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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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Richard Clarke, of Royal Eastbourne Golf Club, won the Assistants' Over 25 Category in the 2001 BIGGA Essay Competition with this fine composition.

A fine set of figures

As I write, it is now two months on from Harrogate and memories are still fresh in the mind of a truly wonderful week. My particular highlights include a wonderful education programme running throughout the week; the bizarrely funny Brahms and Liszt at the Banquet, and an inspirational talk by Roger Black, whom, I note, has obviously used BTME as a springboard to a presenter's role on BBC TV's Tomorrow's World. Even the very best can enjoy professional advancement, if only they come to Harrogate!

Mulling over the attendance figures it is great to see a vindication for the decision to extend the show to three days, which was taken following extensive consultation with the industry. Four consistently packed halls, featuring all the familiar industry names and faces - both on the stands and in the aisles, as well as new The Golf Club Show, which enjoyed a very successful debut in the King's Suite. More than ever Harrogate is a not-to-be-missed Showcase for everything to do with golf... except, of course, the playing of the game!

Just to put you in the picture, Tuesday saw 2,445 visitors; Wednesday was a record individual day for BTME with a mammoth 4,040 visitors, while Thursday was visited by some 2,144. That produces a sum total of 8,629, 10.1% up on the 7,833 who attended BTME 2001, and reveals a relatively even split for the three days - an absolute bumper sandwiched between two very solid days.

As everyone who exhibits, or visits, a Show will know it is the final day where you expect to find the lowest number, so that the 2,144 Thursday figure is one of which we at BIGGA are particularly proud.

To put it into perspective, here's what I wrote in a press release at my first BTME back in 1996. I must be in line for a gold watch or something by now.

A total of 2,312 visitors went through the doors on Wednesday (day 1) and 2,159 made the same journey yesterday (day 2). Last night, on your behalf a team of BIGGA mathematicians poured over calculators to come up with a figure of 42.9% - the increase on Thursday of last year. The number crunchers can also tell us that the aggregate for the Wednesday and Thursday is 4,471, yes 4,471, a massive 25.2% up on the 1995 two day total.

It means that this year's final day figure of 2,144 was on a par with the record breaking opening two days of the '96 Show.

It's amazing how your brain sometimes plays tricks on you. I could have sworn back in '96 that you would have needed a shoe horn to get

anyone else in but, six years on, our final day figure is similar to those but it is regarded by some as a quiet day. It just shows how far we've come. Heaven help us six years from now and BTME2008. We probably will need a shoe horn then.

Meanwhile, roll on Harrogate '03.

Scott
MacCallum
Editor

Making his mark at Milford Haven

Milford Haven Golf Club has recently appointed their first course manager.

Kevin Rawlins took up this key role in the autumn. Already the 33 year-old, is making his mark on the rolling 18 hole parkland course, set on the edge of the UK's only coastal national park.

As a result of his appointment, the Pembrokeshire club is also embarking on an ambitious five-year programme.

Kevin's climb up the green-keeping career ladder began as an assistant at Camberley Heath Golf Club, followed by a six year stint at Wentworth as Deputy Head Greenkeeper.

He believes in leading by example, and enjoys being hands on

out on the course. He is full of praise for the hard-working team he inherited - First Assistant, David Smart, and greenkeeper Charlie Young. The club are currently recruiting a trainee to complete the ground staff team, which Kevin foresees as going from strength to strength.

"Kevin has proved to be huge asset to the club in the time he's been with us. The results he's already achieved on the course speak for themselves," said Club Captain Andrew Smith,

According to Kevin, there is loads of potential at the club, with the luxury of plenty of space for expansion, two acres of nursery turf, and a large store of topsoil that can be exploited in a



Above: Kevin Rawlins, recently appointed as Course Manager at the west Wales club

strategic programme of course improvements, including rebuilding the bunkers in revetted style - unusual on a parkland course.

Top man in Sussex

Steve Phillips, Course Manager at Cowdary Park GC, won the coveted award of Sussex Greenkeeper of the Year for 2001. This award is presented by The Sussex Professional Golfer's Union for Excellence in consistently preparing a Golf Course to the Highest Standards for all Professional events. Steve commented that his head Greenkeeper Jonathan Smith and his Team played a key part in winning the award.

Right: Steve Phillips, holding the award, Jonathan Smith to his right and his team from left to right, Bernard Penny, Darren Freeman, Leigh Holloway and Anthony Hill.



Scottish Education Conference a success

The BIGGA Scottish Region Conference was again held at the Business Learning Centre, Lauder College, Dunfermline in March. An excellent venue with first class facilities and easy access from the motorway.

The speakers were covering a variety of subjects all relevant to the industry today.

Ged Cunliffe, Technical Sale Manager for Biotol, opened the Conference with a paper on Biological Solutions for any fine turf area. This was a most interesting and informative subject.

Next was Philip Langdon, of Wardle Consulting Engineers Ltd, on Irrigation Systems Assessment.

Philip provided an insight into irrigation systems. A topical subject and well presented by Phil. Despite the weather this winter, and the amount of rainfall we have had, his talk was of benefit to everyone who has a watering system or indeed anyone who was considering installing one.

After the break the double act of David Withers, from Textron, and Brian Goudie, of Scottish Grass Machinery, spoke on 'A Salesman's Role'. This was something different from previous years and was presented very well. The talk covered all aspects of the salesman's role, having a

good salesman/customer relationship and the benefits that can be gained from this partnership.

Finally to round of the morning session, was Ruth Mann of the STRI, who presented her paper on Pest and Disease Survey. Ruth explained the reasoning behind the survey and the research being carried out. This topic was of great interest to the members and generated a great deal of discussion.

After lunch, John Caven, Director of Golf at Meldrum House, Aberdeen, spoke about his role in the 'Creation & Marketing of a 5 Star Golf Facility'.

John provided a most valuable insight into marketing and presentation involved in promoting this kind of facility.

A figure well known to everyone involved in greenkeeping, Jimmy Kidd, from Gleneagles Hotel, was next to speak. Jimmy spoke about Gleneagles bid for the Ryder Cup 2009. The requirement for any club to run such an event staggers belief and Jimmy in his usual competent manner provided an enthralling insight into what is required.

The final speaker was Paul Miller, from Elmwood College.

Paul's talk was on 'Integrated

Plant Management'. Paul with his experience in this field gave a very interesting and topical paper on a subject relevant to greenkeeping.

The Scottish Region of BIGGA are once again indebted to the speakers for providing such interesting and informative talks on subjects relating to the fine turf industry.

During the Conference the Chairman had the pleasure of announcing the first ever winner of the Harry Diamond Memorial Quaich. This award is presented in memory of one of the stalwarts of greenkeeping. Harry had served the Association in many capacities and was particularly involved in the education of greenkeepers and it was only fitting that this award be presented to the Student of the Year. The winner of the award for 2001 was Mark Cummine, of Buchanan Castle Golf Club.

The Scottish Board would like to thank the Patrons for their continued support and the members who attended this year's Conference. The numbers were once again over the 160 mark and it is thanks to you that the Conference is the success it is.

Peter J. Boyd,
Scottish Regional Administrator

BIGGA forges closer links with international associations

Right: At the GCSAA Banquet during the Orlando Show a memorable speech by Walter Woods was followed by presentations, including this portrait, to the Old Tom Morris Award winner by outgoing GCSAA President, Tommy Witt

Below: Association chiefs get together in Quebec City. Pictured are Steve Mona, GCSAA; Ken Cousineau, CGSA; Neil Thomas, BIGGA with Marie Thorn, Senior Turf Specialist with Syngenta.

Below right: Pictured at the recent CGSA Conference and Show in Quebec City are Vince Gillis, recently retired Executive Director of the CGSA with CGSA Past President, Doug Meyer.



Gleneagles Excellence in Golf Award winner

Lee Relf, 21, from Colchester, a final year HND Sports Turf and Golf Course Management student at Writtle College, is the 2001 winner of the Gleneagles Excellence in Golf Award Scheme.

To win the award, Lee submitted two 5,000 word dissertations, which he then followed up with 20 minute presentations to a panel of judges.

The GEGAS initiative is supported by FEGGA and sponsored by Textron, and is a 12 month educational and practical training programme for young greenkeepers from around the globe, based at The Gleneagles Hotel.

It is open to students who are looking beyond a basic greenkeeping career and wish to develop their skills

to become golf Course Managers of the future. The scheme can accommodate a maximum of eight students, who are selected from colleges and educational facilities in the UK and now, with FEGGA as a partner, from across Europe. Textron's sponsorship includes an expenses paid visit for the winning student to visit the GCSAA Show in the USA.

The scheme was established in 1994 and has grown year on year providing students with all the necessary greenkeeping skills, together with a unique opportunity for personal development during their year-long work placement.

"Lee is the first winner of the award since FEGGA added their support for the scheme. His dissertations and

subsequent presentations were of the highest order and worthy of the accolade," said Jimmy Kidd, Golf Courses and Estate Director at The Gleneagles Hotel.

"During his 12 month placement he, and the other students, have had the opportunity to experience the alternative styles of maintenance required for soil and sand based greens. They have been able to work on the championship courses at Gleneagles and develop their greenkeeping talents. This is a wonderful opportunity to bring together students from all over Europe to train and gain experience and we are extremely grateful for the sponsorship from Textron that makes it happen."

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FOR GREENKEEPERS BY GREENKEEPERS

Ernie Hart

It is with great regret that I report the death of Ernie Hart.

Ernie was born in 1923 and apart from the War years spent most of his working life connected with our industry.

He was the East Anglia Section President and one of the biggest supporters of BIGGA I have ever had the honour to have known. After his retirement some 14 years ago Ernie would spend some of his time visiting golf clubs around East Anglia encouraging greenkeepers to join the Association. Last year Ernie was put forward for and granted Life Membership of the Association for all the work he had done for the East Anglia Section.

Ernie was a friend to everyone and always there to help, he will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace.

Ian Willett
East Anglia Section Secretary

If you've got an email account, and want to keep up to date with the latest news and events from the turfcare industry, drop us an email, and we'll add you to our ever increasing list of online subscribers. We'll then inform you of any forthcoming features and events via email.

Simply send an email to:

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quoting your name and Membership number, and we'll do the rest - it's that easy!

The Grand Tour Scholarship 2002

The Grand Tour Scholarship invites golf course design and turfgrass management students for the third time to apply for a journey to leading golf courses throughout the United States. The scholarship is once again sponsored by the TORO Company and offers a unique learning experience to future leaders in our industry. The trips are going to take place in August and are organised by the founder of The Grand Tour Scholarship, Bettina Schrickel, golf course architect (EIGCA) and president of Lioness Golf LLC.

The scholarship offers four students the opportunity to visit a variety of famous historic and modern golf courses on the east coast and west coast of the United States, respectively. The Western Route leads to 22 golf courses in three weeks; the Eastern Route includes 25 courses and takes four weeks. Courses to be visited include Augusta National, The National Golf Links of America, TPC at Sawgrass, The Country Club in Brookline, Cypress Point Golf Club, Pebble Beach Golf Links, Riviera Country Club and Pinehurst. Experience has proven the benefit of two students travelling together to share knowledge and impressions and split the task or driving across the country. Students will have the opportunity to walk each golf course, study the layout and talk to the Superintendent.

Golf course design and turfgrass management students from all over the world are invited to apply for the scholarship. Last year's successful candidates came from England, Germany and the United States. Applicants shall be at least 21 years old and have demonstrated significant efforts and results in their educational career.

The scholarship covers costs for flight tickets, rental cars, fuel and hotel accommodation for the duration of the journeys. Students will be provided with the Scholarship Route Book that includes detailed directions, useful tips and safety advice. Applicants must be in possession of a valid passport and drivers license.

Deadline for application is May 15, 2002. The Grand Tour Scholarship Committee, will select successful candidates according to the contents and quality of application documents.

For application forms and further information, please contact Bettina Schrickel by e-mail: lionessgolf@aol.com or telephone: (+1) 954-647-3436.

Toro for St Andrews Bay

Toro has supplied a complete range of turf equipment to maintain the two new cliff top championship golf courses at the £50 million St Andrews Bay Golf Resort & Spa.

The spectacular complex, which includes a 209 bedroom luxury hotel, enjoys breathtaking views over the Firth of Tay, and is the only golf club in the world with views of two Open Championship venues - Carnoustie and St Andrews!

Set among 503 acres, 55 of which are designated as SSSI, the gently undulating courses - The Torrance, which opened in September, and The Devlin, opening next summer - have been kept as natural as possible with the replanting of native flowers and gorse. Toro has been awarded an exclusive five-year lease agreement at St Andrews Bay.

"I was asked what I wanted on the



course and said 'Toro,' said Course Superintendent, Neil Ballingall, who was Course Manager at Moray Golf Club before joining St Andrews Bay.

The picture shows, front, Neil Ballingall, third from left, with from the left Scott McNeil, of dealers Henderson Grass Machinery, Lely's George Macdonald and Henderson's Graeme Millar, with the St Andrews Bay greenkeepers.

Long standing relationship

In 1932 the founder of Sisis, William Hargreaves, visited the Board of Greenkeeping Research (now STRI) at Bingley to show his netball posts and tennis net supports. In conversation with the first Director, Mr R.B. Dawson, he was advised to consider designing machinery to maintain the growing number of sports grounds and golf courses.

Over the years SISIS has maintained its friendship with the STRI and 70 years on William Hargreaves Joint Managing Director of Sisis and grandson of the founder and current Director of the STRI, Dr Gordon McKillop, met up to look at a Sisis Aerator circa. 1936 in the History of Turfcare exhibition held during BTME.



Then and now: Sisis and the STRI



Training numbers are on the increase

THE number of golf greenkeepers undergoing training has leapt 20% in the past 12 months, according to new figures from the GTC. There are 2,817 greenkeepers in formal training in the current year, an increase of 445 on the previous year.

The news has been welcomed by the GTC and bodes well for the quality of golf courses in years to come. The increase is attributable to more and more employers opting for work based training solutions.

N/SVQ Levels 2 and 3 continue to be the qualifications most in

demand, but Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma numbers have also shown healthy growth.

The online Internet learning option is also proving popular, especially at Level 4. One establishment where online learning is taking off is Boston GC in Lincolnshire, where greenkeeper John Osborne has just completed NVQ Level 2 Sports turf.

"Although this type of learning does not suit everyone, in John's case it has really paid off," said Secretary Stephen Shaw.

"For the club the benefits are obvious as the greenkeeper spends less time away from his club, but we decide on training on a case-by-case basis.

"The most important consideration is what the individual greenkeeper wants. They have to be comfortable with the kind of training they receive."

The GTC's Education Director David Golding concurred.

"While the growth in training numbers is very encouraging, we at the GTC encourage all employers to invest in staff training as it is the only sure way of ensuring better golf courses."

Textron trip a success

One hundred and thirty greenkeepers representing Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and Wales augmented by a small party from the Middle East and South Africa attended the GCSAA Show in Orlando recently, courtesy of Textron Golf & Turf and their dealership network.

Numerous airlines were kept busy as greenkeepers flew in from all parts of the globe and assembled at the Crowne Plaza Resort Hotel on International Drive for the four day visit. Day two saw the party taken by coach to the nearby Orange County Convention Centre, where they were guests on the Jacobsen stand.

The following day the guests were taken to Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club and Lodge. An early lunch was followed by a series of focus groups with members of Textron's UK and USA product management and engineering teams. The group was split into five teams and moved between the five sessions where they were able



to discuss the future development of equipment across Textron's entire product range.

"We have been delighted with the response to the focus groups from our greenkeeping colleagues. There has been free and frank exchange of views with a whole range of issues debated, from product enhancement to the future of greenkeeping on both sides of the Atlantic. It has provided an excellent opportunity to spend really valuable time with end-users and I think everyone was able to appreciate

the all-round benefits of the visit," said Glynn Patrick, Textron's International Sales Director.

Andrew Hall, Head Greenkeeper at St George's Hill Golf Club, in Surrey, added, "The whole four day trip was terrific, especially the focus group sessions at Bay Hill. We came away feeling that the Americans were listening to the Europeans, which was very encouraging. I'm sure I speak on behalf of all the other guys in the group: the atmosphere was terrific, the company and hospitality equally so."

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Scotts

Introducing a course policy

I very much enjoyed a short visit to Harrogate and meeting so many old friends after a number of years. Discussions, debates on generalities and technical subjects over a beer, a coffee or in the dining room left me with the profound impression of a major change in the profession of greenkeeping since I had last been involved.

Now there is so much confidence and total command of the subject and the ability to communicate precisely and convincingly. Much of this has to be due to the educational programme so well run by BIGGA and others. But it also owes something to the support of clubs as well, of course, to those who have taken up the challenges which faced them.

We all know that every course and club is different. But I was surprised to hear of so many common problems. And yet one of the tools to overcome many of these problems has not been taken up as strongly as I had thought. Even in the March issue of Greenkeeper International Chris Haspell from Denmark and Barney Wright both refer to it. I am talking about the Course Policy - Chris calls it a Plan - and although we got it going some ten years ago it has not been executed as widely as I had believed. The advantages of such an approach supported by Committees and agreed by members, are substantial.

- It clearly defines roles and responsibilities of Committees, Secretaries, and Course Managers
- It simplifies communication with members and avoids misunderstandings
- Ensures continuity and avoids piecemeal decisions
- Improves morale and efficiency of greenstaff
- Establishes a code of conduct of all on the course which enhances safety

If you are still not convinced read Chapter 6 of Malcolm Peake's "Confessions of a Chairman of Green".

Duncan McGilvary has made some excellent points which will surely be followed up. If the implementation of a Course Policy needs a little help Ed McCabe or myself are available if contacted at our club, Brokenhurst Manor GC.

Arthur King, Lyvington

Email your news, views and letters to:
scott@bigga.co.uk

A right to reply from Denmark

Having just read the February issue of Greenkeeper International I feel I need to reply to three of the letters written in the magazine.

I would first of all like to thank Alex McCombie for his kind words regarding the article that I wrote in the January issue of Greenkeeper International and also the positive reaction I received from colleagues at Harrogate. It appears that it has made people realise that the future is not about green is beautiful but the grasses that we are trying to grow and our goal must be to achieve greens that can survive with limited fertiliser, water and no chemical control. This will become the reality in the UK in the near future and if you have 100% Poa greens you should start worrying now and make that change.

Alex is right in that Education is the key if golf members are to understand what needs to be done to ensure quality greens in the future when you have no chemical control.

Imagine the scenario. You have poa greens, no fungicide and it is October. It has been raining for two weeks and is 14 degrees. You have a serious outbreak of fusarium. What can you do? The answer is nothing except watch as 50% of your green is taken out by the disease. Now who will be blamed for the poor state of the greens? You of course and your job is on the line as your greenkeeping abilities are questioned.

The above scenario is the reality now here in Denmark except through educating and communicating with

our members they accept that the greens will have problems until we eliminate the poa. Are your members ready to accept the same?

I should also like to thank Richard Penley-Martin, Secretary, Stoneham Golf Club, for his comments and making me aware that the Secretary is responsible for running the whole company and not just one part of it. This is not the case at many clubs today.

I am however happy to say that outside of the UK European clubs are run differently and that Course Managers are allowed to solely manage the golf course which is the reason they are employed in the first place and at our club the Club Secretary has absolutely nothing to do with the running of the golf course and I answer directly to the Board of Management.

I would like to make Richard Penley-Martin aware that after years of ex RAF employees taking on the Secretary's role at golf clubs it would appear that at forward thinking clubs experienced Course Managers who have also gained management skills through education courses put on by BIGGA are now taking over the running of golf clubs as General Managers which can only be good for the future of any golf club having an expert in golf course management communicating to members on a daily basis.

Finally, I have to thank the Happy Head Greenkeeper, Leslie Howkins of Cleethorpes Golf Club, for his let-

ter. I am sorry to hear that the attitude of people like myself and Duncan McGilvary bring on problems ourselves because we stand up for what we believe in and what is in the best interest of our profession. I am afraid that I must be working in a different profession to Leslie. If you go back to Duncan's original letter he talks about, "Don't rock the boat" and "Take the salary and do as you are told" and here is a greenkeeper who readily accepts these statements and says he is happy.

Remember that we are custodians of our golf courses for only a short space of time and it is our duty to manage and leave that golf course in the best possible condition for the next generation of golfers and also the next Head Greenkeeper. But who would like to take over after Leslie?

"If they want slow, bumpy greens that they can stop the ball on with a driver and don't aerate them as it makes them miss so many putts who are we to argue."

Leslie goes on to tell us that this is where all his skill, knowledge and experience is used and then tells us that he accepts that the course is not aesthetically pleasing or that he is not producing a good golf course and we are accused of bringing problems on ourselves!

Here is the perfect example of one man being led and not leading.

Ian C Tomlinson, Course Manager,
 Rungsted Golf Club, Denmark

Ian gives thanks for Stateside trip

I would like to thank Bernhard & Company and BIGGA for allowing me to be part of the team of delegates that visited Orlando this February. The trip was a great success, it was an experience not to be missed and very educational, it was fascinating to compare golf course in America with those in Britain. I had the pleasure of speaking to many Golf

Superintendents from all over the US and it was nice to hear that they hold such high regard for the courses in Great Britain. I have already spoken to a lot of greenkeepers throughout my section telling them of the visit and how beneficial it was.

I have planned some talks at our golf meetings this year and I will be talking to various Course Managers

when I go to assess their lads involved in their NVQ's.

Please also pass on my thanks to all the team for the co-operation that went on behind the scenes between Bernhards and BIGGA.

Well done everyone.

Ian Willett, Course Manager,
 Thorpeness GC

Playing with others' lives

I read with interest the letter by Barney Wright in the March issue re. "Respect". Greenkeepers have always had to put up with members knowing better than them, but I have found over the last decade or so that it has become worse.

Our profession must be one of the few which is criticised by everybody. You can go into any clubhouse and there will be a set of members who

know just how the course should be run. These members hold court and people tend to listen to them.

Greenstaff take more flack than other golf club staff. You cannot educate these people. If you put on an open night and ask the club agronomist to talk they stay away, but the next day they are back holding court. These people are playing with others' lives.

The job is hard enough without

sniping from your own lines. More and more good greenkeepers are leaving the trade every year taking with them years of knowledge but as has been said in the bar many times, "anyone can cut grass".

There are more good members than bad ones, it's just the good ones say nothing.

K. Heslop, Head Greenkeeper,
 Brancepeth GC, Durham

Legislation is the key

Re Richard Penley-Martin's letter in February's issue. Just a few observations. You are a manager and you understand that your Head Greenkeeper is as well. Good, that's the way it should be. I have been in greenkeeping for nearly 30 years, 23 at my present club Denbigh. In the past, and this is tongue in cheek, a Secretary had to have the right accent, drink the right whisky and carry out the wishes of the committee unconditionally. That is not now the case. In the time I have been in my present job I have seen a dozen Secretary/Managers come

and go they have all been good men and I have had a good working relationship with all of them. They have all made it their business to understand the greenkeeping side of things. They have left because they weren't allowed to manage. Secretary/Managers and Head Greenkeepers do have good relationships because our associations keep us informed of all legislation etc.

Gone are the days when old Tom can climb a ladder to clean the gutters of the clubhouse and golf clubs now need truly professional people to run their affairs

both on the course and in clubhouse who should be paid accordingly.

Which brings me back to my original letter. It will be legislation that forces the way the average members' club is run, this is why I feel there aren't as many volunteers as before, they are starting to realise where there's blame there's a claim and who in their right mind wants to take up a position with out pay that could end up with them on the wrong side of a court case.

P.S My dad was in the RAF.

Dave Goodridge, Denbigh Golf Club

Sharing the knowledge

I have been reading the letter from Mr T. A. Smith in this month's magazine 'In defence of NVQs' and I feel it deserves some sort of response.

I could not believe the comments Mr Smith made about keeping information from the club members on how we maintain the golf course and mocking record keeping and report writing, indicating for those greenkeepers to get out on the course and do some work, then finishing the statement with the comment 'if they don't ask then don't tell them'.

Is this the year 2002 or is it 1802? These comments and attitudes are out dated, untrue and have to change or greenkeeping as a professional industry will never be taken seriously. Science and industries can only progress with the sharing and understanding of knowledge. I feel it is our duty to share the knowledge we have with not just people in our industry but also the people who keep our industry alive - the paying customer.

The comment stating that a little information in the wrong hands can be dangerous is perfectly true. However, it is our responsibility to educate the uneducated in such a way that they understand what the hell it is we are talking about. At the golf course I work on we have an information board (The greenkeeping board) in the clubhouse right outside the pro-shop. It was put in this location to encourage everyone who comes into the building to read it. On this board we have such information as a weather forecast for the week ahead (taken from the met office website), rainfall records from the past two years in bar chart form for easy comparison, the Course Manager's report for the month ahead stating what work is likely to be carried out on the golf course. There is a photograph of every greenkeeper who works on the course with their title underneath so everyone actually knows who we are. There is a section headed 'Green keeping methods and techniques in which every month I write a short report on an aspect of greenkeeping, such as Hollow Coring,

explaining in layman's terms the reasons for the operation. In the past there has been headings such as 'The top 10 questions asked to green staff by golfers' and 'Aeration - what it is and why we do it' to name but a few. This sharing of information has been nothing but a great success with golfers and visiting guests alike show their appreciation for the work we do.

It is not dangerous to share knowledge if it is shared correctly. I agree with Mr Smith with his comments that people do not want to know the exact science behind an operation; this is why you must explain in a language the non professional can understand and appreciate. This sharing of knowledge has given the members and guests to the golf course an insight into the skilled profession of greenkeeping and the comments such as 'why do you always have to do that now' are vanishing. The feedback we have received at committee meetings has been remarkable and very positive. The age old impressions of the greenkeeper as the man who just cuts the grass is disappearing and we are being looked upon as qualified professional people which surely can only benefit this profession.

Knowledge and education is the key for any type of progression in this industry and it is extremely important that we all understand that the NVQs are not the only way forward. It is clear by reading the magazine month after month that the NVQs are the flavour of the month where further education is concerned. It was quite disheartening to read the comments on the very next page stating that the Higher National Diplomas and Higher National Certificates can breed people who know how to do the job on paper but might not be able to do it in reality.

This may be true to some extent, but I have worked with people with NVQs who also can't do the job very well. This may be down to poor training and just getting bums on seats at colleges, 'get them in, get their money, and pass them. I have worked with people in the past who's NVQ level 2 training

on weed identification consisted of a quick walk around the golf course with the lecturer pointing at the weeds and telling 25 students what it was - and that was it... or the level 4 which consists of one visit a year from your tutor to see how you're getting on, where's the training? This letter is not about putting down the NVQs or any other type of training but I would like to state that they are not the be all and end all of further education and that for an organisation such as BIGGA to point out that the HNC student may not be able to do the job is an unfair statement. This is also unfair to the student who has undoubtedly studied hard for the course.

I have completed NVQ training and I have also completed the HNC and found both of them to be extremely worth while courses. At this moment in time I am one year into my MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I decided to go for the MSc rather than the other courses on offer because of the high level of teaching and the fact that it is recognised world wide as a top qualification.

The fact that this high standard of qualification even exists in our industry is a huge step in the right direction for our industry.

This profession is moving forward, lets all start singing from the same hymn sheet and recognise that all the different qualifications on offer to the greenkeeper have their benefits and this industry does not revolve around just one. There is a qualification out there to suite each individuals' career aspirations be it NVQ, HND, HNC or MSc, all of which have their own merits and all will undoubtedly increase one's knowledge and understanding of the job to what ever level you feel you can handle. Gaining knowledge and sharing knowledge surely can only be a positive way forward for us.

If we do what we've always done we will get what we always get - lack of respect. Let's move on.

Ian Chenery, Assistant Course Manager, Woodbury Park Hotel G&CC

Huge thanks to well wishers

At 9am on the 22nd January this year I had two appointments, one with a surgeon's scalpel, and the other with the opening of the BTME. It seemed ironic that both should be exactly the same day and the same time as each other. I had always said that I would never miss a BTME, but on this occasion I had little choice. However, as days went by I became very much aware of another aspect of BIGGA membership, that of camaraderie, and the bond that runs through greenkeeping and our Association. I received so many cards, letters and phone calls from members and staff wishing me well, that I lost count, but I can assure you that every one was very much appreciated, as was the rum from Devon and Cornwall Section, and the box of fruit from the South West & South Wales Region. I wonder how they knew what to send.

I would like to thank every one of you for the kindness shown, you will never know how much it meant to me and Marion to know how many of you took the time and trouble to send your best wishes. I am getting fitter by the day and will soon be back among you all. Thanks again.

Gordon Child, Churston, South Devon

Textron thanks

On behalf of myself and all the others who attended the GCSAA Show in Orlando Florida this year, I would like to extend a big thank you to Textron. The show was very enlightening especially for those of us who have never had this opportunity in the past. The hospitality, accommodation and indeed everything else during our stay was second to none. The group focus meetings were interesting and helpful to both Textron and their customers and I am sure will go a long way to ensuring more improvements and innovations in the future.

Ross Wilson, Course Manager, Parasampia Golf & Country Club

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If you've got an email account, and want to keep up to date with the latest news and events from the turfcare industry, drop us an email, and we'll add you to our ever increasing list of online subscribers. We'll then inform you of any forthcoming features and events via email.

Simply send an email to: updates@bigga.co.uk quoting your name and Membership number, and we'll do the rest!



BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson makes a plea for more feedback, advises on Regional Training and continues his Key Skills Corner

Education and Training Feedback

There have been a number of comments posted on the BIGGA website referring to the National Education Conference, Workshops and Seminars held at Harrogate in January, some positive and others negative. Sami and I try to meet the education and training needs of all greenkeepers by arranging a variety of education and training opportunities at Harrogate and around the Regions. We regularly ask greenkeepers what subjects and presenters they would like to see for example, we issued 300 feedback sheets at Harrogate in January, but we get very little feedback. We interpret this to mean that the vast majority of BIGGA members are happy to let us do the work of selecting speakers and topics and are happy with the results. One suggestion that we do get is "more greenkeeper presenters". Who are they? Are they willing to speak? Are they worth listening to?

Let us know your ideas by writing, phoning, sending an e-mail to ken@bigga.co.uk, using the bulletin

board, speaking to us direct, speaking to your Regional Administrator or Section Secretary.

Regional Training

The Spring series of BIGGA Regional Training Courses is drawing to a close with greenkeepers attending courses as diverse as Basic Computing, Soil Science, Essential Management Skills, Budgets and Finance, Presentation Skills, Chainsaw Use and Health and Safety. We can afford to present such a wide range of courses at very heavily subsidised prices thanks to our Education and Development Fund. You could cover the cost of several years membership by attending just one course. For example each one day course costs BIGGA approximately £1500. Each delegate pays £30 and we average six delegates per course. Therefore the total subsidy is £1320 and dividing this by six gives a subsidy per delegate of £220. Who says it is not worth becoming a BIGGA member?

The Connexions Card

The Government is keen to encourage 16-19 year olds, in England, to stay in learning and acquire the skills they need to flourish in adult life and has introduced a scheme called the Connexions Card. The card is available free of charge to over 2 million young people and it works by awarding points for regular attendance at school, college, at work based learning and for voluntary work. From 2002 onwards, active cardholders will be able to exchange their points for branded goods or services, interesting opportunities and exciting experiences. There is also a loyalty scheme whereby cardholders can receive discounts and special offers from a range of retailers including computer games, fast food, clothes, leisure activities, travel and CDs.

To get more information, telephone 0808172 3333 or look at the Connexions Card website: www.connexionscard.com



The Fund provides the key to the future for greenkeeper, golf club and game. Individuals and companies can join the Golden Key Circle and Silver Key Circle. For details, please contact Neil Thomas, Executive Director on 01347 833800 or via admin@bigga.co.uk

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If you've got an email account why not send an email to the education department, where we can place you into our exclusive education email address book. We can then keep you up-to-date with education news and events as they happen.

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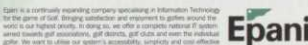
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EDUCATION KEY SKILLS CORNER

Regular readers will have seen the first Key Skills Corner in last month's Greenkeeper International, where I left you with a poser about Full Stops. Check to see if you found all the errors:

Welcome to BIGGA HOUSE. Today is Tuesday, the 3rd of March. The next Public Holiday, in England, will be Easter.

This month's subject is full stops and alternative ways to end a sentence.

For example, closing a sentence.

The Staff of BIGGA Headquarters support the Jeans for Genes Charity.

With abbreviations.

Note that full stops could be placed in the acronym BIGGA (B.I.G.G.A.) but modern writing tends not to use them.

Abbreviations such as Mr, Mon, Apr could have full stops but modern writing tends not to use them.

As a decimal point.

The Golf Club Budget showed a deficit of £67.50.

To show missing text.

Item 4.11 on the Agenda should be amended to read "... referred to the Green Committee".

The only other punctuation marks that can be used to close a sentence are exclamation marks and question marks.

Question marks should be used only for a direct question.

What time does the shop open?

Exclamation marks do not, usually, have a place in business writing however, they can be used to highlight text for humour or great emphasis.

Here is an example for you to try, which incorporates errors with capital letters and with full stops and question marks.

thank you for attending the recent annual general meeting of the south north east section i have enclosed a copy of the minutes for your information please contact sid jones if you wish to attend the next golf day do you wish to attend btme this year

Good luck. Watch out for the answer in the May Edition of Greenkeeper International.