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avoided at all costs. This would be impossible in my position as I have 1.5 hectares of greens spread out over 200 acres, myself and three staff to hand mow and 20 year old mowers to do the job. When you add the fact that saturation golf, starting at around 7 am, is the norm you will appreciate my predicament. Neither my extremely hard working staff, or myself would relish the prospect of significantly adding to our standard 11-hour working day that we presently do for several months in the summer.

■ They are, to start with, very low in microbial activity and this can lead to specific disease problems due to the lack of antagonists and competition to pathogenic organisms.

■ As pointed out by Mark Jones, there are a mass of potential mistakes at the construction stage that can and will lead to additional problems later on.

■ Sand based greens are expensive and time consuming to construct.

But it is not only me that is having problems with their greens (although I must point out, I did greatly exaggerate the symptoms in the article). If there is one thing I can do it is observe. As I visit other courses I see the same problems replicated, especially when they are under resourced and over played. I was recently told of a very highly regarded Course Manager, and I mean one of the very best, state to a large audience that he had rebuilt two greens on his course recently. One was of sand based construction while the other used local soil. He stated that it was the one built with local soil that was performing the best.

Maybe I could be accused of mak-

ing life difficult for greenkeepers who are looking to reconstruct, although I seriously doubt that any committee members or owners would take someone called Sandy McDivot seriously.

On the other hand, maybe I am encouraging greenkeepers to take a closer look at the problems that they may encounter should they embark on the sand based route. I have seen this route followed at other clubs for no other reason than it appeared to be the done thing to do even though their original greens were of a very high quality. The result has been an unmitigated disaster of frightening proportions. Promises of perfection were made and after about a hundred grand has been spent, the result has been a big drop in standards, a totally demoralised work force and a membership that is baying for blood.

Of course, I am not saying that such greens should never be built. They can and are of tremendous value in the right circumstance. However I will stick my neck out and say that a well maintained, established soil based green in this country is as good a green you will find day in and day out anywhere in the world, so why change a winning formula.

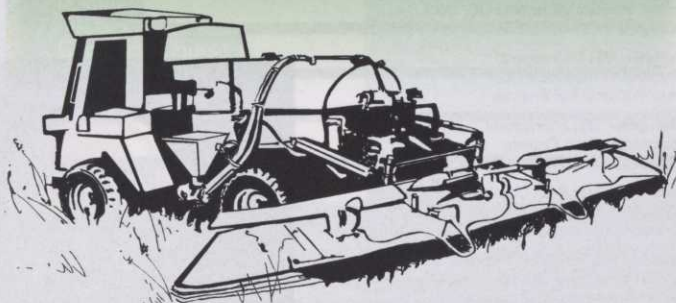
Once again I must apologise for leaving myself so open to misinterpretation in this article. It was poor judgment on my behalf.

Finally in response to Stephen Okula from Tenerife. Thank you very much for inviting me over to visit you. Shall we say two weeks in May and would it be alright to bring the wife and kids?

Sandy McDivot,  
Sludgecombe Pay and Play.

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**May '97:** Data Tagging; Naunton Downs GC; Alternative Spikes; Suspended Water Table Greens; Shallow Aerators; Working in Germany

**June '97:** Drought Survival; Cooden Beach; Monitoring the Weather; Slitters

**July '97:** Royal Troon GC; Speed of Putting Surfaces; Mowers

**August '97:** Maintenance Facilities; Heather Management; Bunker Rakes; Workshops; Architecture; Kedleston Park GC

**September '97:** Accident Reporting; Greens Mowers; Valderrama GC; Links Courses

**October '97:** Environment; Recruitment; Abbeydale GC; Rough Mowers; Soil Analysis

**November '97:** Environment; Competition; Bank Cutting; Risk Assessment; Pumps

**December '97:** Seed Development; Longhirst Hall GC; Toro Awards; Fertiliser Spreaders; Communication

**January '98:** FEGGA Conference; Buying Power Equipment; Elmwood GC; Mobile Phones; Traffic Management; Spraying; Environment

**February '98:** BTME Review; Overseeding; Royal Mid Surrey GC; Drainage; Thatch

**March '98:** Trees, Golf Course Accessories, News from GCSAA, Leamington & County GC, Trevor Smith's BTME Talk

**April '98:** Gleneagles Hotel, Compact Tractors, Environment, Protective clothing, Rain bird, Internet

**May '98:** Greens Mowers, Suspended Water Table Greens, Seeds, Letham Grange Resort, Charterhouse profile, Security and BIGGA's Fund Raising Campaign

**June '98:** Interview with Nick Park, Earthworm special, ATVs, Royal Porthcawl, Grinding

**July '98:** Aeration, Royal Birkdale preview, The importance of research, Architecture

**August '98:** Mill Ride, Fescue, Blowers, Textron, Open Review, Nematodes, Training

**September '98:** Nine holers - Tolladine and Fingle Glen, Turf, Steve Clement profile, Drainage, World Scientific Congress report

**October '98:** Saltex Review, BIGGA Retrospective, Stirling GC, Toro Awards Preview, Tree grants

**November '98:** Royal Opening, Ramsdale Hall GC, Gang Mowers, Hayter International report, Irrigation Systems

**December '98:** Toro Awards, Environment Awards, The Appliance of Science, Engines, Architects, BTME Preview

**January '99:** Pesticide Usage, Life in Colorado, Lyschott Heath GC, Worm Research, Stylo Matchmaker profile, Temporary Greens

**February '99:** Westerham GC; R&A questionnaire results; Finland; grass cutting; BTME99 Review; Bernhard and Co

**March '99:** Loch Lomond, Worm update, GrassRoots, Softspikes, Maintenance facilities, Environment review, Architecture



# An eventful month



Marion and I have just arrived home from spending a week in Canada at the invitation of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association, where I was asked to present a paper at the Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in Toronto - on "Basic Principles of Greenkeeping in the UK."

On arrival in Toronto the sun was shining which made a change from the weather back home, but I soon realised that the sun gave a false impression as the temperature was recorded at 9 degrees below, but the weather apart we were given a warm welcome wherever we went.

This just illustrates the camaraderie that exists among greenkeepers worldwide. We met so many nice people and they gave us the feeling we had known them for years. My time during the day was taken up mostly by the conference and show, but we were taken to see the Niagara Falls by Pelino Scenna and then had lunch at the Burlington Golf and Country Club where Pelino is Superintendent. My wife Marion, however, was able to take in the companion's programme with the other ladies, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

We came together in the evenings for the excellent social programme, the first of which was the President's Reception held at the top of the CN Tower, which is the tallest building in the world... and has a glass floor!

The conference was very well attended with an interesting array of speakers and as the week

progressed it became more and more obvious that greenkeeping in Canada was much closer to methods used in the UK than most other overseas countries. This is largely due to the fact that they are dealing with cool climate grasses, the same as here.

I feel that a closer working relationship with the Canadians could benefit both our associations and our greenkeepers and I would like to see such a relationship develop. The Canadians brought a party of 23 to the BTME in 1999 and maybe we could take a party to their conference and exhibition in year 2000. The cost of such a package will be looked into, so those who would be interested, watch this space.

You will have heard much about the GTC over the last few months, some of it is fact and some just gossip. Until all the facts are available, we cannot speculate the outcome. I do, however, feel it could and should have been handled differently. We, like other parties on the GTC Committee have been kept in the dark. Why, I do not know, but we will keep you up to date as soon as possible.

On the greenkeeping front I can never remember such a wet summer

followed by such a wet winter, and talking to greenkeepers everywhere, it has certainly been a struggle to get the essential work done before the start of the season and has certainly given no chance of picking up on extra work which is normal at this time of year.

The only thing which makes it feel a little better is that everyone is in the same boat. This of course is little comfort when your members start to grumble about early season conditions.

This brings me to my pet subject that somehow we must find a way of helping the golfers to understand more about the turf they play on. If only to make them aware that golf is the only sport played on turf all year round. They may then have a better feel for the greenkeeper's concerns and problems in trying to provide good playing conditions without a closed season when the grasses are normally dormant and therefore more susceptible to wear and damage.

Gordon Child

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