

This month, Ken Richardson gives a timetable of which educational items are up and coming

tables

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 24 and 25 October 1999.

Refund of Education/training fees

Funds are still available for those wishing to claim a refund of education/training fees. 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 1999, 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.

Health and Safety

New Health and Safety regulations continue to be published. Two of the newer sets concern the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER 98) and the Lifting Operations Regulations 1998 (LOLER). Both PUWER 98 and LOLER relate to work equipment in all work sectors.

They maintain and improve existing standards eg. there is now an absolute requirement to carry out lifting operations safely. The additions to PUWER 98 include:

- Minimising risks from roll over
- Preventing startup from unauthorised persons
- Providing a device for braking and stopping
- Providing adequate devices to improve a driver's field of vision, where necessary for safety

LOLER require that lifting equipment has adequate strength and stability; requires risks from positioning and installing of lifting equipment to be minimised and requires that lifting equipment be marked with its safe working load. Safe Use of Work Equipment: Approved Code of Practice and Guidance and Safe use of Lifting Equipment: Approved Code of Practice and Guidance, are available from HSE books or from the BIGGA Library.

Stop Press

Andy Campbell, Course Manager at Carden Park has arranged a visit to Carden Park, by Thomas Maloney, Senior Extension Associate in Human Resources at Cornell University. Mr Maloney, who is the co author of the GCSAA's book Human Resource Management for Golf Course Superintendents, has agreed to conduct a seminar on Leadership and Motivation at Carden Park, on Monday 26 April 1999.

The Seminar is free to all BIGGA members but will of main interest to Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers.

Watch out for further information in the next edition of Greenkeeper International or contact Ken Richardson at BIGGA HOUSE.

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Ken Siems invited Scott MacCallum to visit the stunning Loch Lomond Golf Club and took the opportunity to explain some of the hurdles which he and his staff have to overcome to keep it looking its best

Myth and magic



Above: A picturesque bridge spans a brook at the 17th

Nothing is ever quite as straight forward as it would seem. But then why should it be? It would only make for a boring life and very few of us would want that. Certainly not Ken Siems, Course Superintendent at Loch Lomond Golf Club, and a man who knows better than most that things aren't ever straight forward.

Take his golf course as an example. Loch Lomond would be a strong favourite for any golf course beauty pageant it ever entered. It is absolutely gorgeous, but it's located in one of the wettest, dullest parts in all of Britain.

And there's more...

Myth and magic

Right: A spectacular aerial view showing the clubhouse and the Loch



Above: Ken Siems

Below: Beauty wherever you look



If you visit the course you'd be hard pressed to find a blade of grass out of place and greens so smooth you could play snooker on them, but look beneath the surface and you'd find conditions which would have the groundsman at a municipal putting green wondering how he'd ever produce anything playable.

As I said, nothing is ever as straightforward as it might seem.

"This site is unique in many many ways," explained Ken, in his distinctive Canadian accent, as we sat in the Loch Lomond Mess Room.

"It's probably one of the wettest areas in the UK for a golf course. Last year we had close to 93 inches of rain, and that was continuous throughout the entire year."

Think about that for a second. That's nearly eight feet! They could just about employ the services of Jacques Cousteau as a greenkeeper.

Ken continued.
"Sunlight is another thing. This is one of the most overcast, cloudy areas in the UK. There is a submarine base over in Helensburgh and one of the reasons it's there is that

the cloud cover prevents the spy satellites from seeing them. You can count the number of sunshine days we had last year on both hands and sunshine is one of the most critical elements in growing turf grass."

While you are making a mental note not to bother packing the Factor 15 next time you head to the west of Scotland let Ken give you some more information about the conditions in which he and his nine full time greenkeepers, two mechanics, a conservationist, arborist and administrator work.

"There is a lack of wind because of the shelter from the mountain, while the highest soil temperature we got last year was 58 Fahrenheit and that was in August. This is also a tree site so air circulation is poor."

But to produce such fine results in such unfavourable conditions everything else must be spot on. Mustn't it?

Well not exactly.

"One of the most important factors we have to deal with is the poor soil and the inconsistent construction."

What. Loch Lomond? The course which has been voted the finest new course in the country? Tom Weiskopf's masterpiece?

"All I do is look at the lab tests results which I have - I don't like guessing on this. Just to give you a rough example the percolation rate on the greens average out at 1.5 to 2.5 millimetres per hour. A USGA green should average at 250-300 millimetres per hour. That gives you a rough idea."

To give themselves as much chance as possible of mastering such a difficult set of circumstances Ken and the team conducted a greens' audit to provide as much information as possible to help them.

"We got the hole changer and took cores all the way down into the gravel on about seven or eight areas of a



green and measured how fast the water would move through it.

"In some cases we couldn't find any gravel, but in others it would take 30 minutes for the water to percolate through. In some cases it went straight through," explained Ken.

Then, as if to reinforce the point that he'd made so eloquently over the previous few minutes of the conversation, he added.

"If there is a site where you'd want fast draining greens, it would be this site."

Like so many courses built around the same time the baton of ownership has passed through more than one pair of hands. In this case the Bank of Scotland ran one of the legs before passing on to Ken's employer, The Lyle Anderson Company, whose other golf developments include the prestigious Desert Mountain in the States.

"For one reason or another what the new owners have are greens that don't drain."

In an ideal world the greens would be relaid but while that is the preferred option it is not one that be put



into practice in the short term. Not with an overseas membership which pay large sums of money to be able to play the course when they want and an annual European Tour event which holds the sought after slot of the week before The Open.

Instead, remedial measures are undertaken to make the very best of a poor job.

"We drill down to the gravel, create channels and backfill with dry sand and we vertidrain them. In the summer we top dress lightly every second week and in the winter we do it as frequently as we can without damaging the turf. We also work under a dome which helps to put some heat into the greens. It has been marginally effective."

A great deal is made of the fact that the course is closed for much of the year - from November 1 to March 31 - but as Ken says it's not the ideal time of year to do much of the work they'd really like to do.

"Every golf course in the area is closed for much of the time during the winter and most of our members wouldn't come to play even if we

were open in the months that we do close.

"We keep a record of how many potential golf days we would have in the time we are closed - occasions when we consider people would actually go out and play golf - and it would not be economically viable for us to open."

The "closed" period allows the staff to carry out the jobs that would ordinarily affect play.

We aerify fairways, spread sand on the course - we had a heavy top dressing programme either by machine or if it's too wet by hand - and we continually work on drainage. We have a drainage technician who does nothing but inspect pipes and desilt them because that's critical. We will always be putting in new drainage here."

While Loch Lomond may have inspired some of Scotland's finest song writers to some of their greatest heights Ken says that one of his biggest jobs is to keep people stimulated.

"It's not a fun place to work when it's raining all the time and I have to

work very hard to keep their interest up.

"We can rake leaves here by hand for three to four months a year when it's wet. That isn't normal for most golf courses but here, with the number of trees, the wet conditions and the expectations of the membership there is no other way to do it. It's different here and a lot of other clubs don't realise that."

But surely Ken and his team have survived one of the wettest years on record with their high standards intact.

"We maintained standards but maybe not as consistently high as our owners would have liked," he confessed.

"The owners want their greens to be at nine and a half feet daily with upright growth, but to get that you need a good draining surface and if you don't it's very difficult to achieve."

Ken believes that conditions he and his team face on the day-to-day basis have turned him into a better greenkeeper.

"We are always working with the

weather and we generally prepare two to three work schedules depending upon whether we've had a tonne of rain overnight and can't cut greens first thing in the morning, or if there is a high pressure system coming in. You have to take each day as it comes. I can't go to the membership as happens in some parts of the world and say 'On September 15 we're going to aerify the fairways.'"

One rumour that Ken would like to blow out of the water is that he operates with an open cheque book.

"At the end of the day we're a business and the owners are in the business to make money. So everything we do has to be accounted for and justified. I try to work as though it's my money we're spending and I have a pretty good picture of where we stand financially. As the club grows and becomes more profitable we'll be able to grow as well."

Given one of those mythical cheque books Ken knows what he would do with it.

"I could use double the staff here, do more jobs by hand and have a team out there throwing sand on the

Myth and magic



Right: A magnificent Rhododendron display at the 9th

course. I'd have our car park and all the roads tarmaced and none of the equipment would sit outside," he said, wistfully.

However, things have moved on from when he arrived in July '94 when there wasn't even a maintenance facility.

Ken had been in Britain working at East Sussex National for four years before going back to Canada to work for the same developer.

"Then this opportunity came up and I weighed up the risks and went for it. It was the challenge that attracted me to Loch Lomond."

It's a challenge he feels they're overcoming.

"We're making improvements and if the owners didn't feel that they

wouldn't hesitate in getting someone else. My boss is an Augusta National member and extremely knowledgeable about golf and has a good comprehension of what's involved in golf maintenance."

The project that is taking up much of his time at the moment is converting the rough grasses to Rye which he feels will provide a better protection from the Poa Annua and recover more quickly when the galleries leave after the tournament. The greens are Penncross and the fairways are predominately Highland Bent.

"People talk about Creeping Bent going dormant but I've never seen it go dormant yet. In fact it performs wonderfully.

"I believe, as a manager, that the grass is just one little tool. When you build a course you've got to seed it with something and you've got many things to consider.

When have they got to be ready? What are members' expectations? What speed to I have to keep them at? How many rounds of golf are they going to get?" he said adding that at Loch Lomond they had 15,000 rounds, not forgetting the additional 7,500 caddie rounds a year.

"We also have small greens and have been lucky we haven't had a disease outbreak in over two years," he said adding, "and we don't preventive spray and we don't hand pick poa."

Another rumour quashed. "We could produce great poa annua here but you'd get seed heads and things like that and the owner said 'Let's see what we can do not to have it.' That's our philosophy."

Always willing to experiment and change Ken has set out a trial site alongside the Maintenance Facility in conjunction with the STRI to test grasses and is keen for other greenkeepers to become involved in monitoring their progress.

"I'm intense in what I do here. I communicate with people who I feel are going to be helpful. I like to learn and I like the guys to learn because if they're learning I know they're still interested."

At Loch Lomond you know they'll learn a lot. After all it's not as straight forward as it might at first seem.

Below: Bunkers get the creative treatment on the 15th



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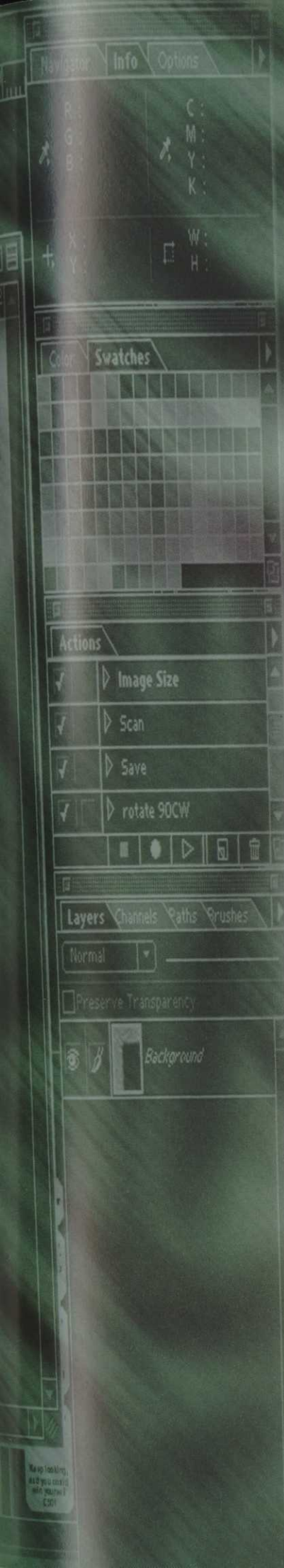
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Further details are available from: Paula Humphries Tel/fax: 01363 82777



Two years on from his last Greenkeeper International series on computers and computing, Ken Richardson catches up on the many developments in a fast moving and exciting industry.

A second byte

Part two

What to buy

If you are considering buying a computer, for home or office use then the first question to ask is; 'What sort of computer should I buy?'. This is a very difficult question to answer as it depends on several things, eg. what do you want the computer to do and how much money do you have to spend. There is a wide range of dealers hoping to sell both hardware and software and they will try to sell you what they think you need. Therefore, before setting off to your local computer shop or picking up a computer magazine, you need to decide what tasks you want to perform using a computer. This is not easy to decide as you can only begin to see what computers are capable of, when you become familiar with them. However, with some thought, you may be able to formulate a plan. The most critical factor is cost ie how much are you or your golf club willing to pay, although you could convince your club to spend a little more money if you made a good enough case. Let's look at some of the points to consider.

Which applications do I want to run?

All applications state their minimum requirements of processor, memory, hard disk and monitor specifications on their packaging. You must decide which and/or how many applications you wish to run. Remember that the operating system selected ie Windows or Windows 95/98 also determines processor, memory and hard disk requirements.

Price

You don't have to buy the most expensive system on the market to get a good deal. For example, a reasonable 'middle of the road' system based on a 300/333 Mhz Pentium or AMD K6-2 processor can be bought for around £600 plus VAT. If you are thinking of multi media operations then go for a 350 Mhz or faster Pentium or K6-2.

Memory

Insist on at least 32Mb of RAM and consider a minimum of 64 Mb if running Windows 98. A hard drive of 4 Gb to 6.5 Gb is the norm. If you need to back up large amounts of data then consider a Zip, Jaz or LS-120 removable storage option.

Graphics

Your graphics accelerator should include 3D acceleration and at least 4 Mb of display memory.

Peripheral Devices

When considering applications, you must also consider peripheral devices such as printers, plotters, compact disks and sound systems and 'add ons' such as modems and Internet

Printers and Plotters

Most computer packages sold today include a simple, bubble-jet printer. This type of printer is suitable for most home and basic office printing. However, if you anticipate that you will need to print large amounts of data then you would need to include a higher quality printer.

Compact Disk Drives

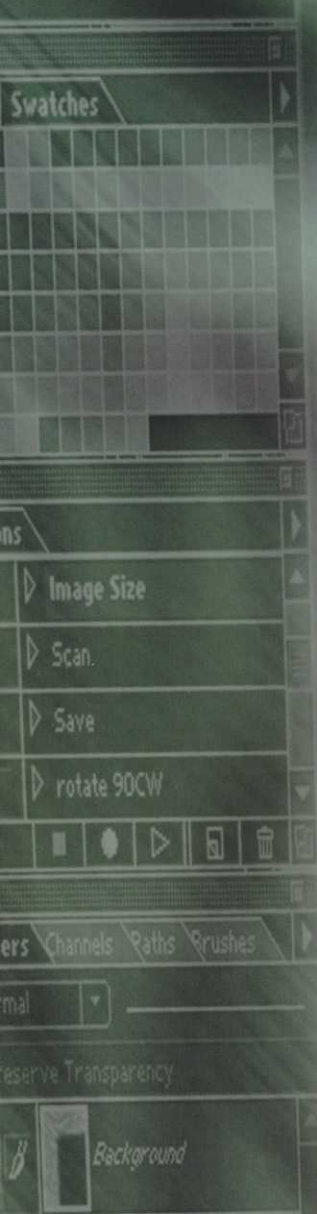
Compact disk (CD) drives are now available on most new computers. Many software titles are available on CD, especially those needing large amounts of data eg encyclopaedia. Reference data for turf science and turf management eg identification of pests and diseases is becoming available and the number of titles will increase with demand. You should look for a 12-speed or faster CD Rom drive.

Sound Systems

Most computers sold today include sound cards, loudspeakers and associated software. These computers can play back music from CD, provide a wide range of built in sounds and, with the inclusion of a tuner card, play television programmes.

Modems and Internet

If you are contemplating becoming a user of the Internet, you will need a modem and appropriate software. Modems allow computers to communicate with other computers via a telephone line. The Internet is an inter connected network. This means that you can connect your computer to a range of other computers, around the world. Moreover, as this connection is through a local computer, you pay telephone charges only at local rates. For example, you could access the pages for the Golf Course Superintendents of America from the computer in your office by telephoning the computer in the office of your Internet supplier which may only be



10 miles away. You can also send and receive E-mail, using the Internet. E-mail is electronic mail and allows you to type messages into your computer and send them to any part of the world for the price of a local telephone call. Modems are available that operate on different speeds eg 33600 bits per second(bps), 56000 bps.

Screen

Screens are available in a range of sizes but you should aim for a minimum screen size of 15 inches. A 17 inch screen is ideal for most users but consider a 19 inch screen if you are considering working with graphics.

Desktop or Laptop

If you really need your computer to be portable then you should opt for a laptop (notebook) system. However, you will pay more for a laptop than for a desk top of the same standard.

Once you have considered what applications you want to run you can then begin to look at purchase options. You should look to buy the highest specification computer that meets your budget. The next step is to decide where to buy and even whether to buy new, buy second hand or even use a computer from another part of the golf course. You may decide to lease rather than buy but I will consider the purchase option only

Where to buy

As I suggested above, the cheapest way of obtaining a computer is to inherit a system from an office which is buying a new system. This has many disadvantages, however. Eg. The software applications may not be what you want, the processor may be old and slow, the system may not be able to be upgraded, spares may be impossible to find and maintenance difficult to arrange. Therefore, if you have made a case for using a computer in your office then it should not be difficult to make a case to your club for buying the computer that is needed.

Computers can be purchased second hand. Indeed many companies sell out dated ie lower specification than current computers that have had little or no use. However, unless you are very knowledgeable and/or have a good relationship with a computer hardware technician then you could be buying trouble. If, however, money is limited and appropriate guarantees can be sought from the supplier then you might consider this option.

Buying a new computer can be even more daunting than buying second hand. There is a bewildering range of computers, a vast range of prices and many different outlets. You could visit your local high street electrical store, a computer warehouse, visit a computer specialist, purchase direct from a manufacturer or use direct mail. Before making a decision on where to buy, you should draw up a short list of companies that supply the system that you want. You should then contact at least three companies to obtain a formal quotation asking them to include:

Product name, model number and version of any software

Date of the quote

Extra items included eg printer, software, delivery, maintenance.

Method of payment including credit options

Availability of hardware and software support

Suppliers of computers include: High Street Stores

There are several High Street stores that sell or rent computer hardware, software and peripherals. The advantages of these stores is that you can see what is for sale, you can calculate the price of a system, you can see how the system operates and you can discuss your requirements face to face with the salesperson. The main disadvantage is price. High Street stores prices tend to be higher than warehouse prices or direct mail. Warranty can usually be arranged with servicing being done in the home, but check that this is included in the price.

Computer Warehouse

Most large towns and cities have at least one computer warehouse which sells the whole range of computers, software, peripherals, up grades, books and stationery. Prices tend to be lower than at High Street stores and you can view and try a wide range of systems. It can be a bewildering experience, however, if you do not have a very good idea of what you want before entering the warehouse.

Computer Specialists

Many towns and cities have at least one specialist computer supplier. These can be local suppliers of top brand name computers or small inde-

pendent suppliers, many of whom make up computer systems to order. Top brand names can be expensive but they can give you peace of mind. Small independent suppliers can give excellent service and good value for money. However, you need to be sure that they will remain in business, at least for the duration of your warranty.

Direct Mail

Computer magazines seem to contain more advertising than editorial and most adverts are for computer hardware and software. You can buy from a major manufacturer, from a direct mail supplier or from a small independent. The main disadvantage of buying by direct mail is that you cannot see what you are buying. However, prices are very competitive and you can compare a number of suppliers.

Practical Considerations

Let us suppose that your club has agreed to the purchase of a computer for your office and that you have decided what software applications you want to run. How do you compare what the different companies have on offer, when each company gives differing descriptions, supplies different software and has different prices for peripherals such as printers? Firstly, write down your needs: Eg.

Processor	Pentium 333 Mhz
Memory	32 Mb RAM
Monitor	SVGA colour 17 inch
Hard Drive	5 Gb
Floppy	3.5 inch
CD ROM	32 times
Soundcard	Soundblaster

Built in Modem
Windows 98
MS Office
Internet
E-mail

Colour bubble jet printer

Basic requirements

Secondly, determine the cost of the basic system (without software) from your chosen supplier or suppliers. You may also be given a great deal of other information which can be confusing, however, try not to let it confuse you too much. Once you have got your list of suppliers down to three or four, you can then start to see what else you get for your money eg Windows already fitted, MS Works already fitted, a range of software supplied 'free', extended warranty, at home or return