

sary. to look at what thinking shapes the way in which golf courses in this country are managed to see what rationale there is for not embracing change.

It is rare in both traditional members' clubs and modern proprietary facilities to see golf courses that either cling on to, or were designed with a course set up that is radically different from those facilities that are seen as normal, or desirable. But what influences the way that many golfers think that a golf course should look like? Presumably there must be some influence from television, but this cannot explain the contradiction we see when golfers marvel at the Old Course and its policy of minimal fertilising, yet pressurise their own club to produce a lush green course with all the contingent problems that this brings.

A golfer's view of how his or her own course should be set up must also be influenced when he or she plays at a club that employs a massive amount of resources to produce a specific type of course and it is perhaps this that has the greatest influence on current course set-ups. The golfer's entirely human desire to improve their own environment by matching the standards set by their recent experiences has led to direct comparisons between the very richest golf courses in Britain and the very poorest. The average golfer may not openly admit that they wish their own course to be as manicured as Augusta National or the impressive new multi-million pound course that they were privileged to play last year, but these are the standards that they have perhaps subconsciously set in their mind.

Many golfers are reluctant to accept that if their club or course can only afford to employ four Greenkeepers, then the standards of presentation and quality of playing surface must be different from a club or course that can afford to employ forty. This, as I have already said, may be a subcon-

scious reluctance, but it is at the root of most of the pressure that is brought to bear on a Course Manager of the average course in Britain. But, if a course is presented in such a way that allows the Greenstaff time to carry out many more labour intensive weed, pest and disease control and preventative measures will it be a poor course or simply different? I have a strong belief that if labour on a golf course is released from the shackles of endless grass cutting to concentrate on tasks such as top dressing, aeration and hand watering, the resultant change would not create poorer golf courses, but simply make them more challenging.

In the quest for length on old established courses in Britain, most of the blame has been laid at the door of golf club and ball manufacturers and all the improvements that they have made to golf equipment. Little consideration has been given to the ability of the modern bogey golfer to spray the ball with impunity and still find it. It is only due to the widening of fairways, semi-roughs, the cutting of bankings and so on that has resulted in the reduction of many courses to the label of "pitch and putt". Perhaps if the same courses were set up in the same manner they were forty years ago there would be far fewer eight degree loft, massively oversized drivers in the bags of players and more judicious use would be made of the far more forgiving three wood. Accuracy rather than distance would become the most desirable talent for a golfer.

Was the way in which Carnoustie was presented for the Open in 1999 unattractive or unfair? Was the resultant media frenzy deleterious for golf? Did golfers stay away in their droves? Carnoustie was given mixed reviews by every golfer that watched the Open that year, but nobody denied that the way in which it was presented was in any way artificial or that the best

golfers in the world were severely tested and that perhaps many more courses could be presented in this way.

If we were to reduce drastically the amount of rough cutting (and by this I mean all areas of rough grass) to maintain the most important playing surfaces without the use of chemicals, and that this policy was accepted readily by the golfers, then there would be no problem - golfers would be able to continue to pay the same fees for a round of golf. If, however, the golfers were reluctant to accept an increase in the amount of time spent looking for balls, that many more shots would be played from deep rough instead of semi-rough and that average round times would increase, then far more resources would have to be made available in order to achieve the course set up they desire and still have time to devote to tasks such as hand weeding, top dressing and so on.

There will undoubtedly be changes in golf course management over the next twenty years. The scientific industry that has produced complex chemical compounds has proved recently that it can produce equally effective methods for the control of these same problems without the use of chemicals. These naturally occurring preventative measures are used routinely in the form of seaweed solutions, carbohydrate feeds, microbacterial compounds and so on, but the science involved in producing these is still in its infancy and is still not holistically used.

If, or perhaps when, every tool is harnessed to both prevent and control turf problems and golf courses come to accept that changes in current practises are inevitable, then I have no doubt that I will cope with the removal of chemicals as a management aid and that Greenkeepers everywhere will prove once again that turf management is not simply a case of cutting grass.

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Scott MacCallum headed west to Bolton to learn about BIGGA Golden Key supporter Rigby Taylor's consultancy agency Grass Science...

The appliance of Science



Clockwise from top right: Grass Science's consultants Chris Peel, Tim Colclough, Noel MacKenzie and Andy Cole

In the last six years an advisory service has grown from a standing start to become the second largest in the country... with its sights set on the number one slot.

Grass Science now has four full time consultants, working under the direction of Director of Agronomy, Brian Robinson, each offering advice to golf clubs, operators of amenity turf and on environmental issues up and down the length of the UK.

The company was born out an appreciation of Rigby Taylor Chairman, Bernard Hedley, that customers were becoming increasingly interested in advisory support and that the industry itself had become more technical and research driven.

"We were conscious that advice was becoming more and more important to customers and in 1995 we felt that we'd got to the stage where we wanted to offer advice in a more formal manner. We felt that there was an opportunity to build a separate division of Rigby Taylor which would be dedicated to offering advice on a commercial basis," explained Bernard.

Brian Robinson, a former Groundsman of Lancashire County Cricket Club, who had for the five previous years been managing one of Rigby Taylor's sales teams, was asked to take the project on board.

"Brian was a good example of someone whose natural inclination was to give advisory input to customers and he too was keen on the idea. So Grass Science was born with in the beginning Brian basically managing a department of one with the help of

some internal resources. The business flourished thanks to Brian's enthusiasm and capacity for hard work and within six months we'd appointed consultant Chris Peel, from ADAS, and the business continued to develop from there," explained Bernard, as we sat in the Bolton Headquarters of Rigby Taylor.

The next major leap for the company came last year when two further appointments were made with a fourth consultant being added earlier this year, all from the STRI.

"We appointed Andy Cole and Noel MacKenzie, both well known and well established agronomists about nine months ago with another, Tim Colclough, joining the team earlier this year."

"Our sales reps were used to offering advice and still do and this is welcomed by their customers, but now we also have a team of consultants whose entire focus is advisory input," explained Bernard, when tackled about the potential conflict of a product supply company setting up its own advisory service.

He added that while a consultant may visit a course three to four times a year the rep may visit 12 times a year so the greenkeeper is always going to hold great store on conversations with his rep.

Grass Science is marketed independently of Rigby Taylor and maintains links with other parties out in the field, whether they be contractors and supply companies.

There is a financial link between the two organisations but in terms of man-

Brian Robinson, right and Bernard Hedley, left



agement the two are 100% divorced from each other.

"Brian has no responsibilities to Rigby Taylor and there are no Rigby Taylor managers with any responsibility for any Grass Science management," explained Bernard, who offers the only genuine link as Chairman of both companies.

Indeed convincing customers and potential customers that Grass Science was an independent company was never a problem.

"It was always more of an issue in theory than in practice. I'm not aware that there has ever been an occasion when a client has felt uncomfortable about the Rigby Taylor/Grass Science link," said Bernard.

While it was something Brian did consider prior to Grass Science being formed, he is happy to admit that it has never become an issue.

"Even from the word go it was never a concern and over the last three years it has got less and less so to the extent that it is never brought up at all now. That was particularly obvious at BTME this year."

The benefits which come from having a link are informal. If a Rigby Taylor rep sees that a customer has got a need for advice he'd be happy to recommend Grass Science. Likewise if a Grass Science consultant is looking to give a product solution he'd be happy to recommend a chat with the Rigby Taylor rep.

"That's the way it works and to be honest pretty much every consultancy tends to have a leaning towards a good product supply company, one that he

trusts, knows will deliver a solution and not do his reputation any harm if he recommends it," said Bernard.

That said there is nothing to prevent Grass Science consultants looking elsewhere for solutions to problems.

"There are no restrictions preventing the consultants developing contacts with other supply companies. In fact it is positively encouraged to ensure their product knowledge is as comprehensive as possible," explained Bernard.

It is a point reinforced by Brian who pointed out that it is not unusual for one of his team to recommend a product for another company.

"We approach our work as a professional organisation which has merit and credibility and to do so it has to stand alone. So there have been cases, quite a number of cases, where it has been necessary to specify other materials... which doesn't make the Rigby Taylor reps too happy," he confessed.

However, such occasions offer the opportunity to assess the Rigby Taylor product range and see whether there is a gap that requires filling.

"As a product supply company we are looking to supply a need and one of the best ways of recognising a need is to be aware of what consultants generally are recommending to their clients," said Bernard.

"The way that Rigby Taylor benefits from our relationship with Grass Science is that we are able to tailor our product

range to find solutions to the problems that the consultants are identifying.

"This has been the case in terms of grass seed development and in some fertiliser formulations within our range," said Bernard.

As an aside he recalled how Rigby Taylor first got involved in fertiliser production 50 years ago when it mixed up the fertilisers prescriptions the STRI recommended to particular clients.

"In large measure we are doing no different now only we have our own consultancy service which enables us to work that much more closely. But the same processes take place."

Bernard and Brian are keen to stress that each consultant brings a specialist skill to the team but that the individuals do offer a collective approach to their work.

"Andy and Noel have specialist golf knowledge; Tim's particular strength is in training while Chris has skills as an expert witness," explained Brian, whose own specialities are grass seed and environmental issues.

While those specialist skills are regarded as important the team, to use a footballing analogy, does play the same formation

"We didn't want people at opposite ends of the consultancy spectrum and that, although they are individuals they will offer advice which is along the same lines," said Bernard.

"The team is able to dovetail so that if another member of the team has to stand in for whatever reason the advice would

be of the same calibre. People have had to change slightly to fit in with that approach," explained Brian, one of whose projects has taken him to Scotland on a regular basis over the last two years.

He has been contacted by the Highlands and Islands Development Agency to look at the Cairngorm Ski Lift Company project to build a funicular railway.

"It is a site of special scientific interest and my role is to ensure that everything is reinstated to how it was... not just after this project but following the bulldozing work that was done in the 60s when the original ski lifts were put in. So far we've photographed rock structures and plants so they can be reinstated just as they were."

The work has enabled Brian to plant our trial plots for grasses to see how they cope at 1,000 and 2,500 feet.

"Taking this work into the mountains has enable me to research how grasses cope with extremes of weather and this will be of benefit to many golf clubs in years to come," he explained.

The future for Grass Science looks rosy with continued expansion on the cards.

"We see Grass Science developing a wider geographical spread over the next five years certainly throughout the UK while we do believe that Europe remains an attractive proposition," revealed Bernard.

Their sights are still firmly set on becoming the number one consultancy in the country but they are also rightly proud of the strides they have made since Grass Science was formed.

Grass Science can be contacted on 01204 377757

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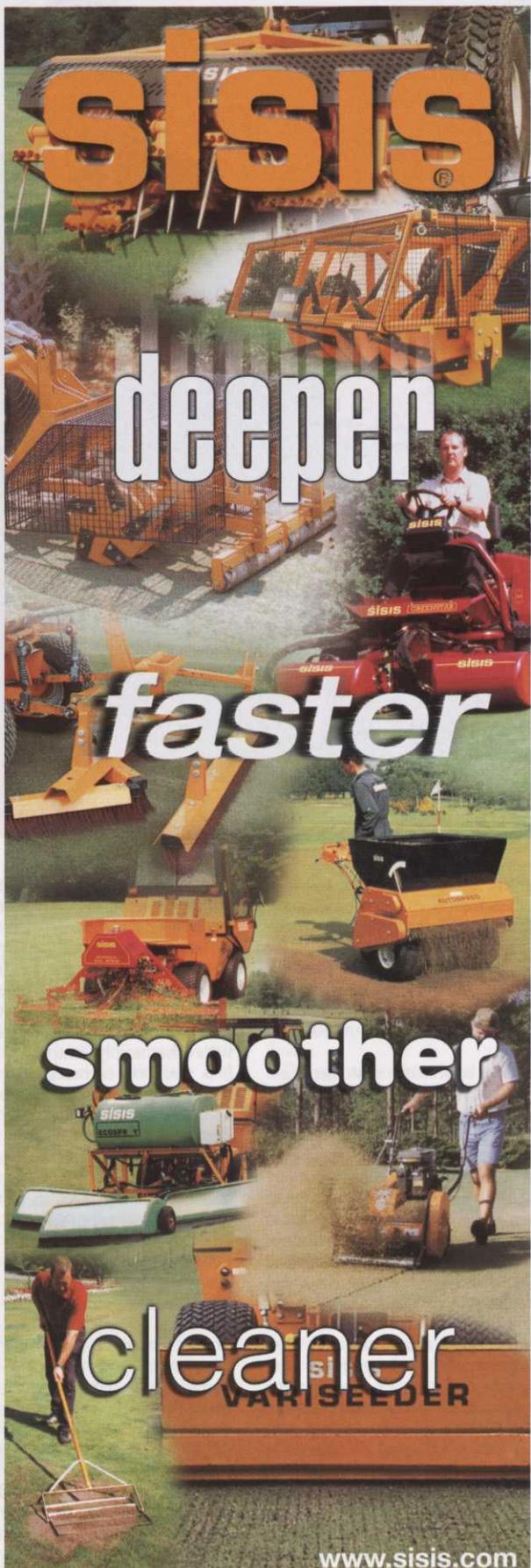
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North

There was a record turnout of North Section members at BTME this year, it was great to see so many folk travelled down to Harrogate, I hope you all thought it was worth the effort and that you will go down again in the future. As ever it was a great week, with record attendances and full of quality events. The new hall meant more stands than ever and the trade show was excellent, with lots to see and buy if you had the budget!

The Tuesday night football match was played in cold pouring rain so it was not surprising that the Scots lads won 4 - 1. There was a shortage of English lads this year, so we cunningly gave the English team some Scots who have been working in England for a while so had gone a little soft! Sorry George.

We had some great evenings, with the Canadian contingent numbering 40 this year, and I am sure our party that were in Canada last month had a great time as these guys know how to party, they could almost be Scottish! Roll on BTME 2002.

Congratulations to Ian Cowper, of Tain Golf Club, who became a Dad last month.

His partner, Samantha, gave birth to Adam and all are doing well. As a result of the imminent birth, Ian had to miss his Patrons Award trip to BTME, but every cloud has a silver lining for someone and Jock Urquhart, also of Tain, stepped in and thoroughly enjoyed his first visit to Harrogate and returned full of ideas that will keep me on my toes for a while.

Congratulations also to Gordon McKie, of St Andrews, who next month gets married to his fiancée, Susan. We wish them every happiness.

Bobby Mackay and his staff at Royal Dornoch have been very busy recently building five new holes on the Struie course as part of an upgrade that will see two great courses in Dornoch in the near future, we look forward to playing it when it opens.

It will soon be Spring and I hope by the time this report is read that the weather has been a little kinder to us to make up for the hardest Winter we have had for many years, it is a good job we have such understanding members at our clubs.

I hope you are all sending your money to Stewart McBain for the 200 Club, please do it now while it is fresh in your mind and Stewart does not have to chase around after you for it. Thank you.

Iain Macleod

East of Scotland

Well here we are another month another article, as I sit and write this on February 6 and look out the window at the course which is covered in a foot of snow I wonder when we are going to get a decent spell of weather as since the turn of the year we've had snow, deep frost then more deep frost then a thaw for a week then some rain then more snow when will it come to an end as its only six weeks till the start of our season and some other courses as well. Hopefully March will be better.

The amazing thing is we spent a week at BTME in Harrogate and the weather was superb the whole week. Strange isn't it?

As normal the Section is quiet just now but a few bits of news for you. Firstly people on the move last month are Paul Hares, formerly Assistant Head Greenkeeper, has left Melville to take up a post with Standard Life and Shaun Cunningham, Assistant at Monktonhall, has taken Paul's job as Assistant Head Greenkeeper at Melville Golf Club. So best of luck to them in their new positions. Well I have already mentioned it but I must say BTME 2001 was excellent once again and every year it just keeps getting bigger and better. Well done to everyone at BIGGA HOUSE and all the organisers of the show the seminars and all the other activities that are going on that week and I speak for everyone when I say it is a credit to you all so keep up the good work and we will see you all next year at BTME 2002.

Peter Boyd, the hotel and the package you put together was first class once again so that's another reason as well as the show etc that we are getting more Scots making the journey south every year.

Peter, I hope you enjoyed your holiday in South Africa preparing yourself for the new season - that's if you took the clubs with you that is. Now don't forget Ian and Richard I am still waiting for your essay about your trip to Harrogate and I won't forget so I'm just reminding you both. No excuses please.

I hope to see you at the BIGGA Scottish Conference at Dunfermline on March 6 which will be past by the time you read this but I hope to see you anyway.

Well that's it for this month, if you have any news let me know just as Steve Halliday, Head Greenkeeper at Melville GC, did because it's quite painless really. The usual numbers are 01968 661313 (home), 01968 661721 (office), 07719 580449 (mobile) or e-mail: cjy263@netscapeonline.co.uk about anything you want as long as you think it will be of interest to the members. So come on, do it now!

PS - I have just heard the forecast and the rain is going to lash down and the wind is going to whip up so that so sounds familiar, but if it doesn't it won't leave any lasting impressions on me!

Chris Yeaman

Ayrshire

I'll start by extending a belated New Year's greeting to everyone, all the best for 2001 and hopefully we all can have a good playing season. My apologies for a vacant column over the past months this was down to family commitments with the birth of my second daughter born in November and a bout of family 'flu at New Year before last month's deadline.

The AGM produced a very small turnout and there were no significant changes. The following committee were elected to serve for 2001. Chairman, Iain Barr, Largs Kelburn; Past Chairman, Duncan Gray, The Pines; Secretary, Derek Wilson, Irvine Bogside; Committee, George Brown, William McMeikan and Jimmy Johnstone all Turnberry. Jim Paton and Brian Ailken (New member), West Kilbride. Brian Finlayson, Barassie. Dennis Tweddell (New member), Bonnyton. Robert T Bruce, Stewarts. There are vacancies for Vice Chairman and committee which remain to be filled. The outings will be finalised at February's committee meeting and will be posted in next month's column.

The Patrons' Award winners were Martin Lothian, from Turnberry, and Colin Murray, from Brighthouse Bay, who were presented with their award at the Patrons lunch and also received a trip to BTME at Harrogate, congratulations to you both. Also many thanks to all the Scottish Region patrons for making these awards possible.

People on the move recently are Scott McLean from West Kilbride to Wentworth as Assistant and Joe Bell who moves up from Deputy Head at Kilmacolm to Head Greenkeeper at Millport on the Isle of Cumbrae.

Jim Paton is organising computer courses in Ayrshire which are run in house by BIGGA through our Education department with Ken Richardson. Anyone who is interested should forward their name to Jim, Derek Wilson or myself.

That's all the news for this month, any news or views call me on 01505 683278.

Iain Barr

West

On January 22-26 I had the good fortune to visit the BTME exhibition at Harrogate for the first time and must again thank the Patron's of our Section personally for making the trip possible. The show itself is very impressive with every kind of machine you could ever want but could never afford being on display.

The educational programme and craic enjoyed afterward's in the company of colleagues will always be a highlight of this event. One night in particular stand's out in Trotter's bar where an educational programme on losing a bad "habit" was very well attended. I can never remember so many greenkeeper's standing so quietly in sheer admiration. It certainly opened my eye's.

Congratulations are to be extended to Colin from Glasgow GC, who

made his TV debut on the January 30, not the CCTV type but national television. My nine year old will need therapy for year's to come after his face filled my TV screen.

On a more serious note congratulations are to be extended to Joe Bell, from Kilmacolm GC, who has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Millport GC. Joe has worked at Kilmacolm for 13 year's and both Ronnie and the West of Scotland Committee wish Joe every success in his new position. Is that the Glasgow fair holiday's booked for Ronnie.

Once again congratulations are to be extended to Ronnie and his staff at Kilmacolm GC after they were given Committed to Green Recognition by the Committed to Green Foundation. Kilmacolm GC is one of only 15 golf club's in the whole of Europe to be recognised with this award.

On an educational note Ronnie tell's me that a moderator's meeting is due to be arranged sometime, in March, a mail shot will be sent out in due course.

I have also been informed that eight greenkeeper's are now working their way through an SVQ Level 4 with GOSTA training, the committee wishes you all the best in achieving your award's.

A warm welcome is extended to our new Section member's these being Robert Brown; Gordon Ewan Logan; Robert McDowell; Michael McLerie; William Hamilton Muir and Darren Welsh. We look forward to meeting you all at the up and coming Section outing's.

Finally we hope Elliott has enjoyed his year as Chairman and I am sure your staff will have your wellies warmed up at Tulliallan ready for your return to duty.

Well that's all I have to report this month, again if any Section member does have anything they would like added to the column feel free to contact me on 01355 236335 or 01355 266862.

Brian Bolland.

Central

This month we extend a warm welcome to another nine new Section members, and they are Graham Brand and Alan Breen, from Carnoustie Golf Links; David Smith, from Glenalmond College Golf Course; Richard Colley, from Dunfermline Golf Club; James Dowie, from Brucefields Family Golf Centre; Alexander Latto, from Thornton Golf Club; Derek Downie, from Ladybank Golf Club, and Dudley Aitchison from Anstruther Golf Club. As before, hopefully we will have the pleasure of meeting some of you at forthcoming events.

News of two former Section members, David Murdoch, formerly of Dunfermline Golf Club and now of Liphook Golf Club received his Master Greenkeeper Award at BTME. At Harrogate and Ian Ross, formerly of the Dukes Course at St. Andrews, is now working in Norway as Head Greenkeeper at the Miklagard Golf Club in Osteras.

Congratulations go to them both with every success for the future from everyone in the Section.

As usual there were a good number of Section members at Harrogate again this year and I'm sure everyone must have enjoyed a bigger and better BTME. Any member who has not attended this event should mark it in their diary and start planning now for 2002 as it is an enjoyable week on both the "educational" and social sides of things.

Entry forms for this year's Spring Tournament, which is being held by courtesy of the members of Scotsraig Golf Club in Fife, should be with you shortly and once again I would ask you to return your form, with the correct remittance, as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

The winners of the January draw in "Club 2000" are D. McOwat, £30 with number 357 and D. Wilson, £20 with number 385. The winners of the February draw are M. Lindsay, £30 with number 320 and P. Butler, £20 with number 166. Thanks to S. Connah, T. Edwards, W. Swan, A. Paterson and D. Gillon for purchasing their tickets, although outwith the allotted time, were still in time to be included in the first draw. Thanks again to everyone who has supported this Section fund raiser.

John Crawford.



Northern Region
Douglas Bell
Tel: 0151 431 0433

North West

I have just completed the fixtures for the year, and by the time you read these notes you should all have received your fixture list for the year I would like to thank Rufford Soil Technology for once again sponsoring the printing and distribution of the fixtures, and once again I ask you to support the Section events, and make it all worth the time spent organising. If for any reason you have not received a list of fixtures, or if you are a new member please give me a ring and I will send you one immediately.

I have been informed that Paul Worsencroft, Head Greenkeeper at Knutsford Golf Club, has been involved in a car accident, and his wife and two children were also in the car with him at the time Paul has broken both legs, and his wife is still very ill. Thankfully both of the children were uninjured, they are six months, and three years old. I am told the driver of the other car was killed outright, so I suppose they are lucky to be alive. I am sure we all wish them a speedy recovery, and soon put this nasty episode behind them. I must mention also that Knutsford Golf Club are very supportive of him, and that his job is safe no matter how long it takes. I wish more golf clubs took this attitude.

The Mere Seminar is on Thursday, March 22 with a programme for the day based on how to overcome the problems caused by the inclement weather over the last 12 months. There will also be a demonstration of gravel

banding on greens, and a talk on the right soil and sand mixtures for root zone. The cost for the day is £20 including lunch, and non members and club officials are welcome. All entries to be sent to me at Hanhill Lodge, Hanhill Road, Liverpool. Tel. 0151 724 5412, or mobile 07761 583387.

Cheques made payable to BIGGA N/W.

We have a match: against the N/Wales Section at Abergele Golf Club on Thursday April 19 and I require a strong team of 16 members to win the GEM. Trophy This annual tournament has been played for many years, mostly on a friendly basis, and is once again sponsored by GEM Professional so there is no cost to you. All you have to do is get there. If you are interested give me a ring as soon as possible.

The following week on Monday April 23 we have the "Spring Tournament at Mere GCC, with the tee available from 1.30pm. Lunch will be served at 12.30 and an evening meal follows the completion of the golf. We are restricted to 50 competitors so get your application in early with your cheque for £15 to Bill Merritt, 225 Liting Avenue, Clubmore, Liverpool. 1.4 QRB Tel 0151 284 4416. Evening dress, jacket and tie. That's it for now, any news or views please contact me on 0151 724 5412 or Mobile 07761 583387.

Bert Cross

North Wales

Well the month of January brought us all some proper weather even though it did go to the other extreme of freezing, at least we were able to move soil etc around the course to get some of our construction work completed. But oh yes the rains came again and our course is yet again saturated and closed.

The extreme weather conditions have brought about the need for extreme greenkeeping, with many courses so wet and the grass still growing the only solution was to cut fairways and rough during the freeze, the results have meant courses are now playable, with good definition of fairways and memberships that can now play again, everyone happy! it just shows that at times we just have to throw the rule book out of the window.

On March 21 you can visit Bathgate Silica at Archild Quarry if you are interested please contact John Hammond on 01270 762828; our spring meet is at Ruddlan Golf Club on April 5, entrance is £12 under 21, £15 members and £20 Guests, the North Wales vs North West match will be played at Abergele Golf Club, date to be announced, anyone interested in getting our shield back please contact our match secretary Jeremy Hughes.

At the college, Graham Wright would like to hear from any Head Greenkeeper's who are interested in giving talks to NVQ level 2 students on afternoons in the summer.

The Section welcomes back into the fold Mr Andrew Campbell, MG. You know it makes sense mate!

Finally, our Section at this moment in time has two of our members serv-

ing as captains of golf clubs, they are Wyn Mostyn, who is the Captain of the Plassey Golf Club, and Terry Adamson, Captain of Northop Country Park Golf Club. I was wondering whether any other Section wishes both of them every success in their year of office, maybe they could influence the weather seen as that's what us Greenkeepers are supposed to do!

Dave Goodridge

Cleveland

Very little to report this month. Two members of staff at the Wynard Club have successfully completed their NVQ Level 2 at Askham Bryan College, Stephen Taggart, and Gary Hutchinson both passed with flying colours the course also included the PA 2 which they both also passed.

After being advised by the police (three times) Shaun Carroll, Deputy Course Manager of Eaglescliffe Golf Club has abandoned his attempt to break the land speed record through Yarm High Street, he can now be seen travelling to work with a queue of traffic behind him. Once he has safely arrived at work Shaun has the responsibility for servicing and Maintaining machinery at Eaglescliffe Golf Club and he boasts the fact that in three years only one piece of machinery has had to go away to be repaired, well done Shaun for setting an example for others to follow. A BIGGA Committee Meeting has taken place at Middlesbrough Municipal Golf Club to discuss various issues, including forthcoming events and golf tournaments.

A newsletter is being prepared and will be sent out when things have been confirmed, any news please contact me on 07719193381

Steven Jaques

North East

On behalf of the Section we would like to thank Terry Charlton, of Turf Care, once again for providing a coach to Scotsturf. From what I have been told he put quite a spread on, and also prizes for raffles etc. Thanks again Terry.

Matfen Hall are about to start another extra 9 holes in the Spring I believe on the other side of the road should be a good test of golf as there is already a fairly large pond on site.

Tyneside GC again has kindly offered their services for our winter seminars the first one was in January and given by Robert Laycock the agronomist, and there was a good turn out with 30 greenstaff attending and a few of them had a travelled 70 miles round trip. Robert, I must say, gave a very interesting talk and the Section thanks him for his time and effort.

February 8, and the talk was given by Peter Hampton, of Bernhards of Rugby, on reel maintenance again this was another interesting subject with the greenkeepers who attended finding out one or two things that would make the tasks easier, it's only a pity that only a third of January's turnout bothered to be there. Still it was their loss.

Don't forget April 5 is the Spring Comp at Warkworth and the Autumn

Competition at Hexham on September 21.

Due to a problem with email the North East notes have not appeared over the past few months so apologies to the members who have missed out on their Section Notes.

Jimmy Richardson



Midland Region
Les Emery
Tel: 0116 287 9036

East Midland

This year has again seen another excellent Trade Show at Harrogate, with more products on show, more workshops and seminars. Although I was only able to attend the show for one day it was still great to see a few old friends, gain some more valuable information and to see what a fantastic Association we have. Once again I would like to encourage all members to support the show in future years, so we can remain successful. It was nice to meet up with the Canadian Greenkeepers prior to my visit to Vancouver, and make a few more friends. Also it was great to see an old friend of mine Steve Peters, now Head Greenkeeper of Blankney Golf Club. Steve and I both attended Reaseheath College, so we had plenty of happy memories to talk about.

The Section has arranged a Lecture evening, which is to be held at Kirby Muxloe Golf Club on Tuesday April 10. The speakers are to include our Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson; a representative from Bernard's Grinders and myself. As I am sure you are all aware by the time you have read this article I shall have recently returned from the Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show in Vancouver which was kindly sponsored by Bernard's Grinders, and I would like to share my knowledge, that I have acquired from this wonderful trip by producing a talk for you all on this evening. Forms will be sent to you shortly and your attendance will be greatly appreciated.

Finally I would like to congratulate Chris Bates on his appointment as First Assistant Greenkeeper at Scraftoft Golf Club. Chris was formally Mechanic/Greenkeeper at Kirby Muxloe Golf Club.

Antony Bindley

East of England

The winter education seminar held at Newark Golf Club had Dennis Mottram as its key speaker. Dennis talked all day on 'Understanding Soils' The day was broken into various topics and members were involved in group participation, which added to the day. Nearly 50 members enjoyed a very informative seminar.

Thanks to all the excellent trade members for providing all the excellent raffle prizes which came from Barenbrug Seeds, Aitkens, Cannon's Turf, Rigby Taylor, Ruffords Topdressing, Alpha Amenity, Boughton Loams and Amenity Technology. A lot of members have

been asking about another computer course, if I can get enough support I will gladly organise the day, so let me know if you are interested.

The fixture list is now complete and will be with you shortly. A new sponsor this year for our second fixture is Amenity Technology which replaces the Les Purdy's Golf Day which unfortunately has packed in.

Graeme Macdonald

Midland

Firstly I would like to offer a warm welcome to our six new Members, Andrew Miller, Gary Watkins, Colin Woodward, Christopher Young, Keith Abercrombie and Jason Simms.

It was good to see some familiar faces at BTME which, again, offered an excellent opportunity to learn and develop professionally as well as mix socially. All in all a very rewarding week. By now each member will have received a 2001 Section programme - omitted on December 13 is the AGM 4.15pm start. Anyone wishing to offer a tournament venue for 2002 would be very welcome to contact Rhys Thomas on 07775581615.

Finally, British Seed Houses are proposing a visit to IGER Aberystwyth in July. Those interested in this excellent two day trip please contact Andy Smith 07977 145091.

Phil Gates

BBO

My apologies for missing last month's article but, I was very busy at the time breaking my New Year's resolutions. Most were broken by about an New Year's day apart from no smoking which I'm pleased to say is still going strong, but believe me the lads at work wish I hadn't.

Never mind, so it's into the new year and what have we got to look forward to? The members moaning about the temporary greens, more rain, the staff whingeing about the cold and then some more rain just for luck. But don't panic there is always the Section events to look forward to. Now before you get the rope out and start putting it around your neck we should have the golf days confirmed within the next couple of months so if you have had any problems with mailing from HQ ie. change of address or incorrect address then contact BIGGA HQ as soon as possible, that way we can be sure everyone is getting an entry slip.

The Section would like to wish Dean Thatcher, at Radgemore, a speedy recovery from his recent illness (meningitis). He has been off work since mid-July, but hopes to be back this spring.

Also we have several new members to the Section and would like to welcome: Geoffrey Carrigan, Drayton Park; Chris Collins, Reading; Matthew Flicks, Huntercombe; Alastair Higgs, Calcot Park; Michael Randall, Huntercombe, and Gary Wiltshire, Ellesbrough.

One last thing before I go and that is that I'd like to thank the blokes from Tacit for getting me even more plastered than I already was up at Harrogate. Well I think it was them

anyway. For anyone that hasn't been up to BTME then I'd recommend it for a night out, there really are some eye openers up there even by my standards!

Jon Scoones (01189 723334)



South East
Derek Farrington
Tel: 01903 260956

London

It's been a quiet month on all fronts really. Just when you think the weather is starting to improve after Christmas we succumb to yet more rain and flooding. Who wants to be a Greenkeeper!

Still it's not all bad news around the Section. Some good from West Herts GC in that Andy Smith has been confirmed as Course Manager. Congratulations to Andy who can also look forward to the construction of new maintenance sheds in the very near future.

Going back to the incredibly wet weather I had an interesting tour of Browns in Chesham recently and if you think we've all got flooding problems think again. The weather coming off the hills around the yard at Browns means that without constant pumping the staff would by now have developed gills and fins. They do say that goldfish have a five second memory span so no change for the guys in stores department then! if you're reading lads it's just a joke - honest!

As I said in my last report our Spring Meeting will take place at Stockley Park GC in May - date to be confirmed. Please support the day if you can. A couple of recent appointments around the Section have seen Martin Guy installed as the new Course Manager at the American Golf-owned Oakwood Park and Guy Jenkins moving from West Herts GC to the Course Manager's position at Denham GC Every success to both.

As you may or may not know here at Sandy Lodge we have undergone some major redevelopment work in the late summer. But we're not the only ones - oh no! Ian Semple, at Old Fold Manor GC has overseen the refurbishment of several bunkers, carried out by Kestrel Golf, who incidentally were the contractor for our work as well. John Merriman, at Batchworth Park, can also look forward to another nine holes in the near future.

At Harpenden Common GC new maintenance sheds are the order of the day. Steve Brocklehurst and his team have recently moved in to the new building which is situated in a much more accessible position on the course.

Digressing wildly away from Greenkeeping just to blow my own trumpet for a moment myself and Rob Washbrook, Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Hadley Wood GC, last month reached the last 16 of the Herts Carpet Bowls singles tournament. See you in the final Rob!

Finally, Anyone looking for the ulti-



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mate driving experience should contact Peter Hopkinson, at Browns, who has a Y Registration VW Golf for sale - £950 o.v.n.o. Taxed until the end of March, no MOT and four slick no weather tyres. No time wasters please. Don't all rush to the phones at once!

Robert Phillips

Essex

By Train is Much Easier

With all the bad press the rail service has received recently you can appreciate why four of our members and two gentlemen from Rigby Taylor decided to take the safe option and hire a seven seater vehicle and drive up to the BTME in comfort. All went smoothly on the journey up to Harrogate and the same was expected on their return, but this was not to be. Steve Denton and Dennis Smith, Rigby Taylor; Martin Forrester, Stapleford Abbots GC; Adrian Cornell, Colne Valley GC; Peter Hurrell, The Warren GC, and Ian Squires, Orchard GC, ground to a halt at 11.30 pm just five miles from the M11 services at Stansted, no problem, phone the AA, get a replacement vehicle and be on their way. The rescue service company that were working for the AA, (lets call them the AB), said that a replacement vehicle would be delivered to the M11 services by the hire company, so off they went confident of getting home within the next hour or so. Just one thing prevented this from happening, no car at the services. Once again the AB, who it must be said did their best to get these people home, contacted the hire company, it's ok we can get another hire car at the other pick up point - Cambridge! By this point, (12.20am) temperatures were starting to rise, all except Mr Denton who kept a level head through the whole charade.

They arrived at Cambridge to once again be greeted by an empty space where a car should have been. Anybody who has seen Planes, Trains and Automobiles will appreciate what was going through their minds. They were however assured that a replacement vehicle was on its way, another one and a half hours passed. Finally, up rolled the smallest seven seater in the world, a Fiat Punto. Disgusted at what had passed Mr Denton took the bull by the horns and ordered a taxi to take them all home, quite a good deal really only £120 and they did all get home by 5.15am, nearly six hours after breaking down just 45 minutes away from home. Perhaps the trains aren't so bad after all!

Now onto business. The first of this year's Educational Evenings is to be held at Writtle College on March 22, the subject matter is not yet known but keep the date free in your diary. While on the subject of Education I have to congratulate Phil Allibon, of the Burstead Golf Club, and myself for passing the HNC in Sportsturf Science and The NVQ Level 3, two years, three for some, hard work gladly finished.

Upcoming golfing and social fixtures are Friday, March 9, The Annual

Gentleman's Dinner at Walton Heath Golf Club and April 25, our spring meeting at Frinton Golf Club. By the time this gets published you should be in receipt of your fixture list, if not contact Martin Forrester. (01245) 603131.

Finally a message to Gordon Scott, of Toothill Golf Club. Thanks for your letter, sorry it has been a while but rest assured you will be contacted by us to set up a possible golf day at your course. See you all at Writtle, if not Frinton or Walton Heath.

Steve Crosdale



South West
and South Wales
Paula Humphries
Tel: 01288 352194

South West

Some of the Section have been on a memorable visit to this years BTME in Harrogate. On their behalf I would like to thank BIGGA headquarters for a very good show, it seemed to be a great success!

The coach kindly sponsored by Amenity Technology was a vast improvement, thank you. Our appreciation to Paula Humphries for her help and organisation was also shown by presenting her with a large bouquet of flowers.

It was great to see old and new faces around BTME even a gathering of Welsh and Southwest members were seen popping and trotting around Harrogate Town Centre. A new member 'Sid' I believe was tucked up watching "The Rock" on television on night one but then on night two and three I could give a good account of him but then maybe not! Our thanks go out to Richard Wyman who helped one member suffering from amnesia, who was unable to remember his name, room number, or how to open doors!

The Section are pleased to announce that Guy Woods, Course Manager of Bath Golf Club, has agreed to become Education Officer. We believe he will bring new ideas to the Section and we welcome your support, he can be contacted on 01225 333928 for all your training needs. Congratulations to Craig Fudge and Nick Perkins on their recent promotions to the new Head & Deputy Greenkeepers respectively of the Kendleshire, which is now under new ownership. Kevin Green is still involved in a new build in Bristol called "The Players".

Westurf is upon us so please support it on March 14 at Westpoint, Exeter.

The next event is the Spring tournament kindly sponsored by Scotts, at Thoulstone Park GC, on April 5. If you have not yet received any correspondence about the Sections events contact Kevin James the secretary on 07788427677.

Any member wishing to be considered for the team match on May 3 at the Manor House please contact Knobby Knight on 01225 760634.

Any news views or info please contact me on 01285 720112.

D. Bougen

South Coast

Have you ever been to the BTME Learning Experience? I went to my first one this year and I was very impressed by the two days. So if you haven't been before I can thoroughly recommend it.

The show itself was much bigger, and so was my hangover! It is now spread over more halls, so it takes an age to get round it all, but it is a good show with everything you've ever wanted there. Well done to everyone who organised the week.

Anyway, enough of BTME, and

back to our sunny little Section.

There are only two things to mention this month. The first is Westurf. You should have all had the information on the day by now, so please show your support for the day and try to come along.

If anyone knows anyone who would like to exhibit anything at the show, then let Paula know. You can contact her on 01288 352194. Stands are going cheap this year, so don't think that it's expensive.

The second item is the Spring Tournament. Chris Sturges works

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very hard organising the tournaments, so try and help him out by getting your names and money in early. The Spring Tournament is at the Army GC, Aldershot, this year. The price for the day is £21, this includes 27 holes, morning coffee, lunch and dinner. £21 is cheap for all that, so you would be mad to miss it!

Cheques should be made payable to BIGGA and sent to Chris at 40 Kinsbourne Way, Thornhill, Southampton, Hants, SO19 6HB. Don't forget to include your name

and address. If you have any queries, then you can phone Chris on 02380 494084.

Please remember that if you have to pull out of the event, then give Chris at least seven days notice. If you don't, then you are liable to still pay for the day, as the golf club will still charge the section. **You have been warned!**

The seminar at Sparsholt would have been and gone by the time this column goes to print, but if anyone is concerned about the fees charged by some of the speakers, don't wor-

ry. The Education Fund, and not the money taken for the day, pay for all the speakers' expenses. All the money taken for the seminar, as with other events, goes towards the cost of the venue and the food.

Well that's all for this month. Mike Cartwright.

Devon and Cornwall

As usual the first event of the New Year for many members was to attend the BTME show held in the lovely town of Harrogate, the region's annual trip to the show

departed from Fingle Glen this year, the coach was excellent and the videos on board kept members amused on the long trip North.

The show itself just seems to get better each year and is now one that you can't afford to miss. Many members attended the Amenity Technology evening which I hear was buzzing with atmosphere

Congratulations must go to our Regional Administrator Paula and Stuart Ashworth, of Amenity Technology, who had organised the superb trip. Also, I would like to con-



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gratulate all the staff at head office for organising a superb BTME.

The Section's first meeting of the year was sponsored by Barenbrug Seeds and held at Royal North Devon Golf Club on Wednesday January 31. The day started with our golfing members competing over the clubs links course for prizes kindly donated by Barenbrug UK, our non golfing members were treated to a guided tour of the sheds and course by Head Greenkeeper Mark Evans before returning for lunch.

After an excellent lunch David Singleton of Barenbrug UK presented the mornings golf prizes as follows 1. Anthony Parker, Saunton, 38pts all on back 9; 2. Tony Gooch, Torrington, 38pts; 3. Kevin Dymond, Mortehoe & Woolacombe, 38pts.

Our afternoon educational talk was presented by Peter Wisbey, Courses Manager of the EGU Woodhall Spa, Peter gave an excellent presentation on his management policy at Woodhall

Spa, and also answered questions relating to Woodhall Spa and the EGU.

The Section would like to thank our meeting sponsor Barenbrug and David Singleton for their continued sponsorship. Also, our thanks must go to Mark Evans and his crew for all their efforts on the day. Last but not least our thanks must go to Royal North Devon Golf Club for allowing the Section use of their facilities and all their staff who made our day run so smoothly.

Our last meeting of the winter programme will be the Aventis and Supaturf meeting which will be held at Roserow Golf Club on Wednesday March 28, the day will start as always with golfing members competing for the Supaturf Trophy (Head Greenkeepers), Aventis Trophy (Assistants).

Remember that Westurf is now at Westpoint, Exeter on Wednesday, March 14.

So let's see a big attendance from the Section and support the Region so the

Region can support you.

Richard Whyman

South Wales

I gather BTME was again another success combining the National Education Conference which is supplemented by practical greenkeeping workshops including machinery maintenance, computer skills and golf course design & grass/soil science. The key speaker for the seminars was none other than the world landspeed record holder Richard Noble, of Thrust 2, Other seminars included health & safety and the environment issues. Well done to all the trade and the organisers of the exhibition.

In January we had our first evening lecture in conjunction with the JOG with 32 persons present. Keep it up! Geoffrey Davidson presented us with his extensive knowledge of drainage systems including the types, specification & design and soil texture. A

very interesting evening with practical demonstration and slides.

Bring you up to date with the Seminar next month although we look forward to a health & safety update on 14th of this month and on April 11, the Annual Quiz.

Richard Hatcher



Northern Ireland

The Section had an educational visit to Coleraine and Ballymoney where we visited Geoff Connell, of the company Grass Roots, to see the product TDC9 being produced. Geoff gave us a very informative tour of the facilities showing us the different stages of production.

Mr Ivor Ramage, of the NOMIX company also gave us a detailed introductory talk on the NOMIX compact sprayer. He also kindly donated a NOMIX sprayer, herbicide and cleaner for a prize draw. The prize was won by Ballymena Club Club. I would like to thank Geoff and Ivor for their hospitality, the refreshments were very well received. After the visit to Grass Roots we all travelled the short distance to Groundsman Industries in Ballymoney. The company was formed by Bill Warke and specialise in making a variety of turf aerators and core collectors. The wide range of machines can be fitted to a Cushman, various sizes of tractors, or pedestrian models which can be used on smaller areas. Bill has designed all the machines himself and also the wide range of tines that can be used for whatever job is required whether for overseeding, thatch removal, or aeration. Neil McLaughlin, from Greenmount College was also on hand to give a talk on aeration. Bill gave us a tour of his factory explaining the different manufacturing stages that take place in constructing the machines and tines. The 25 members who attended would like to thank Bill Warke and his staff for the excellent food and drinks he provided.

The members found the afternoon visit very beneficial. The Section held a committee meeting in early January to formulate but golf days for the year so members will be informed in early spring of the dates and venues. A sub committee has formed to organise the next Educational Seminar which will be held in the autumn of 2002. The Chairman of the committee is Emmett Curran so if any member has any ideas for the seminar Emmett can be contacted at Downpatrick Golf Club on Tel.: 44612152.

I would like to welcome Robert Crooks and Gordon McBride Malone Golf Club back to the Section which brings our membership up to 110 and still growing. Please remember our next event is at Downpatrick Golf Club on March 27 starting at 2pm where we will play 9 holes of golf and attend talks by Liz Wilson, of JA Humphries on grass seeds and also Ian McClements the STRI agronomist will give a talk on a subject of his choice.

Ken Henderson

SCOTLAND

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LONDON	Ian Semple	Old Fold Manor GC	Club: 020 8441 2077	
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ESSEX	Martin Forrester	Stapleford Abbotts GC	Tel: 01245 603131	Mobile: 07773 630323

SOUTH WEST / SOUTH WALES

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S COAST	Fred Deamen	Alton GC	Club: 01420 82042	
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S WALES	Peter Lacey	Pennard GC	Tel: 01792 233923	Mobile: 07971 914121

NORTHERN IRELAND

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