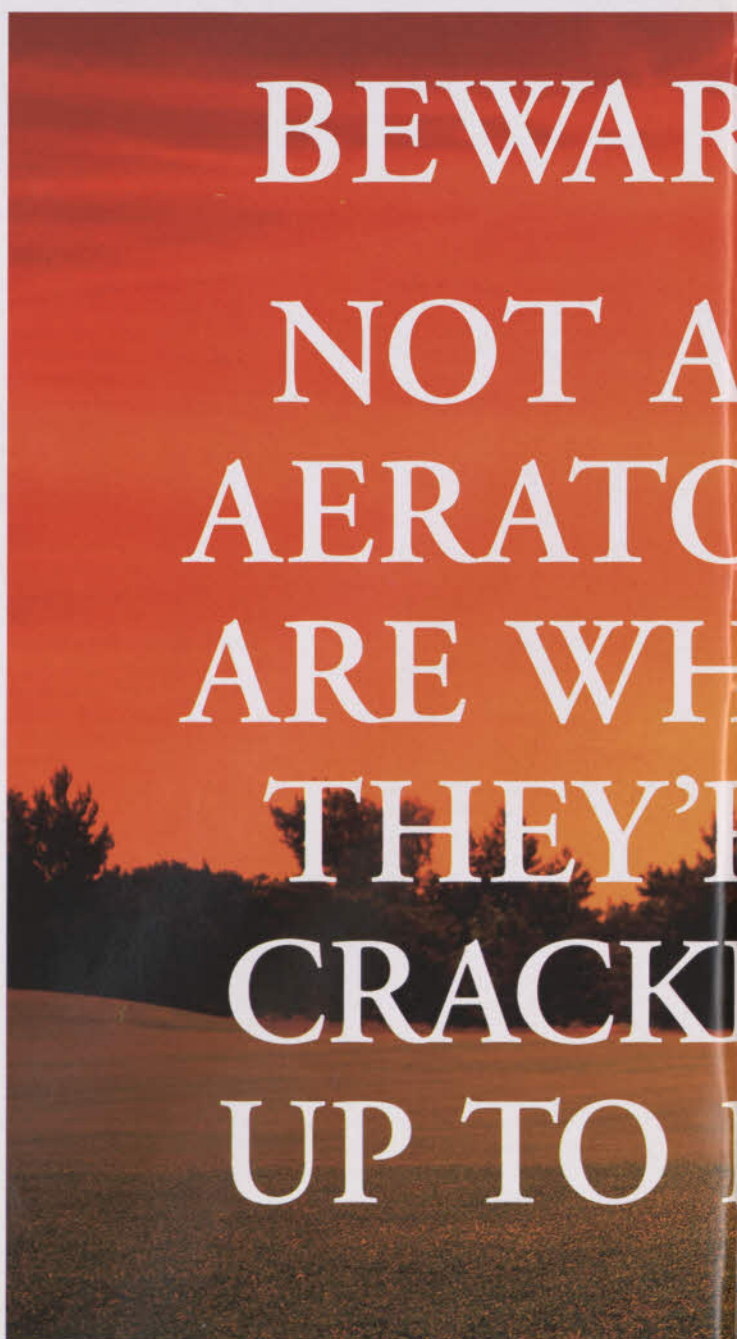
The summer tournament proved

to be a great success, held at the Wrekin Golf Club which was a very demanding course with, in some cases, amazing undulating countryside and views over Shropshire to match. The course was in great shape and many thanks go to all the greenkeeping staff. The evening meal was a real feast and I could safely say it was the best meal the Midland Section has received in a

very long time. Again many thanks to all the members of staff.

The results are as follows- 1. (Gross) Mike Hughes. I. (Nett) Vince Lee; 2. Rod Hunter; 3. John Hooper; 4. Mike Gash. John Mullins, of Supaturf, won the nearest the pin - he was the only person to get the ball on the green!

The planned trip to the Massey Ferguson went ahead and 19 green-



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keepers went along and I am told a very good day was had by all. A big thanks to Mitchell's who sponsored the food at lunch time especially to John Fawkes and John Proffit. I will take this opportunity to remind you that anyone who wishes to play in the Christmas tournament on the 10th December must get their entries in by November 9. You may think this premature but there is

always a full entry very early for this tournament.

It is with great sadness that I have to inform all the members of the Midland Section and anyone who knew Trafford Stonebridge of his sad death on Saturday August 8. Trafford passed away in his sleep after a fight against cancer.

Trafford will be remembered as a great man with a massive sense of

humour to match. He was serving Chairman of the Section and had given many years of service to the Midland Section and to Maxstoke Park where he has left behind many dear friends. Everyone who knew him will find this news a great loss and on behalf of the Midland Section I would like to send our sympathy to his family and friends at this time. Thank you Trafford for

all the amusement and commitment you have given greenkeepers of the Midland Region.

Finally, I will introduce some more new members- Michael Milinczuk, Stephen Marsden, Michael James, Trevor Smith, Terence Finney, Shaun Sutton, Sally Doherty and Christopher Stilgoe.

Jonathan Wood

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Devon & Cornwall

With the summer drawing to a close, our thoughts turn to our Autumn and Winter meeting programme which starts with the Roffey's meeting at Saunton Golf Club on Wednesday, October 14. The morning's golf competition will be a singles Stableford for the D.O. Hunt Trophy. For our non playing members there will be the usual course walk which will leave the club house at approximately 10.30am. Lunch will be from 1pm followed by our afternoon educational talk with the golf presentation and a short Company presentation by Roffeys, our day's sponsor, concluding the day.

As in previous years the Section will hold raffles at its October, December & March meetings with the first prize at our October raffle being a pair of Hi-Tec golf shoes. Please note the changes to our meeting programme listed below; 1. Golfing members to receive starting times before meeting with a draw for partners being introduced to avoid same old groups play-

ing together. This will be done for all meetings including foursome competitions etc. 2. Company & Golf presentation to conclude the day; 3. A levy of £2 will be added to each entry received after the closing date; 4. As some members have problems paying before meetings, they will be able to continue to pay on the day without being levied as long as the entry has been received before the closing date.

Any member who doesn't attend after entering will be invoiced if no payment is received.

Regional educational dates; November 25, Regional Seminar to be held at Cannington College. For more details contact Paula Humphries on 01363 82777.

December 8-9, Golf Course Design to be held at Borringdon Hall Hotel, Plymouth. For more details contact Ken Richardson, BIGGA HQ on 01347 838581. January 19-22, Region's trip to BTME at Harrogate. For more details contact Paula Humphries on 01363 82777. You should have received our new fixture card which has once again been kindly sponsored by P J Flegg. The fixture card has dates of all our forthcoming events.

If you haven't received yours yet please let me know.

Richard Whyman.

South Coast

Our Summer Tournament was held at Bramshaw on Thursday, July 23. The results were as follows; 1. Phil Wentworth and L Hopper; 2. John York and Joe Cooper; 3. Bill Davis and Steve Pellat. Thanks must go to Bramshaw Golf Club for allowing us the courtesy of the course and granting us the use of all their facilities. The course was in excellent condition thanks to Adrian Wiltshire, the Course Manager. Also thanks to Clive Lovell the Head Greenkeeper of the Manor Course. His team did a superb job in preparing the course for us. Our main sponsors for the day were John Deere, New Forest Garden Machinery. They were represented by Nick Clarke. They presented us with an excellent prize table. To our sponsors we thank you for your support. Last but not least, a big thank you to Trevor Smith our tournament organiser. He did a great job in organising the event.

At the prize giving a presentation was made to Gordon Paine. Gordon has recently retired as Head Greenkeeper at Maidenhead Golf Club. Gordon has been a keen supporter of the South Coast Section for a great number of years. I think I can safely say he was one of the Founder members. We have received a letter

from Gordon thanking all members of the South Coast Section for the Tankard that was presented to him. On behalf of the South Coast Section I would like to wish Gordon a long and happy retirement.

Another reminder for the Regional Seminar to be held at Cannington on Wednesday November 25.

The main speaker will be Frank Newbury, who will be speaking on Communications, in particular "Making Committees Work For You." He will also be conducting a Workshop. All applications and enquiries to; Paula Humphries, Truants Cottage, Zeal Monachorum, Crediton, Devon, EX17 6DF, Tel: 01363 82777.

Paula would also like applications and deposits for BTME as soon as possible. As I said in last month's report, "If we can get the support we will run a coach from the South Coast Section."

Our Autumn Tournament will be held at Tidworth Garrison Golf Club on Thursday October 15. It will consist of an 18 hole Stableford. The price for the day will be £15 per head. This will include an evening meal. All applications along with current handicaps, cheques for £15, name and address and telephone number to our Tournament

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