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Expanding horizons through the Dreer award

My name is Mieke Darnaske, a Senior Plant Science Major at Cornell University.

My field of interest is Golf Course Management. Currently, I am in the process of applying for the Dreer Scholarship for students in any Horticulture field of study.

The Dreer Award allows for one student from Cornell University to spend at least one year in a foreign country, studying a field of interest to them. The student must design a programme citing work or internship arrangements, travel expenses and most importantly the reason for travelling to the intended country(s).

Travelling to the United Kingdom to study the different aspects of Golf Course Management will allow me to have a better understanding

of the history of golf. As my family recently built an 18 hole course in Upstate New York, it is important to develop a strong appreciation for management in foreign countries, as well as in the United States.

I have worked on all aspects of golf course construction, as well as standard mowing operations, flower garden design and installation and have acted as assistant club house manager. The Dreer Award will give me the opportunity to enhance my knowledge and experience upon returning to my family's course.

Along with my academic studies, this spring I will be working to certify the Cornell University Golf Course with the International Audubon Society. The certification process will be a learning experience not only for me, but also for the

Superintendent, David Hicks, and the University.

This will not be the first time I have spent time in a foreign country. During 1994-1995, I spent one year in Wageningen, the Netherlands as a Rotary Foreign Exchange Student. I believe my language skills and international experience will be an asset to me if I am awarded this scholarship. I feel my experiences both on and off the golf course will also benefit you and your course.

The interests which I seek to expand on through this scholarship are:

- Clubhouse management
- Golf course maintenance and restoration
- Golf course horticulture and flower bed designs

I seek both paid and non-paid internships at up to four courses over the period of one year. If there is interest from your course to work together with me, or if you may know of a interested course or company, contact me at:

Mieke A. Damaske 7067 Boughton Rd. Victor NY 14564 United States
 Tel:-1(716)-657-7867 Fax-1(716)-657-6735
 e-mail-damgolf@hotmail.com

Thank you for your time.

Mieke Damaske,
 Victor, New York

McDivot 1



As a member in good standing of BIGGA, I take exception to the article in the January issue of Greenkeeper International entitled "Sand Green Destruction" by "Sandy McDivot".

I have always enjoyed the author's articles in the past. He has an admirable flair for the written word, and his astute observations on the state of our industry and outspoken opinions (albeit under a pseudonym) are a much desired breath of fresh air in the otherwise stifled atmosphere of golf politics.

In his past articles, Sandy McDivot always had a firm grasp of his subject matter, and seemed to me to be someone speaking from an informed position. In the case of "Sand Green Destruction" however I can forthrightly state that any demonstrable knowledge of sand green maintenance is sadly lacking. I base this on my own 15 years of building and managing sand based greens.

To begin, McDivot complains of greens that puddle up and a "huge splat of a pitch mark". The only way that happens on a USGA green is if you are throwing out way too much water. Likewise the *Poa annua* infestation, excessive spiking, black layer and *Fusarium* that McDivot describes in the article are all symptoms of chronic over watering. Any turf school graduate could point that out.

Try field capacity, Sandy, and not saturation.

McDivot would do well to read the USGA literature on the desired level of irrigation.

Then the author says he was forced to apply "obscene quantities of fertiliser", and even worse - he had to do it in the autumn! Well, when exactly do you fertilise bentgrass? High summer? And just what is an "obscene" amount? A half an ounce a thousand? Two tons an acre? Further, what fertiliser is he applying? Ammonium nitrate? Cow manure? We are left to wonder.

Regarding fertility levels, one constructive suggestion I could make to anyone with sand greens is to "spoon feed", applying small amounts, (ie 0.5oz N/M, depending on soil analysis) at frequent intervals, even weekly. This will avoid nitrogen-induced disease incidence and the surge of green growth McDivot describes.

I have never seen a case of the described thatch build up when the correct management procedures of aeration, verticutting and top dressing were applied. This latter practice isn't mentioned at all in the article. Here's a clue, Sandy: Regular, light top dressing has been proven to reduce thatch, improve disease resistance, improve ball holding capability, reduce grain and smooth those old spike and ball marks. Try it!

If it's Take All Patch that you're worried about. I've obtained 100% control with alternating applications of Bayleton (2.5

kg/ha) and Rubigan (3.0 l/ha) supplemented with ammonium sulphate at 30.0 kg/ha, all on seven day intervals. It took about three months to disappear completely, not so many years as McDivot says, and the total cost didn't exceed £2,000, hardly exorbitant in this day and age. This may not work in all situations, but it certainly cleared up the problem for me.

Speaking of heavy play, we are presently doing over 200 rounds a day on a public course where the soft spike policy is cheerfully ignored and no golfer takes particular care to pick up his feet or repair his pitch marks. We change holes three times a week, or about every 450 golfers on average. This is on sand greens which don't even meet USGA specifications, and they remain both playable and attractive.

We are managing "Pennlinks" creeping bentgrass in a sub-tropical climate for which the species is entirely unsuited. We mow at five mm, the greens roll nine feet on the Stimpmeter and, oh yes, they are absolutely free of *Poa* (which does grow here) or any other weeds for that matter without an ounce of herbicide.

For decades the USGA Green Section has worked diligently through scientific research to develop the best possible growing medium for golf greens. This is meant to benefit both the Course Manager and the golfer. I spend a

considerable amount of time and effort to convince the powers that be to the necessary expense in constructing USGA greens, and it dismays me to see my arguments undermined by ignorance.

I believe it is irresponsible to publish articles, which contradict the fundamentals of sound agronomic principles by an individual who is either uninformed or incompetent. I find it distressing that a professional and reputable publication would carry such misinformation. Printing anecdotal evidence - moreover from an anonymous source - that flies in the face of proven industry standards is a disservice to this organisation.

I understand why the author wishes to remain anonymous, but he could do himself and everyone else in golf a favour by consulting with someone who truly understands USGA golf greens. I am acquainted with several knowledgeable people in the UK who I would be happy to recommend.

Alternatively, I invite the author to visit us here in the Canaries, to observe first hand, the successful management of sand based bentgrass greens.

After all, it's better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

Stephen Okula
 Golf Course Superintendent,
 Golf Las Americas, Tenerife,
 Spain

McDivot 2

I refer to the article in January edition of Greenkeeper International, Sand Green Destruction, by Mr Sandy McDivot. I would like now to make a few comments of my own about his views.

My first point is Mr McDivot. I don't understand why you have to be anonymous when writing in a magazine such as ours. Is it that you feel more secure and therefore more able to criticise your fellow colleagues in greenkeeping? I am unclear as to the intention of your article. Is it that you hate all modern constructed greens and therefore

you would have us all revert back to the old turn of the century standards?

Your comments were not without some merit as you did your best to highlight some of the problems that the modern day greenkeeper has to contend with but I am of the opinion that your condescending style of communication was ill thought out and unhelpful. This was the case particularly with your recommendations, however lighthearted, about the use of illegal mercury based fungicide and alcohol.

To Scott and the team. We have an

excellent magazine so let's keep its content at the fore front of our industry and not resort to this kind of destructive unnamed twaddle.

I have a final message to Mr McDivot.

You had a golden opportunity to teach us something and therefore enrich our life as a greenkeeper, but you missed the mark by a mile.

Billy McMillan
 (and proud to say it)
 Wildwood Country Club

McDivot 3

After reading "Sandy McDivot's" hatchet job on sand based greens, I felt I had to write to level things up.

After all it is only right to read both sides of the story, especially when one side is so full of generalisations. It makes me think that "Sandy" is no greenkeeper but a fully paid up member of the tabloid press.

I am the first to admit that there are many sand based greens in the UK which have failed for many reasons;

1. Poor quality root zone.
2. The incompatibility of root zone/blinding layer.
3. The incompatibility of blinding layer/drainage carpet.
4. Greens constructed with improper machinery.
5. Greens constructed during difficult weather conditions.

Many of these can be put down to a dilution of specification, for whatever reason (usually financial).

We then move on to management practices. We as Course Managers/Greenkeepers have always had to be adaptable and never more so with the maintenance of free-draining sand based greens.

Fertiliser applications should be little and often. The same can be said for Verti-cutting, top-dressing. A sympathetic cutting height (5/16") should be used for a full season at least, after all we are dealing with a young plant. The use of triple greens mowers should be avoided at all costs due to the weight of these machines and the quick appearance of

triplex rings.

Communication with the members/players is vital to educate the golfers as to why you are doing these things.

Aeration should be carried out as normal but a move to micro-tining would be of great benefit. Over-seeding should be carried out as normal to re-introduce the original seed/turf cultivars.

Pin positions should be changed more often to limit wear. Fertiliser selection is crucial.

No Phosphates and regular use of organic liquids or seaweed from day one should be a matter of course.

Fungicide use should be strictly limited or better still don't use them at all. Why kill millions of useful bacteria when you have spent time and effort building them up. I have not used fungicide for nine years.

It can be done with careful/thoughtful management.

As for spike/divot marks, if you reach a situation where your sward has thinned out these blemishes will obviously become more noticeable.

The STRI uses a wear machine to imitate spike marks, so the league tables for cultivars do reflect a grasses resistance to wear and tear. There are many courses who are thinking of reconstruction due to drainage limitation, small putting surfaces or just plain bad greens.

So why should they re-build and use the old turf as a putting surface when better species are available. True, the old turf will get up to speed quicker but we

shouldn't be looking short term, after all the greens will still be there in 50/60 years if built properly in the first place.

At the moment there are many Greenkeepers who are in the process of trying to persuade their Golf club/committee to start a reconstruction programme. "Sandy McDivot's" (his real name would have been nice) article will have made their job even harder or maybe impossible.

I talk from personal experience when I say sand based greens can be a great success. They have to be constructed using the finest consistent materials available, (not built down to a price) when weather conditions are favourable.

The golfers/members must understand the task that lies ahead and must not pressure the greenkeeper for a quick fix. Finally the greenkeeper/manager must be able to adapt his management practices from green to green.

After all he may end up with 12 soil/6 sand greens and they will never behave the same way. This is something "Sandy McDivot" is obviously incapable of doing.

Maybe he should move aside and let the "village idiot" take over.

Mark Jones
 (real name)
 Preston Golf Club
 (real golf club)

McDivot 4

I am writing to ask you to pass on my heartiest congratulations to Sandy McDivot, of Sludgecombe Pay and Play, on his superb article in the January edition of Greenkeeper International.

I am sure anyone who has had anything to do with sand greens will have had similar experiences and will find it very easy to relate to.

Sandy seems to have this ability to weigh these situations up and when putting pen to paper his thoughts hit the bullseye.

Richard Heaslip
 Chigwell, Essex

Help needed with wind information

To all Scottish members. If you have any stories or photographs of damage caused during the January 1999 storms that hit the U.K. please let me hear about them, as I think there will be some interesting bits of information to tell our members. So if you have got anything to tell, drop me a line and any photographs. This would be much appreciated and we could put them in a future issue of Greenkeeper International.

Chris Yeaman
 Scottish Region Magazine
 Liaison Officer, 74 Muirfield
 Drive, Gullane, East Lothian,
 EH31 2HJ

Congrats to the mighty Quinn

I write in a personal capacity to congratulate John Quinn, Course Manager at Elmwood for his recent achievements of being runner up in the Toro Excellence in Greenkeeping Award, together, with gaining Master Greenkeeper status. John is an enthusiast and an inspiration to all of us who work with him.

Colin Mackay
 Assistant Course Manager,
 Elmwood GC, Cupar



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You can never have too much advice which helps you live a little more bearably in the dark winter months

Customer *satisfaction*



For any greenkeeper worth his salt, the start of a new season is always laced with excitement for what lies ahead, while providing time to reflect on the year that has passed, to learn from (sometimes bitter) experiences and to formulate plans for combating the upcoming player onslaught.

Certainly, 1998 will go down as the year of "The Big Soak", with Mother Nature emptying more rain upon us than in recent living history, or so it seemed. Into 1999, the rain continues unabated, the hard lesson learned by many being that water still refuses to flow uphill, while for those unfortunate courses situated "below sea level", there's a lesson to be learned from the Dutch, who know a thing or two about draining lowlands, with their ingenious use of Archimedean screw pumps.

Rain-sodden courses have indeed caused many golfers to be thoroughly grumpy, especially those seven-day-a-week seniors, who like a bad whine (sic) often get bitter with age. And who do they blame for course closures, temporary greens, or tees moved a few yards away in order to protect from destructive forces? Why, it's the poor old greenkeeper, who has the nerve to fail to control the elements!

All of this greatly focuses the mind on keeping the customer satisfied, which is itself as much a skill - a learning experience, if you like - as maintaining course machinery to a required high degree of efficiency. Writing this in January, there's a gale lashing in from the east, it's pouring (again), the course is waterlogged (again), while the Sunday Telegraph

Customer satisfaction



has just published a doom and gloom article concerning no less than 90 golf courses being up for sale at knock-down prices, apparently an albatross around the necks of their present owners.

Just yesterday, though it rained too hard to play, there were a few stalwarts hanging around the clubhouse. Having first solved the world's economic problems, they rounded on me to explain, with 200,000 new players having entered the game in the past five years, why golf course casualties are so high.

"Aren't there too many courses?" they asked. Well, some clearly were built in the wrong place and certainly many spent too much, yet today more rounds are being played by more golfers than ever before, with that trend continuing on an upward spiral. New courses are still being built, and indeed doing very nicely, thank you, while very many others are undergoing more than superficial facelifts, so there aren't too many dead ones, just some that are poorly run by people who don't really want to run a golf course, just own one.

We should not be worrying about golf in decline. If a plateau is perceived, well, these things often happen before the next boom. The cold facts are that some golf courses don't

deserve to succeed; with Owner/Managers making the assumption that golfers will put up with anything just to get a game. Not anymore, they won't, for while most golfers may be hooked, they are not barmy. Like some of these clubs with FOR SALE boards out; they have fine facilities, but often are poorly managed, usually by uppity accountants. When grey-suit management enters meltdown, the cycle shows a drop in business, a cut in prices and a cut in maintenance. If that doesn't work, slash prices again and virtually eliminate maintenance. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to work this out as a recipe for disaster. Golfers have figured it out.

What they've figured out also is that they now have a very wide choice of places to play. Well-run and well-maintained courses can still charge a decent sum, and get no objections.

A poorly run facility though, be it corporate, public or member-owned, will often look for a scapegoat, with the greenkeeper the one whose head is placed on the chopping block.

Here's one worthwhile tip. By recording every single work command, including every course of action (and every reaction), you can often rescue the day. The saving grace, of course, is that poorly run golf facilities rarely get

ploughed up. Once in place, they stay; with one man's folly becoming another man's good deal. Assuming your work has been conducted with patient efficiency, continue greenkeeping, albeit with a new owner.

Before your members awaken to spring, when again they'll start those unrealistic demands for the course to mirror Augusta National, take a further look at the history of 1998. Learning from it, now might be the time to get lines of communication with the members well and truly open. You might begin by explaining exactly what a cold, raw, wet season does for the growth of the sward, explaining that April is still a winter month.

With spring and summer remaining as distant dreams, this is the time to tell players about soil temperatures, and that even you cannot force Nature to warm up before she's ready. Use bulletin boards and newsletters and never miss an opportunity to explain your views in person with any new committee incumbent, even if you view the latest committee re-shuffle as akin to re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Keep pessimistic views to yourself, but colour optimism with a large slice of realism. It won't hurt.

These first early months should also present a good opportunity to look at traffic management. You'll know the path of least resistance your members take, how they enter and exit greens and tees and how their movement effects wear. To institute traffic control measures now, by spreading the load over a wider area, rather than waiting until turf is injured beyond simple remedy in the growing season, will pay dividends, even if only 50% of your members fall in and co-operate. By simple mathematics, 50% compliance means 50% less wear.

Some greenkeepers look at bad weather as a grand opportunity to undertake some tasks best hidden from prying eyes. For example, the best cure for poor circulation around greens with too many overhanging trees is, by common consent, use of the aptly-titled chainsaw twosome: "Thunder" and "Lightning", though this year there's a new one that might take some beating - tree root wet rot!

Don't lose heart, tackle each task according to its level of irritation. While the nature of greenkeeping quite properly is to exercise patience, never forget the prayer of golfers -

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Environment competition aims for ecological excellence

The 1999 BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, won in 1998 by Lindrick Golf Club, has a new co-sponsor unveiled at a press conference during the show. Amazone Ground Care will continue as a co-sponsor which was started by Amazone Managing Director, Rod Baker, in the mid 90s but will be joined this year by The Grass Roots Trading Company who replace Rhône-Poulenc Amenity who co-sponsored the event for the last two years. "Since its inception the Golf Environment Competition has really caught the imagination of the country's golf clubs and the

quality of entry has risen steadily. This is particularly gratifying because it is a measure of the increasing importance golf clubs are placing on environmental and ecological issues," said BIGGA Chairman, Gordon Child.

"I would like to pay tribute to Rod Baker, of Amazone, for his undoubted commitment to the cause of golf environmental matters and to Rhône Poulenc who supported the competition in '97 and '98. I would also like to welcome Jamie Bennett, and the Grass Roots Trading Company, for joining as a co-sponsor and feel confident that the BIGGA



GRASS ROOTS
— TRADING COMPANY —

Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and the Grass Roots Trading Company, will go from strength to strength," said Gordon. Rod Baker instigated the Amazone Golf Environment Competition in 1995 and has been a driving force behind the co-sponsored event since it began in '97. "I'm delighted with the success of the competition which was highlighted when the winning golf clubs received their awards from HRH The Duke of York at a presentation last year. It was a proud moment for me and a fitting tribute to the golf clubs who do such a great deal to preserve and maintain their environment," said Rod. Jamie Bennett is delighted that his company has the opportunity to put something back into the game of golf. "We jumped at the opportunity to become a co-sponsor because, as a company which is well aware of the environmental responsibilities of golf, we feel the this competition plays a major role in highlighting the excellent work undertaken by golf clubs," said Jamie. As in previous years the competition will be judged by STRI Ecology Officer, Bob Taylor, and English Nature.

Competition launched for architecture students

The importance of the role played by golf course architects in the creation and maintenance of quality courses round the world is being recognised in a new national award scheme.

The British Institute of Golf Course Architects (BIGGA) and worldwide turf machinery and irrigation products manufacturer The Toro Company, have teamed up to produce 'The Toro Student Golf Course Architect Award'. Announcing the new initiative at BTME, BIGGA's President Howard Swan said that the award would be competed for by students studying on a two-year post-graduate diploma course in golf course architecture at Merrist Wood College.

He said that the course, set up by BIGGA, is unique in the world and produced its first graduates last April. It is an international course, with five students in the current intake coming from the USA, Japan, Germany and Scandinavia. New international students joining in February will come from as far afield as Chile and South Africa, as well as emerging golf nations such as Slovenia and Croatia. "I'm delighted that this unique course for our profession is being recognised by a company of the worldwide stature of Toro. I know that our students will benefit greatly from this award and the experience it will give them," said Howard.

Rex Hansen, International Marketing Manager for Irrigation Products, said: "Toro is supporting this award as part of its commitment to education and training in the golf industry. As with our support for greenkeepers and Course Managers, we believe it's important for us to be working with architects."

Bob Buckingham, Toro's European Sales Manager, said: "Golf course architects are key people in the industry. They are responsible for the development of new courses and we want them to understand the use of irrigation systems and turf maintenance machinery." The first recipient of the new award will be chosen from students who will complete their course in January 2000. An expert judging panel made up of representatives of BIGGA and Toro, with the course's educational manager, will assess the young golf course architects on their academic achievement on the course, the standard of their presentation and project dissertation and by personal interview. For the winning student, there's the career-enhancing kudos of becoming 'The Toro Student Golf Course Architect' and prize of an all-expenses-paid visit to Toro's impressive worldwide headquarters in Minneapolis and its irrigation division in Riverside, California, USA. There also will be visits to famous golf venues such as the Los Angeles Golf & Country Club and the Olympic Club, in San Francisco.



New supporters go for gold



BIGGA announce five new Golden Key Supporters at the show and they were presented with their plaques by key note speaker Frank Dick at the Chairman's Lunch in the Majestic Hotel. Joining the existing group of Golden Key Companies are Stylo Matchmaker, Rolawn, Bernhard and Co Ltd, Amenity Technology and The Grass Roots Trading Company. "It is thanks to the support of key companies within the industry that BIGGA has a healthy Education and Development Fund and I am delighted to welcome the five Golden Key Supporters into the BIGGA family," said Executive Director, Neil Thomas. "It is only through the support of these companies that BIGGA can fund its many educational initiatives which include the production of books and videos, as well as ensuring that the many excellent training courses at regional and national level can be run at a cost to the individual far lower than would otherwise be the case," added Neil.

Four of the new Golden Key Companies will be profiled within the pages of Greenkeeper International over the next few months while Stylo Matchmaker, who have just launched a range of work and leisure wear under the BIGGA banner, appear in the current issue of the magazine. The complete list of Golden Key Companies is as follows:- Amazone Ground Care, Amenity Technology, Barenbrug, Bernhard and Co Ltd, Charterhouse Turf Machinery Ltd, Grass Roots Trading Company, Hayter Ltd, John Deere Ltd, Kubota UK Ltd, Mommersteeg International, Ocmis Irrigation UK Ltd, PGA European Tour, Rainbird, Rhône-Poulenc Amenity, Rigby Taylor Ltd, Rolawn, Scotts, Stylo Matchmaker, Supaturf Products Ltd, Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products, The Toro Company. The Silver Key Companies are:- Avoncrop Amenity Products, Ernest Doe & Sons, Lambert/Fenchurch, Sisis Equipment Ltd and Weed Free.

Hayter dinner

The annual Hayter dinner held in the George Hotel on the Tuesday of Harrogate week saw Gibsons Machinery Sales crowned Dealer of the Year for the third year in succession. Stuart Mercer accepted the award. The Outstanding Dealer of the Year was BS Mowers of Bristol, with Steve George accepted the award. Overseas Partner of Distinction was Commonwealth War Graves Commission with Derek Parker, Director of Horticulture accepted the award. Salesman of the Year was Alistair Rowell, of Carrs Agriculture in Hexham. Tony Hazard, Hayter's Divisional Director from Tomkins presented the awards while Geoffrey Fletcher, of Drake & Fletcher, in Kent gave the vote of thanks.

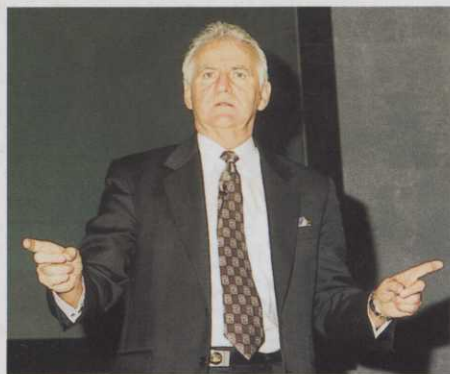
Mastering their profession

BIGGA'S elite band of Master Greenkeepers has been swollen to 20 thanks to its biggest ever single intake, with four new greenkeepers entitled to carry the letters MG after their name.



Sid Arrowsmith, of Frilford Heath Golf Club; David Duke of Seddinersee Golf and Country Club, Germany; John Quinn, of Elmwood College Golf Club, and David Hannam, of Royal Eastbourne Golf Club, each received a plaque and a Master Greenkeeper blazer badge from BIGGA Chairman Gordon Child during the National Education Conference in

the Majestic Hotel. The title "Master Greenkeeper" is a sign of someone at the top of the profession and can only be bestowed once he has completed 10 years as a Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper; collected 200 credits, achieved by acquiring qualifications, attending educational seminars; had his golf course inspected by another Master Greenkeeper and passed a rigorous written exam. Of the new intake, David Duke is the first based in continental Europe and is a protégé of another Master Greenkeeper, David Whitaker, of The Wisley; while last October, John Quinn was a runner-up in the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping. The 20 current Master Greenkeepers include five from the United States, one is from Germany with the other 14 from the United Kingdom.



Above: The many faces of Frank Dick.



Above: An audience held spellbound by Frank Dick's performance



Left: The week was graced by the presence of Carl Burtner, President - Worldwide of Textron Turf Care and Specialty Products who paid a flying visit. Andrew Sunaway, Sales Director, Gordon Child, Carl Burtner and Peter Bell, Marketing Director

Sunday January 17

Can this really be our 11th exhibition? It surely is and time to hit the road again for Harrogate. For me it is a very short journey but I am mindful of all those already on the road from distant parts. The weather seems set fair but on past experience I take nothing for granted. Already my Education and Training Manager has taken to his sick bed and I know we are going to miss Ken this week with five days of continuous educational programmes. Still, on with conference registration which seems to run more smoothly than ever thanks to Sami. The early comers are already well bedded in and many heading for the swimming pool. Tonight is informal and an enjoyable dinner is followed for many by the traditional late night at the bar - just building up for the week ahead.

Monday January 18

With Ken absent I suddenly find myself in conference mode checking that all is in order. A new Chairman, this year in Dr Mike Canaway, and we agree on the need to keep the programme running to time - this always contributes to the professionalism of the event. Mike proves to be an excellent Chairman giving his expert opinion when the need arises. I determine to make sure that he is reinvented for BTME 2000. The speakers present a varied programme and again one is impressed with the presentations of our own members. The highlight for me is the presentation of the Master Greenkeeper Certificates to David Hannam, David Duke, Sidney Arrowsmith and John Quinn. Our Master Greenkeepers now total 20 since the incep-

tion of the scheme in 1990. The workshop programme is proceeding well and the lunch break confirms yet again the quality of the food at the Majestic. With many of the bedrooms having been refurbished all is well at the hotel now under the control of a new group. Thankfully Frank Flaherty is still in charge and he knows only too well what greenkeepers like...! If the food and accommodation are good, then my worries are far less! This certainly applies at the Majestic and I believe at the other hotels we use. So to one of the highlights of the week, the Conference Dinner. Our after dinner speaker Ian Shuttleworth, the solicitor from Ilkley, proves a great hit - getting it just right for our particular audience. We welcome Andrew Sunaway and Peter Bell from Textron mindful of the fact our Learning Experience programme would just not happen without the company's great support. It is then the second late night of our stamina-sapping programme. It is telling on the staff as well before the exhibition has even got underway. Tony is flat on his back and won't be in this week. Two down.

Tuesday January 19

Conference and workshops continue. Down at the halls it is getting very busy but Jenny is taking the flak and keeping cool. The conference ends with a lively question and answer session. Short Board of Management meeting to elect Chairman and Vice Chairman. It is no change. Gordon has enjoyed his year so much that he offers to stand for another and is unanimously re-

elected as is Elliott as Vice Chairman. We all rush off to see Hall Q which will welcome our exhibitors and visitors in 2000. Parties are shown around while beer and burritos are consumed. Early impressions are that Hall Q is being favourably received judging by the queue of potential exhibitors jostling for Jenny and Cheryl's attention (or are they handing out signed photographs?). A quick change and off to the sixth Hayter Dinner in the George Hotel ably hosted as usual by Kim Macfie and Barbara Garton. Meanwhile the Past Chairmen's Dinner is conducted in its normal lively style but, I am assured, in slightly lower key than the previous year's event which was rather exciting by all accounts!

Wednesday January 20

We are ready for the off at 9am when the Chairman cuts the ribbon. This year we have reintroduced the Keynote Speaker session and the event has received maximum publicity. Frank Dick proves to be quite brilliant in front of a large audience. If people aren't motivated by this session then they never will be. It is clear that videos of the session are going to be in great demand. We'll put this one down as a success! Off to the Chairman's Luncheon which finishes in record time at 1.45pm. I am always conscious that, while enjoying a pleasant lunch, our company representatives are naturally keen to get back to their stands with as little delay as possible. Frank Dick makes the Golden and Silver Key company presentations. Back to the halls which are busy and a great atmosphere. Time to prepare for the AGM. This

goes smoothly and is enlivened with the new customary contribution from Cecil George. Jim Fry receives his Honorary Membership plaque. The Chairman welcomes Kerran Daly to the Board of Management in place of Robin Greaves and also Mark Dobell, Financial Secretary at the R & A, as our new Guardian. I am not finished yet as I have a final FEGGA Board meeting to attend. I have been providing back-up support to FEGGA since its inception in March 1996 and now with the basis of its administration in place it is time for me to cease my direct involvement. I shall miss the company of Dean, Per-Olof, Elise, Claus, Roland and Tommy but I guess I will continue to meet up with them on the greenkeeping circuit.

Thursday January 21

Ken reappears - excellent news - or does he just want to come to see Showwaddy? No BTME Steering Committee meeting over breakfast by popular vote but I am up early anyway preparing for the day ahead. The sun has got his hat on - quite the best weather at any BTME - I can't quite believe it! Off to the FEGGA AGM. Per-Olof Ljung elected Chairman with Claus Detlef Ratjen elected as Vice Chairman. Roland Favrat remains a Board member and is joined by Jean Michel Herrissé from AGREF and Jo Bedford from GCSAI. Tommy Lindelof is appointed Honorary Administrator and Dean Cleaver Honorary PR Officer. Mid-afternoon brings a press briefing where Scott announces our major competitions and awards for 1999. Then I link up with Sami to ensure that preparations for