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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Greenkeeper INTERNATIONAL

The official monthly magazine of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association

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THIS EXCLUSIVE SQUALL JACKET

Don't miss your chance to win this fantastic jacket worth £60 in our exciting new Buyers' Guide competition in association with Allen Power -

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FOR GREENKEEPERS BY GREENKEEPERS CHAT GREENKEEPERS

Setting ourselves challenges

I find it hard to believe but I've just experienced my seventh Harrogate. It seems like only a few months ago that I was meeting so many of you for the very first time, but now it is friends of quite long standing whom I bump into each January.

This year, of course, the week took on a new form with a three day show, beginning on Tuesday morning, and the inaugural Golf Club Show joining BTME in the Harrogate International Conference Centre.

Both innovations could be deemed unqualified successes with record numbers attending the Show - 8,629, more than 10% up on last year's record total - and the feedback from the Golf Club Show exhibitors extremely positive. It must be hoped that after such a promising launch this Show will go on from strength to strength and reinforce the belief that Harrogate is the "one-stop shop" for greenkeepers and golf club officials alike.

I, like so many of you I met during the week, am already looking forward to BTME 2003 - my eighth - although to surpass the quality of what we have just experienced it will take a fair bit of preparation and imagination. Still, as Sir Edmund Hillary might have said as he stood on the foothills of Everest, what would life be like if we didn't have challenges? Between now and next January every effort will be made to ensure that your week in North Yorkshire is as rewarding, and as entertaining, as it can possibly be.

This month I must pass on my congratulations to you on providing the magazine with the strongest Letters' page since I have been Editor. In fact, calling it a Letters' page is doing it a severe injustice as it stretches to two full pages and is packed with well expressed arguments on a range of subjects.

Credit for much of this must go to Duncan McGilvary, Course Manager at Potters Bar GC, whose article, "Should we lead or should we be led" was the catalyst for a flood of correspondence stretching over the last three months.

It is a topic which obviously struck a cord with you all and, as the debate continues to develop, I'm sure the letters will keep flooding in.

Following on from the article Duncan hosted a couple of meetings at Harrogate at which many of those who had commented up until that point, as well as several other interested parties, discussed the issues raised by the piece. Feedback from those meetings will be aired in the magazine in due course.

The article also made its mark outside the green-keeping fraternity and was discussed at the EGU Masterclass at Woodhall Spa in early January, where more greenkeepers and golf officials were given the chance to air their views.

Such well considered debate, while uncovering a range of opinions, is undoubtedly healthy and does much to strengthen the view that greenkeepers should be given full rein to their voice and access to debates within their golf clubs.

Scott MacCallum
Editor

Brian's ordeal at hands of armed robbers

Brian Woodhouse, Head Greenkeeper of Chalford Golf Club, in Buckinghamshire, endured a terrifying ordeal late last year when, early one morning when he was first to arrive at the club, he was attacked, handcuffed, beaten up and asked if he wanted to die by robbers armed with a shotgun.

Speaking in his local paper, the Bucks Examiner News and Advertising, Brian, 54, said that at first he resisted but they had started hitting him around the face.

"One of the guys threatened to shoot me in the legs and asked if I wanted to die. They got the handcuffs on me and kicked me in the stomach," said Brian.

Since the attack new security measures have been put in place at the golf club and Brian has

Police took 'too long' to get to scene of gun-raid

report by Helen Osborne

MANAGERS have criticised police after it took them nearly 20 minutes to travel two miles to a golf club to tackle a violent armed raid, in Little Chalfont.

Greenkeeper Brian Woodhouse, 54, was handcuffed, beaten up, and asked: "Do you want to die?" by the would-be robbers armed with a shotgun.

The victims at Chalfont Golf Club, called three times before police officers from Amersham arrived.

"It's disgraceful," said owner of the club Mike Dunne, who chased the intruders after discovering the battered and bruised Mr Woodhouse.

Manager, of the club in Lodge Lane.

she explained.

"We received a call about the robbery at 6.54am. Nine officers were on their way to the incident within one minute of that call being made even though they were not yet officially on duty.

"Police were in the vicinity within two minutes and surrounding locations including the railway station were checked very quickly.

"An officer attended the scene itself at 7.12am, by which time we had been able to confirm that the shotgun used in the incident had not been discharged and there was

Flashback to the chilling headline in Brian's local newspaper

shifted his hours so that he arrives at the club during daylight.

"Many golf clubs are isolated so I would caution any greenkeepers

who tend to be first to arrive at the club to take care," said Brian, who has yet to recover fully from the trauma.

A second series of training courses planned by TGA

Following a successful launch last year the Turf grass Growers Association (TGA) will be holding a second series of half-day training courses at venues in the West Midlands, Yorkshire, Berkshire and Surrey between March and June.

Targeted primarily at professionals who supply, specify or install quality sports, amenity or ornamental turf surfaces, the courses are being hosted by independent turf consultant and agronomist, Robert Laycock, the appointed advisor to the TGA.

Course content has been carefully chosen to help attendees understand and achieve optimum selection, installation and after-care of cultivated turf. Specific attention will be paid to the importance of turf quality and the various methods of quality assessment, including the TGA standards for cultivated turf, independently drawn up in 1996. Robert will also look at the selection of turf for different

lawn situations together with lawn design, establishment and long-term care, including the most suitable equipment for the job.

The first TGA training course of the 2002 season takes place at Birmingham City Football Club on March 18. Further courses will be held on April 23 at a venue near Bradford, Yorkshire; on May 22 at a venue near Reading, Berks; and on June 18 at a venue near Reigate, Surrey.

To register for or receive further details on the TGA conference or the TGA's 2002 training courses, contact TGA headquarters, telephone 01728 723672 or e-mail: david.clarke@turfgrass.co.uk



GTC article gets Chairman of Green thinking right 'On Course'

An article in the new issue of the GTC newsletter "On Course" has set at least one Chairman of Green thinking.

Management consultant Frank Newberry had argued that better management skills were allowing Course Managers, Head Greenkeepers and their Deputies to cope with the ever-increasing demands put upon them and Brian Jackson, Chairman of Green at Bishop Auckland GC, read the piece and immediately contacted David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, to say how much he enjoyed the article.

"My time in industry has taught me that training is very worthwhile. Anything which motivates people and inspires self-confidence has to be good," said Brian.

"Frank's article rang bells with me and reinforced in my mind that training is the way forward for the industry."

David retires from industry after 45 years

David Smith, a Director of Atherton and Ellis, has retired after a career which spanned 45 years having joined the company in 1956 as Secretary

From the start of his career David was involved in sales, and attended exhibitions to keep abreast of industry developments. The main event in those days was the Institute of Groundsman Exhibition at Motpur Park, now SALTEX held at Windsor. He holds what must be a record of never having missed an exhibition in 45 years.



David pictured with Clive Osgood and Stephen Bernhard at last month's BTME

Lely is new UK irrigation distributor for Toro

The Toro Company has appointed Lely (UK) Limited as its Irrigation products distributor for the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Philip A. Burkart, Toro Vice President and General Manager, International Division announced the move. He said that the development, effective from February 1, enhanced and expands the partnership between Toro and Lely, which began its role as UK distributor of Toro Commercial equipment, such as professional turf mowers, aerators and utility vehicles, in 1983.

"Lely has been an outstanding partner handling Toro Commercial products, and we anticipate the Lely team will deliver similarly exceptional performance with Toro Irrigation," said Philip. "The Lely staff now includes a team of irrigation professionals whose experience and expertise, combined with their operational excellence, will make a positive difference for Toro irrigation customers in the UK and Ireland."

In its new role, Lely, of St Neots, Cambridgeshire, distributes Toro Irrigation products such as sprinklers, valves and controllers to Toro Irrigation dealers throughout the UK and Ireland. Lely also provides dealers and end-users with next day parts, service and technical support from its



Lely Managing Director, Graham Dale

in-house staff and the Toro National Support Network (NSN) Global computer support service.

"Toro is the only brand to offer both commercial equipment and irrigation, and Lely now becomes the UK and Ireland's source of Toro Total Solutions," said Philip. "Everyone at Lely shares the Toro commitment to provide value, productivity and strong product support. We feel fortunate to expand our relationship with such a quality partner."

Toro Irrigation was previously distributed over here by TIL Irrigation Limited.

Toro personnel such as Andy Brown, Irrigation Manager for the UK and Northern Europe, are working closely with Lely to ensure the newly appointed distributor provides Toro Irrigation customers with excellent customer care.

Lely Managing Director, Graham Dale, who started in the turf industry in 1973 and has been involved with Toro products since 1980, welcomed the opportunity to expand the Lely-Toro partnership.

"We have enjoyed a long and rewarding relationship with Toro and are pleased to increase our role as a Toro distributor," said Graham.

"A primary focus of our Toro Irrigation business will be to strengthen partnerships with existing golf customers. We also see significant opportunity for large-turf and golf customers to renovate and upgrade existing irrigation installations with products such as the Toro Gemini-Trident control systems."

Lely assumes responsibility for supporting Toro Irrigation in use by several high-profile UK golf properties, including the St Andrews Links Trust, Wentworth Golf Club, Royal County Down, Celtic Manor, and the K-Club, which will host the 2005 Ryder Cup, as well as stadiums that are home to many leading football and rugby clubs.

IOG conference goes back to basics

The IOG Conference 2002 "Back to Basics" takes place from Friday March 22 to Tuesday March 26 at The Holiday Inn, Newport, South Wales.



Among those speaking on the programme over the course of the Conference are Gareth Davies, Chair of the Sports Council for Wales; Dr Stephen Baker, of the STRI; Giles Wardle, Irrigation Consultant; Dr Alan Gange, of Royal Holloway College; Martin Jones, of Myerscough College; Justin Smith, of TurfTrax; Douglas Shearer, of Elmwood College, and Jim MacKenzie, of Celtic Manor Golf Course and Resort.

Further information can be obtained from the IOG Tel: 01908 312511.

Reduce annual expenditure by joining Golf England

Golf clubs throughout England will soon get a chance to join Golf England - and to save money on their annual club expenditure.

Invitation packs are being mailed at the beginning of February to 1,900 clubs, along with a preview of the first of many offers available through the group-buying scheme. Clubs are being offered 15% off the cost of a range of fertiliser and ground-care treatment products; as well as catering equipment items at less than half price.

Clubs will also receive a reminder copy of the Golf England presentation made in November and December at roadshows around the country; promotional material to inform club and committee members; and finally two copies of the contract together with explanatory notes.

"Clubs should receive two copies of the pack in early February, and we know from our telephone calls that many clubs are ready to join as soon as they have their contracts," said Dale Clements, Marketing Director for Golf England.

Once a club returns its application to join, it will receive a welcome pack. This will include a CD-ROM catalogue of all the current products and services available on the group purchasing scheme which will allow them to place their first orders.

Illegal chemical use: Are you breaking the law?

Simon Barnaby, Technical Manager for The Scotts Company, has experienced an increase in the number of enquiries received relating to the potential use of pesticides not approved for use on turf areas. Scotts took the opportunity at BTME to bring the facts relating to the issue to the attention of their customers, and to warn them of the possible consequences.

Pesticide manufacture, storage, supply and application are regulated by law. There are a number of Acts of Parliament and Regulations that cover the above points. These include: Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH), Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA) and Control of Pesticide Regulations 1986 (COPR).

The legislation requires that no product may be used unless it has

government approval on the grounds of safety and efficacy. Everyone must comply with conditions of approval. Only chemicals with a recommendation on the label for use on Managed Amenity Turf can be legally advertised, supplied, stored and applied to Managed Amenity Turf situations. It is illegal to use any other chemical that does not have approval.

Why are there different products for different situations?

Chemicals used on Managed Amenity Turf situations are specifically formulated and designed for use on turf. Each product has to undergo extensive research on turf in order to ascertain product efficacy e.g. does it work. Stringent research is also carried out to ascertain human, animal and environmental safety - this work can take a number of years to complete. Once above criteria is met PSD (Pesticide Safety Directorate) will reg-

ister the chemical with a specific Approval e.g. For Use On Managed Amenity Turf.

What if a non approved chemical is used?

The user, the club or site manager, supplier and advisor are all liable; and may suffer any or all of the following:

Heavy fines. Unlimited amount (a recent misuse case resulted in a £220,000 fine plus costs)

Imprisonment. Up to two years in prison for each case

Insurance void. All cover void

Turf damage. Products not formulated for turf use may cause severe damage

No efficacy. Products not designed for use on turf may not work or could increase the risk of resistance

Environmental damage. Products not used for the specific purpose for which they were designed or labelled, may harm the environment

Operator exposure. Non approved products may carry inappropriate advice for the situation

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Paul appointed Finance Director

Paul Bray has been appointed Rolawn's Financial Director when Rolawn's current Financial Director, Paul Hopewell stood down after ten years with the Company. Paul joined the company as Financial Director Designate last October.



"I have enjoyed having the opportunity of getting to know the business and the people in it prior to formally taking over the role of

Financial Director. I am very much looking forward to being involved in the exciting opportunities which lie ahead for Rolawn."

Before joining Rolawn, Paul worked as Group Financial Controller for Higgins Agriculture Limited, the UK's largest independent potato merchant with growing, selling and distribution operations in the UK and mainland Europe, dealing with many European blue chip companies. Paul (39) is married with one daughter, and lives in Cawood, North Yorkshire

Ken Dawson, Rolawn's Chairman said, "we are extremely pleased that Paul has joined us. His expertise and experience will be important elements in supporting the future growth of our business".

Latest news?

www.bigga.org.uk/news.html

William joins Eammon Wall

William Garrett has recently joined consultants Eamonn Wall & Co at their Dollar office in Scotland. William replaces Alastair Seaman who is now in Nepal and remains an e-mail consultant with the firm.



William, 33, brings useful experience to the company in the fields of arboriculture, woodland conservation and continuous cover silviculture. Previously he worked for Coillte (Irish Forestry Board)

completing their inventory of native and historically significant woodlands before returning to the UK in December 2001. After graduating from the University of Wales, with an M.Sc. in Environmental Forestry William spent some time working for the Mersey Forest and Warrington Borough Council. Prior to his M.Sc. he obtained an NCH in Arboriculture from Merrist Wood and a BA from University of London. He has travelled extensively living and working in Spain and Italy and enjoys rock climbing, snow boarding and mountain running.

Rigby Taylor Matchplay Competition

The South Wales Section Rigby Taylor Matchplay Competition finals were played at Royal Porthcawl Golf Club. The eventual winners were the father and son combo of Jamie and Herbie Probert, of Pontaradawe GC who won the RT Rose Bowl. They defeated David Bray, of Morriston GC and Steve Mills, of Gower GC in the final.



L-R: David Carvey, Rigby Taylor Rep; Daryl Bray, Herbie Probert, Steve Mills, Roy Barker, Rigby Taylor rep with Jamie Probert, kneeling.

Lancaster Uni launches brand new modular training course for Industry

Lancaster University has launched a Modular Training for Industry programme, specifically for professionals working in the area of Plant Sciences and Agrochemistry, which aims to transfer knowledge and understanding from their research activities into industry.

The one to three day intensive courses are supported by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and have been designed to provide a new perspective to develop a sound understanding of the fundamental functioning of plants.

Full details of the current courses are shown on their website (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/deptS/PSi>) together with the relevant registration forms.

EGU host successful Greenkeeping Masterclass

The EGU Greenkeeping Masterclass, held at Woodhall Spa, in early January gave over 60 greenkeepers the chance to hear papers from Rex Kimberley, Terralift Ireland Ltd; Kate Entwistle, The Turf Disease Centre; John Nicholson, John Nicholson Associates; Graeme Francis, then of the Hydroscape Group, and Sue Ingram and David Watling, of the Environment Agency, who discussed Water Abstraction.

Organised by Neil Cockbill of the Golf Services Division and chaired by Colin Spurr, Chairman of the Golf Services Committee, the Conference also involved some team tasks with eight groups splitting up and preparing short presentations on four greenkeeper related subjects.

The sessions were split by a superb dinner in the EGU Headquarters and excellent after dinner entertainment from a rules expert.



Roland wins first Clive Edwin Smith trophy

At the Essex Section AGM held at Channels Golf Club the Section were able to add an impressive piece of silverware to their trophy cabinet. Clive Smith had been a Member at Frinton-on-Sea Golf Club until his premature death aged 52 earlier this year and had also been a Member at several other clubs during his working life.

Wherever he played his golf Clive had always had a kinship with the Greenkeepers and Clive, a modest 16 handicapper had always appreciated that whenever he did have a good

round it was generally attributed to the Greenkeepers and the condition that they had prepared the course. His widow Carol who often walked the course with him when he played knew of his appreciation of Greenkeepers and has donated to the Section a magnificent silver cup to be awarded to the Section's "Golfer of the Year". The first winner of the Trophy was Roland Hughes of Forrester Park Golf Club.

Right: Mrs Carol Smith presents the "Clive Edwin Smith" Trophy to Roland Hughes (Forrester Park GC)



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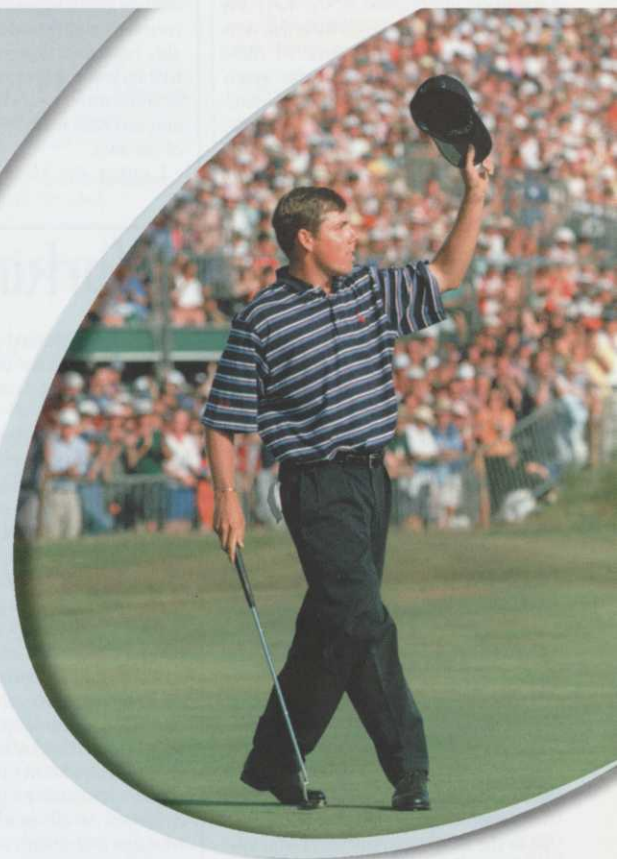
Finance is available on the Big Boss sprayer with a pause payment until July 26th at 0% based on January 2002 price list. The offer is subject to 65% of the RRP and acceptance by Humberclyde Farm Finance.

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Education is the key

Ian Tomlinson's excellent article in the January issue of Greenkeeper International was a breath of fresh air for those of us who believe in traditional greenkeeping, and should be a warning for those who rely on the combination of fertilisers and chemicals. Working abroad where pesticides have been banned and fertiliser use is being closely monitored would surely change the approach of many greenkeepers, and I firmly believe no matter what our suppliers tell us it is only a matter of time before we will be in the same position.

Ian describes in detail the causes of his Poa dominated greens and their subsequent failure. Excessive use of fertiliser and water combined with a minimal aeration programme is a recipe for disaster and Poa domination as well as a soaring chemical bill. It is surely time for us all to embrace these traditional principles he talks about and take a more cultural and environmentally friendly approach to greenkeeping. These principles are by no means new and have been the ones that Jim Arthur has long advocated. One of the most important factors, if we are to embark on such a radical change in policy and management, is the support of our members. Education is the key! We need strong leadership to form a nationwide education programme to make members understand that the 'green' courses they see every week on satellite television are neither the way forward or possible on our limited budgets and that a radical review is needed. This education programme must be carefully designed to promote the qualities of traditional British golf courses both from a playing and environmental perspective.

More importantly, it must be drawn up and presented from either the Home Unions or the R&A as they invariably have more respect among members than our Association. So let Ian's article be a catalyst for us as an Association and an industry to take a long hard look at the way we manage our golf courses and to put pressure on those governing bodies to help us educate our members on why there is a need for change.

A. McCombie, Parkstone Golf Club

Northern Seminar thanks from Longhirst

Just a small note to say thank you to Doug Bell and Bert Cross for bringing the recent Northern Seminar to Longhirst Hall GC. The speakers were entertaining and very informative. A thank you must also go to the 25 or so greenkeepers who travelled on a particularly cold and frosty day. It just goes to show the club members that greenkeepers do actually think of educating themselves! Looking forward to hosting next year's autumn competition. Regards,

Graham Chambers, Course Manager, Longhirst Hall, Northumberland

A Golf Club Manager's view

Prior to becoming a Golf Club Manager I spent 20 years as an electronics engineer. When I became a manager in this environment I was aware of the skill sets of my key managers and employees. It was not my job to manage their areas rather to make sure that they did it right and that they had everything that they needed to do it.

When I came in to golf, the one area where I had no skills was greenkeeping so I filled this gap by attending courses run by BIGGA and STRI. The information gained has been supplemented by becoming an Associate Member of BIGGA and actually reading Greenkeeper International. I also spend time talking to my greenstaff and learning from them. I am now in a position that I can discuss and question matters intelligently with my Head Greenkeeper and communicate information in detail to the membership (which hopefully they pass on to other members!).

I have worked with Head Greenkeepers from both ends of the spectrum: A young man who was happy to formulate our greens management policy with me and then to discuss greenkeeping matters with the members and the other who was probably capable of doing this but accepted that he was going to be told what to do by the committee and therefore sat back and accepted it and made no decisions of his own.

I expect my Head Greenkeeper to

come to me and tell me what we should be doing, be prepared to discuss the line he is taking and why he has eliminated other options, then get on with it and that is why he is being paid the salary commensurate with the job.

More and more golf clubs are changing their management structures to have small management committees. Because golf clubs have become businesses, the amount of legislation has escalated dramatically and is specific to the environment plus there are less and less volunteers for positions on the committees because of the pressures on time of modern life. These changes mean that the staff these clubs employ have an increasing self determination of their role as they become solely responsible, through higher management, for their department. 'Course Development' documents are rapidly becoming the norm as a way of eliminating the changeable nature of the Green Committee. These allow the greenkeeper to advise on the best management policy for the course and get it down in print. He can then be left to perform the job he is paid to do, with the committee/s only being involved with exceptions to the plan.

In some clubs these changes will happen slowly so the long standing Head Greenkeeper will have a chance to adapt if that is what is expected of him.

But in other clubs this will happen overnight and Head Greenkeepers should be preparing themselves for the change now! For existing Head

Greenkeepers, the majority of the change will have to be by self help, but for the staff being trained now, there should be an emphasis on applicable management techniques so that, as they become Deputy Heads and upwards, they are confident enough to be able to discuss the management of the links with senior management and not be afraid to stand their ground, backed by fact, if they feel they are correct. At the end of the day, if a company wants to go against specialist advice there is little you can do to stop them, but it is probably time to look for a new job!

The final thing that we have to remember is that WE have chosen a profession where the shareholders in the company are also the customers and can have direct daily access to the workforce which is not something that you will find in Lloyds Bank or ICI! Therefore, we have to deal with the situations that that environment brings accordingly.

Ian Tomlinson should be aware that the Secretary/General Manger is responsible for the running of the whole company and not just one part of it, therefore he should question what one of his heads of department is doing, but I wouldn't expect him to overrule that manager unless he has good reason.

As a small aside for Dave Goodridge, my 20 years engineering were spent in the RAF.

Richard Penley-Martin, Secretary, Stoneham Golf Club

Working together for mutual benefit

I have been reading your recent correspondents' remarks with great interest and thought that I could provide some different angles.

While I agree that Course Managers must lead with authority, they will always be limited by the level of authority invested in them by their employer and can only act as they wish if appropriately empowered. It is an unfortunate fact that Greens Committees do not always have the best interests of the golf course in mind when they make important decisions.

I know of several instances where the use of temporary greens is diminishing because Captains, committees etc, are overriding Greenkeepers' decisions in order to fulfil the day's intention of playing golf. I also know of two local courses where temporary greens are not employed at all, much to the Course Manager's vexation.

Previous letters on this subject have commented on "interference from Greens Committees" so this is clearly a common problem. (For "interference" should we be reading "ill-advised decisions"?). However, the Committee is in place to serve the best wishes of the mem-

bers; and the Course Manager is employed with the same end. Regrettably for many members (including those in authority) the distinction between the short and long term health of the golf course is a difficult one to realise. Bearing these factors in mind, surely Course Managers and Club officials should be working together for the mutual benefit of both the golf course and the members? It is not unreasonable to expect partnerships of this nature to operate successfully; indeed they already do in some enlightened golf clubs. Harold Blackshaw may well stand aside to let his electrician rewire his house, but I dare say he might indicate where he wants his power points.

In my view, there is an immense task ahead: We need to educate all those people in golf clubs whose business is with the golf course itself. Due to the ephemeral nature of committees, it would surely be sensible to target all golf club members i.e. future committee members. Whether BIGGA, for all its efforts, is large enough or influential enough to tackle such a task, is a tricky question. Maybe we need to enlist the help of other golfing authorities: could the R&A

commission The Way Forward for established golf clubs: could the EGU and the LGU help us to emphasise the importance of the golf course to their members?

It is evident in Central Government that power is cyclical and perhaps the rise in the greenkeeping profession that we have witnessed over the last decades is levelling off and the golf clubs are trying to reassert authority; trying to re-establish the power they have ceded. Only when those in authority are educated, and only when golf club members realise that the whole greenkeeping ideal is asseverated for the benefit of their golf game, will Course Managers be granted the necessary freedom to conduct their business to the fullest extent of their knowledge and ability.

I must thank the Editor of this magazine for respecting my wishes for anonymity. I have no reason to hide my opinions from greenkeepers, but as I am not a Course Manager, I feel this letter may be considered inflammatory at my golf club, and I do not wish to compromise my colleagues or myself.

Name and Address supplied

A stress reducing equation

It's a simple law of economics taught to every GCSE student in the country. What's all this about I here you ask!

Well over the last few months there have been several letters and articles written about the poor state of the greenkeeping profession. It seems to me that, apparently, this poor state is due to interfering committees and lack of respect from the golfing public.

All the letters go on about wanting to produce wonderful courses and how committees change too often and don't have the right credentials for the work they put themselves up for and several more comments of the same nature.

I believe it is the attitude of these greenkeepers that brings problems on themselves and not the fault of the whole industry. As Duncan McGilvary pointed out in his article in the November issue of Greenkeeper international 90% of golf in Britain is played on private members golf courses. The very nature of these clubs is a committee structure, and golf clubs have been run like these for over 100 years. Part of being a Greenkeeper is working with committees and Chairmen of the Greens Committee. All greenkeepers should realise this is part of the job just the same as top-dressing or applying fertiliser. Once this has been accepted a more harmonious relationship can be formed.

The committee structure is used widely in life, often known by another name, the government is a large structure of committees and sub committees, BIGGA is run by a committee structure, as are many golf clubs. The committees are the voice of the people, trying to run to the best of their ability whatever club, association or even country they are in charge of. As you will all know, committees never please all of the people all of the time

as different people have different ideas and views on everything in life. Golf club committees try to provide what they feel the members want from their course and they have to pass on or communicate these wants on to us the greenkeepers.

Is this the interference we hear so much about? I don't consider committee views, activities or even orders as interference. It is part of the communication process, which is set up within committee run golf clubs. This is where I get back to supply and demand. We, as greenkeepers, are the suppliers of a product (the golf course) and as suppliers we should produce the product that is demanded by the golf club members.

If they want slow, bumpy greens that they can stop the ball on with a driver, never wanting them aerated because of those blasted holes that makes them miss so many puts, if they want fairways cut so short the grass dies at the first sign of the illusive British sun, if they want rough so short they can rip a 3-wood 120 yards and never lose the golf ball they bought in 1985 who are we to argue.

We are not all producing top class championship courses for Tiger Woods and Co with long thick rough, narrow fairways and greens so fast the average club golfer would wet themselves! In this day and age where competition is tough for new members at golf clubs it is the role of the greenkeepers to provide what the golfers want and ensure the future success of your employer. Supplying the desired product is where we use all the skills, knowledge and experience that we have, even if it is not what we consider to be a good course or aesthetically pleasing. The finished product should be made to the highest standard within the parameters

set out by the clubs committees.

We cannot change the establishment and golf club structure so we need to be more adaptable to our surroundings and the clubs needs and the golfers ever changing desires. Other members of the clubs management team e.g. the pro and secretary should be used by us to get information to and from the members. These people should be classed as colleagues, not the enemy as some believe them to be. A pro or secretary with a little knowledge of greenkeeping can be a very handy partner on occasions such as hollow tining or course closure in the winter. These people are more on the front line of customer relations if they understand why, they can pass on the reasons to the golfers. Golf pros don't want to be greenkeepers any more than we want to sit in a shop selling sweets and tee pegs all day, so we should not feel threatened if we are, as I'm sure we all are, competent at our jobs.

Most golfers know what they want from a golf course and they don't want to know how to achieve it. That's our job to educate and enlighten them as to the needs of the grass plants they can see and the soils they can't. There are many ways to educate golfers. Open evenings, greens forums, a chat with Joe Smith on the 12 fairway. Use your imagination. The one thing we are all guilty of is poor or non existent communication. So come on greenkeepers, stop moaning about what a bad lot we have, and use all your skills to make the golfers happy. Remember ...

**Happy Golfers = Less Moans
= Happy Greenkeepers**

Leslie Howkins, Happy Head Greenkeeper,
Cleethorpes Golf Club, N.E.Lincs

Help with lawn sand?

Has anybody experienced problems with turf damage to their greens following an application of lawn sand? We have unfortunately used lawn sand, as usual, only for it later to be found to be contaminated with herbicides and over a period of 1-8 weeks thereafter suffered severe decline and ultimately death of significant areas on our greens. We were able to prove that the lawn sand was the cause due to the fact that the **one** green that was not treated was the **only one** that remained undamaged. More importantly we had left over sealed unused bags which we have had tested at two independent laboratories for herbicide contaminants. If we had not had any left over, nor had the one green untreated, we are unlikely to have been able to establish the cause, and certainly been unable to prove it.

Should you have cause to now suspect that a routine application of lawn sand may have led to damage on your greens, contact the magazine with details of your supplier and manufacturer and the batch number printed on the bag. Should it be the same as that used by ourselves it may be of great help to you.

Please respond through the pages of this magazine

Enviro thanks

Thank you for the excellent coverage (again) of this year's 2001 environmental competition and again we see the total commitment from numerous courses throughout the UK in promoting and enhancing environmental aspects. I would just like to point out a discrepancy in the article concerning my course, Bradley Park Golf Club. We have 300 members and not 200, plus the pay and play customers with being municipal. The number of rounds per annum is between 55,000 and 60,000. Thank you again and here's to the future promotion of environmental concern on our courses.

D. W. Brierley, Head Greenkeeper,
Bradley Park Golf Club

In defence of National Vocational Qualifications

I recently read with dismay a letter in the Greenkeeper International from John Ross. His views are that the NVQ system was failing and yet another qualification should be produced to test our greenkeepers. Having worked my way through the City & Guild to stage four, NVQ level four and beyond that, I believe that there is and always will be room for improvement and this should come in part from the Head Greenkeepers and not just the governing bodies.

The GTC have established working groups that already review the training. The groups have representatives from colleges, STRI and BIGGA. It is through this partnership that the employers and greenkeepers now have an excellent range of qualifications to choose from that they feel most appropriate to the trainee and the club.

As I understand it, the NVQ system is all about making sure the person being trained can actually do the job on the ground as well as holding their own in a committee room when necessary.

I have living proof at the course where I am that NVQ's do work. I have only been here for 16 months and already have

one of my staff well on the way to completing NVQ level two. This is a 37 year old man who had no ambition in the trade, he just used to come to work do the job and then go home. He now knows botanical names for trees, grass and plants and can identify them as well. He now uses many other skills that he had but was not encouraged to employ.

For the critics that say it's all so easy, what would you expect if a person has been doing the job for 11 years. He should know how to operate the machinery used to maintain the course. There are parts of the NVQ that need hard work and lots of it. What the NVQ system does is give them a chance to go forward, learn more and gain a recognised qualification on the way.

The other very important factor is that the Head Greenkeeper must put himself on the line and encourage the staff to ask questions. When a staff member goes through the NVQ system it will act as a refresher for all the staff (including the Head Greenkeeper). Questions that are asked in the tea room can be thrown open to everyone. It is up to the Head Greenkeeper not to be frightened that he

may not know the answer. There have been occasions when I have either forgotten the answer or have not known it. Nobody knows everything and we are all trying to improve are own lot in one way or another so let's share the real knowledge with each other that we get from our experience. I am not knocking the old system, but it is the real hands on knowledge that needs to be handed down along with the technical information from the text books and college.

As for the fact that John Ross seemed to find the NVQ 3 easy, as I have already stated a person doing the job should be able to do this. Level three is a stepping stone to level four and lack of theory, if any, should be dealt with at the appropriate levels. The governing bodies have put into place many other qualifications and perhaps he should have a go at one of them. At least then if any of his staff need his help he will be able to offer it.

Some of the other points about the need for support for the lonely greenkeepers is in my opinion justified. However I believe that too much information is being given back to the club members on how the course is maintained. Greenkeepers all

over the UK are measuring rain water and thatch levels etc. writing reports and putting them selves under unnecessary pressure. It is time to get back to work, if they don't ask, then don't tell them. No where else is it more true that a little information in the wrong hands can be most dangerous. A quick example is if you go for an operation the surgeon will tell you in the simplest way what he is going to do, he will not mention how many yards of cotton he will use or how sharp the blade will be, because you do not need or want to know.

Use the report writing time to work on the course or to help your staff and remember stop talking before you run out of things to say. Let the quality of your course do the talking for you. My final message is to those Greenkeepers who have not yet received the training to become a work-based trainer or even carried out an appraisal on their staff to identify training needs and in turn motivate that member of staff like my 37 year old! Get involved now, if you need help, it is out there for you, just ask.

T A Smith LCGI,
North Shore Golf Club, Skegness

This month Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, explains the many educational and training options that are available to the modern day greenkeeper

Education and Training update

The rush of correspondence, following the publication of Duncan McGilvray's article in the November edition of Greenkeeper International, has shown that there is still a lack of knowledge about the range of education and training available for golf greenkeepers. Moreover, many Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers seem to think that responsibility for training their staff rests with the GTC, BIGGA, Colleges, the Home Unions and/or the R&A.

Many Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers were educated and trained under the, now extinct City and Guilds Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4, which were phased out in 1995/96, following the introduction of Vocational Qualifications. Comparing the two qualifications is difficult, if not impossible as they are completely different ie. Vocational Qualifications are designed to show what someone can do, at work, on a number of different occasions, under a variety of conditions, together with the appropriate level of knowledge. Whereas, the, extinct, City and Guilds qualifications were college based and showed what someone knew.

Vocational Qualifications are open to all, no matter what level of skill, knowledge or experience. BIGGA strongly believes that all new recruits to the greenkeeping industry should be given the appropriate "on the job" training to enable them to do their job safely and correctly to a set standard. These standards have been set by Industry and reflect what a greenkeeper can do eg. switching, brushing, cutting, spreading, identifying grasses and other plants etc as well as what they know about this range of tasks and that they have a reasonable level of literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

The National Standard for basic greenkeeping skills in England and Wales are called National Vocational

Qualifications in Sportsturf Level 2 and in Scotland they are called Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Sportsturf Level 2. There are a number of ways in which new recruits may be trained. They may be given on the job training and assessment, they may be sent to college to learn their knowledge with practical skills being taught and assessed at work or they may be visited at work by travelling lecturer/assessors who teach and assess skills and knowledge at work on a number of occasions.

Once new recruits have achieved the Standards required for the award of a vocational qualification they are classed as qualified. However, training should not stop and newly qualified greenkeepers should be encouraged to continue to learn new skills and knowledge. These new skills can be taught at work, in college or on short courses such as those run by BIGGA and a range of colleges and other training providers.

The decisions on who gets trained, what training is needed and what is the appropriate training rests with the Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager, not with the College, nor with the GTC nor with BIGGA.

Devising an Education and Training Policy, arranging finance for training, selecting the most appropriate course of training and monitoring of training standards are basic management skills that must be mastered if Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers want to lead and not be led.

The options available to managers of greenkeepers are varied. Level 2 Vocational qualifications could be followed by Level 3. However, remember that vocational qualifications mean that the holder can do the job at work. This is not easy if the club do not get involved in training and allow all knowledge and skills to be taught in college and assessed by simulation

and/or a portfolio of evidence. If you decide that vocationals are the most appropriate for your staff, make sure that they are able to provide evidence of the ability to do the job, at work, on a number of occasions. Level 3 is a large step up from Level 2 and it may not be appropriate to allow staff to move up to the next Level until they have gained some experience. Level 4 is an even greater step and candidates for this qualification must be working as managers. Vocational qualifications are not the only qualifications available. Greenkeepers can attend Ordinary National Certificate and Ordinary National Diploma Courses and Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma Courses, which, in turn can lead to First and Higher Degree. Remember that these qualifications show what the holder knows and not necessarily what they can do.

Vocational qualifications are ideal for all new entrants to the greenkeeping industry. They show that the holder is qualified to perform a wide range of tasks and that their skills have been assessed at work. Whether all greenkeepers move on to the next Level of Vocational Qualification, on to a more academic course onto a range of short courses or continues with on the job training is a decision which must be made by managers which in greenkeeping means Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers.

You've got mail!

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.

Send an email to:
 education@bigga.co.uk
 ken@bigga.co.uk
 sami@bigga.co.uk



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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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