

Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund



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For details, please contact Ken Richardson on 01347 833800 or via ken@bigga.co.uk

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Ken Richardson discusses the department's latest projects.

It's been an even busier month here at BIGGA House for Sami and I as the preparations for Harrogate Week continue, we have had the Final of the TORO Student of the Year Competition and we have had to arrange the Autumn Master Greenkeeper Examination. We have received a host of bookings at BIGGA House since the Continue to Learn programme dropped onto doormats. Workshops are filling up fast.

Harrogate Week 2007



Last month's article concentrated on one-day Harrogate Week Workshops and I intend to look at half-day workshops this month.

Thanks to support from the GTC, we have been able to extend our Workshop Programme and 2007 sees a total of nine half-day Workshops.

Delegate feedback in 2006 requested more Microsoft Office Workshops and we have added to the 2006 list.

Tuesday, January 23 includes two workshops on Microsoft Word when trainers from Keystrokes Ltd present a Basic Microsoft Word Workshop in the morning and an Intermediate MS Word Workshop in the afternoon.

The 'basic' workshop will introduce delegates to simple word processing tasks, applying formats and incorporating images. This workshop is a must for anyone who has to produce documents for management and committees.

The Intermediate Workshop will introduce delegates to some more in-depth features of MS Word, including tables, bulleted lists and automated features. This workshop is ideal for those who have a basic knowledge of MS Word or who have attended the 'basic' Workshop.

Wednesday, January 24 is the day for all those who wish to grasp the concept of spreadsheets, with a 'basic' workshop in the morning and an intermediate workshop in the afternoon. See how you can use Excel to manage budgets by using formulas and produce graphs.

Thursday, January 25 completes the MS Office workshops with a look at MS PowerPoint. Learn how to produce 'professional' presentations that can include graphs, diagrams, company logos and organisation charts.

Tuesday, January 23 sees a new half-day workshop at Harrogate Week. Aimed mainly at Golf Club Officials, but of interest to greenkeepers, the half-day workshop will show you what to do if you want to get sued.

More importantly, it will show what to do to prevent being sued under Health and Safety legislation by giving advice on the 'safe' way to design golf course features.

Wednesday, January 24 sees another new half-day workshop for Harrogate Week. This time, the subject is Basic Agronomy and it is aimed at those who have a limited knowledge of soil science. Presented by Henry Bechelet from STRI, this workshop is an ideal way to gain some essential scientific knowledge.

Henry will be running another half-day agronomy workshop on Thursday, January 25, this time for golf club officials. Designed to help secretaries and chairmen of green understand 'greenkeeper speak', how to produce and use a golf course policy document and how to manage winter play this workshop is sure to be a popular choice.

Make sure you get a place by sending in your application form as soon as possible. Remember that if you book all seminars, you get a 30% discount and if you book all seminars through your Regional Administrator, you get a 40% discount.

TORO Student of the Year



Full details of this year's competition are given on page 23 of GI, however I would like to add my personal congratulations to all eight finalists and commend them on

their professional approach to the final interviews. This competition continues to renew my faith in the industry and this year is no exception. Special congratulations go to Mike Emptage who will be off to the US in January and to the runners-up Abi Crosswood and James Billington who both win a week at Harrogate in January 07.

Rachael and Gemma would like to welcome 56 new members to the Association and talk about the direct debit scheme.

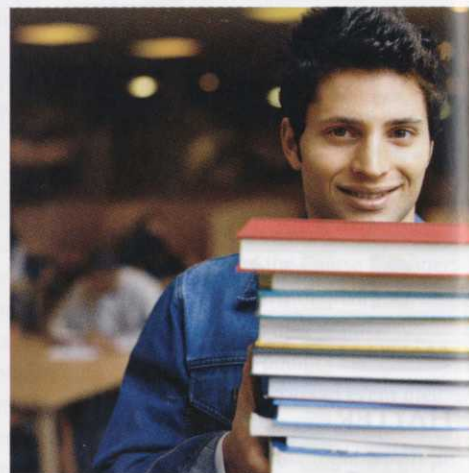
Membership Update

Do it with a Debit

The direct debit scheme to enable members to pay their subscriptions in instalments, is becoming ever more popular. We can now accept payments in one, five or even 10 instalments to help spread the cost of the subscription. If you pay your own subscriptions you should receive a direct debit form in your renewal pack. The form allows you to select the payment frequency you require. Return this to us with your renewal and we will write to you with your payment schedule. The beauty of the scheme is that each year at renewal time we will just write to you with your new payment schedule and you don't have to do anything more unless your details have changed. If you would like more information or a form please call Rachael or Gemma on: 01347 833800.

Add a BIGGA Library Book to your Reading List this Winter

The BIGGA lending Library is available to all members, stocks over 800 titles and has recently benefited from some recent additions. You can borrow up to two titles from the library at any one time, for a period of six weeks. The books subjects vary from computing, through to career guidance, turf management and health and safety. If you would like an up to date library list call Brad on: 01347 833800.



FERRARI EXPERIENCE WINNER

As you know, we have been running a competition to give away a drive in a Ferrari to a member who recommends a new member to the Association. I am delighted to announce that Gary Branchett of Tenterden GC has won the Ferrari experience and Ross Brown also of Tenterden has won a Red Letter Day voucher. Congratulations to you both.



NOVEMBER'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a monthly draw to win a £10 Music Voucher. Our congratulations go to Gavin Speedie of The Gleneagles hotel.



BIGGA welcomes...

SCOTTISH REGION

James Bledge, Central
David Monks, West
Matthew Salmon, West
Craig West, Ayrshire
Sean Wood, North
Norman Yeats, North

NORTHERN REGION

Philip Brown, North West
David Ellwood, North West
Shaun Hutchinson, North West
Timothy Johnson, North West
Ben Leeming, Northern
Ian Taylor, North Wales
Jonathan Wilson, North West

MIDLAND REGION

Gary Carter, Mid Anglia
Morgan O'Sullivan, Mid Anglia
Martyn Parrish, BB&O

SOUTH EAST REGION

Steven Allchorne, Surrey
Paul Boozer, Kent
Ross Brown, Kent
Jon Coady, East Anglia
Mark Davis, Surrey
Tomas Gee, Surrey
William Lowe, Surrey
Russell Oakey, Essex
Matthew Powdrell, Surrey
Peter Spicer, Kent
Will Straver, Surrey
Neil Townsend, Surrey

SOUTH WEST & SOUTH WALES

Claire Arnold, South Coast
Steve Clarke, South West
Stacey Dickinson, South Coast
Nigel Gridley, South West
Paul Healy, South West
Steve Horne, South West
Graham Reynolds, South West
John Rheinberg, South West
Andrew Stevenson, South Coast
Jack Wills, South Coast

INTERNATIONAL MEMBER

Paul Wilkins, Cyprus

STUDENT MEMBERS

Andrew Carmichael, North East
Letitia Dowling, Central Scotland
Andrew Leak, East of England
John Noonan, Essex
Era Van Zyl, Ayrshire

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Brian Atkins, Kent
David Fletcher, East Anglia
John Lockyer, South West
Scott Macgregor, Malaysia

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Roderick Armour, North Scotland
Allan Davidson, West Scotland
Don Dixon, East Anglia
Jeremy Hindle, East of England
Donald Houston, East Scotland
John Jeans, Central Scotland
Philippe Pages, North East
Steven Preston, Midland
Martin Richardson, South West



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On the Fairway to a Glittering Career

A young Scots greenkeeper who has just returned to his home turf with glowing references from two of America's greatest golf courses, has landed a dream job at one of the England's top ten clubs.

25 year old Danny Murray, from Balerno near Edinburgh, was scarcely off the plane from the States, when he was signed up by Wentworth to work on its three championship-standard courses in Surrey.

Danny trained at Oatridge College in West Lothian and thanks to his tutors there, crossed the Atlantic to take up a year long internship at Pinehurst, "the cradle of American golf", in North Carolina. He was part of the TOP scheme, run by Ohio State University, to allow young greenkeepers to broaden their experience of what is a global industry. While there, Danny grabbed the chance to work at New York's famous Winged Foot Club before, during and after the 2006 US Open championship, extending his stay by six months.

Eric Greytok, the Director of Golf Courses at Winged Foot, was impressed: "He made a significant impact during the preparation, completion and clean-up of the 2006 Open. He also assisted in the completion of a \$750,000 renovation project on the East Course.

"One of Danny's strongest attributes is that he possesses a strong work ethic and a good character, that is often hard to find in an employee. He has a bright future in management ahead of him and will be very successful in this industry."

The reference from Jeff Hill, the Course Superintendent at the eight-course Pinehurst complex was just as glowing: "He won everyone's respect for his hard work and dedication to doing a great job. I feel confident that Danny will be very successful in the turfgrass industry."

Michael O'Keeffe, the Irish-born head of the TOP scheme at Ohio State, said: "We're very pleased that Danny Murray will be able to use the

experience he has gained in America in his next job. Many head greenkeepers around Europe recognise the advantage of hiring these young people who have made an extra effort to add value to their CVs."

Danny looked in on Oatridge College on his return from the States and took the chance to urge other young Scots to follow in his footsteps, once they have had some experience in greenkeeping in this country. He said: "I'd say wait until you're 21 or 22, then go for it. It's a fantastic experience working on some of the best courses in the World, like Pinehurst and Winged Foot, but you have to be prepared to put in the effort.

When I was at Winged Foot we were expected to do 14 hour-days and it wasn't easy when the temperatures got up to 95 at times."

At that point Danny was hoping for a job in the London area and it was only a few days later that he got the call from Wentworth.

Previously Danny worked at Gogarburn in Edinburgh and Archerfield Links in East Lothian. He attended Oatridge while doing his apprenticeship at the Marriot Dalmahoy Golf and Country Club in Midlothian.

He is one of 10 former greenkeeping students from Oatridge who have taken part in the TOP scheme and who have gone on to top jobs. A scratch golfer, Danny says one of his fondest memories of the States will be playing - and winning - mini "Ryder Cup" contests between British and American greenkeepers.

Eileen Barry, the Liaison Officer at Oatridge College, said: "We're so proud of Danny and how well he did in the United States. The letters of reference he brought back are so good they really should be framed!"

HOBBIES

Name: Eric Barber

Age: 70

Position: Retired member of BIGGA

Golf Club: Teign Valley (of which he was part owner)

Hobby: Athlete



As far as being active as a child goes, Eric started running from a young age, cycling from the age of 13 and began swimming in the army at the age of 18.

Cycling was always Eric's passion until his son joined Torbay Amateur Athletics at the age of nine. Eric got a feel for running and started to go running once or twice a week, entering two local races a year.

"I always said I'd take up cycle racing

when I retired but I decided to take up running instead, at the age of 59," said Eric.

A natural athlete, Eric progressed quickly winning the Westwood League Cross Country in Devon and Cornwall (in the 55-59 age group) and also joining and winning races at the South West Veterans Athletics Club.

Progressing to compete nationally, Eric found himself in top 10 placing on the track and road. He competed in Triathlons, Duathlons and Aquathons. At the ripe old age of 63, Barber competed in the World Championship, Veterans Athletic, in Gateshead obtaining three out of four top 20 places. He competed again at 65, when the World Vets

GI has begun a new feature, finding out what greenkeepers get up to in their spare time.

Here's something you didn't know about me...

Athletic Championships were held in Brisbane, Australia and won the British Marathon Championship in 2003 and the half Marathon in 2005, in his age group.

"Because I chose cycling over running when I was younger, there was less chance of me getting injured, therefore I am a more able runner," commented Eric.

Eric's best ever race was in 2003 in Zofingham, Switzerland. "The competition consisted of a 10k run, followed by a 150k cycle, finishing with a 30k run," It was on a hilly terrain with an undulating circuit. In the lead after the first run, Eric was passed by an Italian competitor during the cycling but was able to pull it back on the last run to finish 28 minutes ahead of the Italian rival, to win his age group.

Now 70 years of age, the Veteran South Devon athlete has become triple world champion after decimating the field (in the 70 to 74 age group) in the World Duathlon Championships hosted by Canada in Newfoundland.

"I get to know the course before I compete and adopt the 'if they can do it, I can do it' attitude," said Eric.

"One of the benefits of competing is meeting up with old rivals again. Around 79 countries take part in the World Championships. We are all good friends and when the race is over we all have a chat and socialise with one another."

Eric aims to still be competing at the age of 80 and still running at 90.

Eric has recently been selected to represent England in the 70-74 age group at the British and Irish Masters Cross Country International, at Falkirk, Scotland on November 18.

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk.

INTERNATIONAL EQUIPMENT MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

On September 1, 2006 (12) Equipment technicians were involved in a conference call to deliberate on starting an Equipment Technicians association. During that phone call we decided that not only is this type of association long over due, but it is increasingly necessary for the development of this position. The equipment technician's role over the past 20 years has developed into much more than just a person on the staff who keeps the equipment operational. With the increase in golf courses around the world there simply are not enough skilled technicians to meet the needs of every course. That is because there has never been anything to work from. How can you tell the difference between a skilled and unskilled technician? Is it the way they look or dress? Is it how quickly they can get a piece of equipment up and running? Is it the organisation they have or maybe the management skills they possess? Also is not everyone's perception of a skilled technician different? The GCSAA helped develop the Superintendent position into one that's matured over the years as well. They have taken on more responsibility and have in turn gained much more respect.

It is for these reasons that an equipment technicians association is needed. An equipment technician is responsible for all the equipment that maintains the golf course on a daily basis. With that being said the equipment technician has a duty to make sure every member and guest experiences a golf course that is in beautiful condition everyday. The position they hold can determine whether that guest returns to the golf course to play again or if today is the last time they see your golf course.

The golf course technician is an integral part to the success of a golf management team and it's for that reason that professionalism, standards, education, and achievement should be recognised, nurtured, and respected. It is the goal of an association to grow this idea and to expand it all over the world. We feel that by doing this it will encourage others to enter our profession and to do so with the previous statements in mind. We intend to work with Superintendent Associations and manufacturers to further develop this association into one that gains the respect and recognition that is long overdue and much needed in our industry.

We would like to invite everyone to join us in creating an association that is long overdue and that will encourage our growth as industry professionals. The development of our website is currently in the beginning stages and can be located at www.gcema.org. We would like to encourage everyone to be apart of this association today and help grow our industry and the equipment technician profession so everyone can experience what a top-notch golf operation should be.

Regards,
Stephen Tucker

TORO STUDENT OF THE YEAR

Dear Scott,

I am writing to pass on my sincere thanks to Ken, Sami, Pete, Bruce, Iain, John and everyone else at BIGGA House for their kind hospitality that I received while competing in this years Toro student of the year final.

I have to say that the staff at BIGGA House are a credit to the association with their professional and welcoming manor.

I really enjoyed my stay at Aldwark Manor, making the last eight was a massive achievement for myself and getting to meet and compete against such a great bunch of greenkeepers was fantastic, congratulations to everyone who competed and especially to Mike for winning.

Once again please pass on my sincere thanks.

Graham Brumpton
Ipswich Golf Club, (Purdis Heath)

Letters ▶▶▶

THANKS BIGGA!

Dear Sir Michael

Thank you so much for the generous donation of £807.95, made by the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, towards The Prostate Cancer Charity's work. Please pass our thanks to everyone that contributed; your support is invaluable to us and the donation is gratefully received.

The Prostate Cancer Charity was established in March 1996 to improve the care and welfare of people whose lives are affected by prostate cancer. The Charity is the only organisation in the UK both to fund scientific research into the disease and to provide support and information to men with prostate cancer, their families and the public.

The Charity's support and information services include a range of printed information, a telephone helpline service (0845 300 8383) staffed by specialist nurses, and a website at: www.prostate-cancer.org.uk Additionally the Charity also has a nationwide network of men with prostate cancer and their families, who are willing to talk to other individual and the media about their experiences.

Thank you once again for showing your support for our work. If you would like any further information regarding the work of the Charity, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,
Gemma Cornwell
Community Fundraising Officer

POSITIVE THOUGHTS FOR ELECTRIC UTILITY VEHICLES

I am writing in reply to the October article "All charged and Ready to Go."

After reading this article on electric utility vehicles, I feel the need to pass on my own recent experiences to fellow greenkeepers.

In the spring of this year I purchased, for the first time, an electric utility vehicle for the purpose of running our 150 litre 12 volt boom sprayer, which was previously fitted to a petrol driven utility vehicle. The sprayer worked fine on the petrol unit apart from the inconvenience of not being able to hear the electric motor running and the inability of the petrol unit to spray at very low speeds without jerking.

My only concern before purchasing the electric unit was, would it have the guts to run the electric sprayer as well as itself for several hours a day without running out of steam. In view of this I contacted both John Deere and Toro to see if they could shed any light on the subject. To my horror, they both replied saying they did not know of any other club or organisation running a 12 volt boom sprayer on an electric utility vehicle, although John Deere stated that they did not foresee a problem.

At this point I decided to consult the sprayer manufacturer hoping they could shed more light on the subject. They explained it was all to do with amp hours and between us we worked out it should be ok, so I decided to throw caution to the wind and order a John Deere TE Gator. To lessen the risk of failure I had the unit fitted with heavy-duty batteries as an optional extra.

Now we come to the crunch issue. Did it work? The answer is a resounding yes. Not only does the sprayer operate without a hint of giving up the ghost, but also the smoothness and control of operation is vastly superior to that of the previous set up using the petrol driven unit. The sprayer unit has been adapted so it can be easily removed from the transport box to enable the Gator to be used as a conventional utility vehicle. The new electric edition to our fleet has become the number one choice for the greenkeeping staff, as they genuinely prefer to travel around the course without engine noise disturbing the peace and quiet of their surroundings.

Robin Bryson
Head Greenkeeper, Rugby GC

CHOOSING AND USING FINANCE FOR THE GOLF COURSE

"If you would like to know the value of money, go and try to borrow some." Benjamin Franklin

Every day we are bombarded with financial information and offers. It may be an invitation to sign up for a new credit card or our latest statement from the bank or building society. Either way, the more we know about the different sources and costs of money the easier it becomes to make a better decision, particularly in business, and that includes the golf course.

'Choosing and Using Finance' is not a simple subject. Like course maintenance, it demands considerable professional knowledge and experience. However, understanding the basics is important to the Course Manager and Greenkeeper since it plays an important part in planning and budgeting to ensure that the club has the materials and equipment it needs to deliver the quality of course preparation and presentation that members and others demand.



CASH AND CASHFLOW:

It is impossible to run a business without cash. Income and expenditure are 'cash' and it's essential for a healthy business that cashflow is positive, ie, more income than expenditure. Of course, there are often short-term blips in the cycle. In the golf industry, seasonality has a significant impact on cashflow as green fee income falls during the winter months. Similarly, income probably peaks after members pay their subscriptions when the cycle returns to balance.

To manage the cycle, most people and businesses use a bank account which gives them the use of cash. To provide for short-term deficits in cashflow, the bank may also agree to provide an overdraft so cash payments can still be made even when cashflow is negative.

Cash is essential for day-to-day transactions like paying wages and utility bills, or the costs of raw materials for manufacturing or services, eg, sand in the bunkers and beer in the bar!

CAPITAL INVESTMENT:

However, some items of expenditure - notably items like purchase of machinery, buildings and building refurbishment, carry a larger price tag with a cost that is normally paid back over a longer term than items like wages and utility bills. These are classed as capital expenditure while the wages and other short-term expenses are classified as revenue expenditure.

Attempting to finance the cost of capital expenditure out of cashflow can cause problems. If cash were the only option open to an individual or a business, all but a few of us would live in rented accommodation and drive cheap used cars.

Naturally we could save the money for a car but this would take time and we would still forego the use of that money while we were saving. What's more, given the price of new cars, we might have to make do with something less expensive to match savings and investment over a reasonable time period.

Clearly the more expensive the asset, say, a new house, the less likely it is to be funded from cashflow or savings.

Unfortunately, a business does not have the time to save the money for major capital purchases - largely because it relies on new machinery and other assets to generate income. One could argue that this is not true for a

golf club since it doesn't manufacture anything. Nevertheless, it has to provide playing and other facilities of a quality that maintains membership levels and attracts income from visiting parties. This requires considerable investment not just in the course but in the house too.

The acid test for any new capital investment is, first, is it realistic for the business or organisation and, second, can it be cost-justified? If the answer is 'Yes' to both, then the third question is what is the best way to finance it?

SHORT OR LONG TERM:

Cash (unless we have masses of spare cash all the time!) is best kept for short-term expenditure and meeting day-to-day operating expenses. The same is true for 'cash substitutes' like the overdraft and credit cards which provide a short term bridge between income and expenditure. It's also important to retain the flexibility of the overdraft and not to block it up with long-term borrowing.

Capital investment demands financing facilities that can be matched to a realistic working period for a machine or other assets. For example, if the club needs a new greens triple mower and its replacement policy is to change high-use machines like this every three to five years, then it makes sense to match the funding to the period of use, say, between three and five years.

This offers the club a number of benefits. First, cashflow should not be stretched because the cost of the machine is spread over time, meaning it earns its keep as it works for the club. Second, if the repayments are fixed in advance, as is normally the case with loans, HP and leasing, it makes it easier for the club to budget for new machinery. What's more, spreading the cost can increase the budget and the options open to the Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager to specify more machinery - perhaps a combination of machines instead of just one, or to buy a better specification.

FIXED OR VARIABLE:

The cost of finance varies according to the type of facility. The cost of borrowing money is the interest rate at which the lender/market is prepared to lend. Normally, the interest rate reflects the level of risk in the transaction. For example, a long-established business or organisation with

By Eddie Henderson

a strong balance sheet (plenty of assets owned by the business) and a good trading track record offers more security than a start-up business. Hence the rates at which each can borrow from the bank, and the amounts, will be different.

As comedian Bob Hope quipped: "A bank is a place that will lend you money if you can prove that you don't need it!"

The overdraft carries a variable rate of interest, which moves up and down in relation to changes in bank base rates. The same is true of credit cards, although the rate of interest charged on overdue amounts is considerably higher.

Fixed cost facilities include bank loans, hire purchase and leasing agreements, where the cost and repayments are fixed at the outset and will not change during the life of the agreement, which makes accurate budgeting far easier. While the strength of the business is still important to security, the finance company also considers the security in the asset (good equipment with a ready resale market value is easier to underwrite than a one-off machine with a doubtful provenance!) and the ability of the business to repay.

Mortgages for property and other building work are normally variable rate, linked to bank base rates but with a lower margin than other forms of variable rate lending. The lender normally retains the deeds to property until the debt is repaid.

Generally, loans, HP and other fixed-cost financing are over medium-term periods between two and five years, although they can be longer depending on the asset. This makes them suitable for machinery and other assets with a limited economic life to the business or organisation.

COST OF BORROWING - TIME AND MONEY:

Many factors impact on the cost of borrowing. A key factor is the interest rate and, as a rule, the higher the rate the greater the total amount you repay. However, the period over which payments are spread also affects the total cost of borrowing. A bit like a snowball travelling down a hill, the longer it rolls the more snow it gathers.

Unfortunately, interest rates can be calculated and expressed in different ways, which makes it difficult to compare one type of deal with another simply by looking at the nominal rate of interest. Most common are flat rates, which relate to simple interest calculation and true rates which relate to compound interest calculation. The table here shows the difference.

INTEREST RATES & THE COST OF FINANCE

Imagine you want to buy a new greensmower at a cost of £12,000, financed over 36 months. You receive three finance quotes, each with a different interest rate. Which would you choose?

1. 4.83 per cent flat pa
2. 9.00 per cent true pa
3. 9.30 per cent APR

On the face of it, 4.83 per cent flat pa wins hands down – but in reality the payments are the same for each at £381.60 per month.

Make sure you compare 'apples with apples' about what you pay and when you pay.

Because of the difficulty in comparing flat and true rates of interest, the Consumer Credit Act requires that all credit agreements (hire purchase and loans) show an APR, which enables one lender's deal to be compared accurately with another's - provided the payment structures are the same.

However, two other factors affect the total cost of borrowing. One is specific fees and other charges that are included under the agreement, for example arrangement fees. The other is the availability of tax allowances, which vary according to whether the business or organisation buys or hires the assets.

BUY OR HIRE:

There are only two ways that a business, an individual or an organisation can acquire anything - either it can buy it or hire/rent it. The difference is who owns it after the transaction. Legal ownership is called 'title' and where title passes the prospective owner can offset part of the cost of capital purchases against taxable profits. This is called a capital allowance. Further, the interest paid each year is also normally allowable as a business expense.

Where the business or organisation simply hires an asset using leasing or contract hire, which is a special type of operating lease, then it never owns the capital asset. Under these circumstances it is able to offset the rentals paid each year as a business expense against profits for the corresponding period.

Both routes have their merits, but to claim allowances the business or organisation must pay tax, which rules out many members clubs. Obviously professional advice is essential to make the most cost effective choice, although many golf clubs now use leasing not because they are tax-paying businesses but because it enables them to spread the VAT and to fix their costs in advance. What's more, they can often benefit from low-cost finance offers made by the manufacturer with a new machine, which cut the cost of borrowing.

Eddie Henderson has more than 25 years experience in providing asset finance solutions for organisations in turfcare and agriculture. This includes retail banking and senior positions in a number of leading finance companies. More recently, his company has acted as a financial consultant to some household names in machinery manufacture and distribution. Eddie can be contacted at: eddie@echenderson.co.uk or on: 07776 197499.



Spreading costs over time, makes it easier for clubs to budget for new machinery and can even increase the budget for greenkeepers to specify more equipment

Course Feature

A Dozen Reasons to Visit Arran

Scott MacCallum jumps on the car ferry to Arran to visit a unique golf course.



Stewart Fotheringham

In my time with Greenkeeper International I have visited over 150 golf clubs spread over the length and breadth of the United Kingdom. I've been to some of the most famous courses in the world, some of the most exclusive clubs in the world and some of the most beautiful courses in the world. I've also visited clubs where the staff have achieved the greenkeeping equivalent of the miracle of the loaves and fishes in making the most, and beyond, of the resources available.

Indeed I believed that I'd encountered every conceivable style and type of golf course, and greenkeeping, experience that there was to be had. That was until I visited Shiskine Golf and Tennis Club on the island of Arran, off the west coast of Scotland. I've seen nine holers, 18 holers, 36 and even 54 holers but never before had I visited a 12 hole golf course!

But don't go away with the idea that Shiskine offers some sort of "Golf Lite" experience offering two thirds of the regular golfing fare. Shiskine is a proper, fun, golf course requiring every club in the bag. It has a range of seven par-3s from 120 yards up to 212 off the yellow tees, four challenging par-4s and a par-5, which comes in at 477 yards, and 506 off the medal tee.



The elevated 5th Medal tee

Indeed it regularly features in the Golf World Top 100 and has been described as "the cult 12-holer at Blackwaterfoot" in reference to the village that is home to the club.

And it is all beautifully maintained by Head Greenkeeper, Stewart Fotheringham, and his team of Assistant, Kenny Gilroy, a recent finalist in the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Competition, and summer worker, Lois Hodgart. That's it, and between them they achieve standards and an attention to detail that would do many more heavily staffed clubs proud.

"The plusses of a 12 hole course from a golfer's point of view is that you can be round in an hour and a half. For a lot of people 18 holes are just too many and it's too much time out of a day," explained Stewart, as we walked around the course on a mid-October day with the sun splitting the sky.

"The minuses from our perspective is that the course fills up very quickly and it is difficult after 8am to get anything done out on the main playing areas."

It means early starts for Stewart and Kenny, 5.30am and earlier on occasions, with the main priority cutting. Even then, though, no compromise is sought with hand cutting of the greens the order of the day.



Stewart with Kenny Gilroy and Lois Hodgart

"It looks so much nicer but it takes two of us two hours to cut them rather than one of us an hour and a half on the Toro greens machine, which we sometimes do on Sundays."

Other greenkeeping complications result from the fact that the big event of the year, the Arran Challenge, a 36 hole event, is played for women in October and men in November delays the start of the winter programme. Also being a holiday island there are a lot of country members who tend to use the course in July and August, a time when it would traditionally be busy with visitors so the revenue boost that some clubs get in the summer months is more limited.

A local lad brought up not far from the golf course, Stewart started out as part of a youth opportunity programme and immediately found his vocation.

"I loved being outdoors and even more than that I loved cutting grass. I knew straight away that it was the job for me," he said, with an enthusiasm just as strong as it was 24 years ago when he started.

"I always loved cutting grass, even when I was at home. I also love the smell of grass and I just love keeping things tidy," he said, well aware of the fact that the popular stereotype is of a profession where all people do is cut grass.

"I wouldn't want people thinking that's all we do. It's a small part of what we do but it's what got me hooked initially."

Stewart became full time assistant and then took over as head man in 1989 when he started to put his mark on the course.

"I wanted to introduce more definition to the fairways and create some semi rough so golfers could identify the hole they were playing more easily."

Backed by investment in new kit, including a deep spiker, Stewart also made inroads into the longstanding thatch problem and an intensive aeration programme began to reap its rewards.

"A lot of it was down to having the machinery to do the job but when we started our aeration programme, the surface of the green was lifting because the rooting was so shallow now the rooting is below the hole cutter," he said.

He is also delighted to have been able to build some excellent revetted bunkers for the course.

"We have 10 bunkers in all and I really enjoy working on the bunkers and making them look the part. I've put a few more in and taken some out during the years but there is nothing better than revetting a bunker, standing back and admiring a job well done," said Stewart, who taught himself the art with the aid of books.

With a stream cutting through the course, Stewart has built some fine bridges, complete with non-slip treads to ensure traffic is spread with another of the downsides of a 12 holer being wear area and he is very careful to ensure that he reseeds areas which are suffering from the footfall whenever he can.



The course was originally designed by former Open Champion, Willie Fernie, in 1896 as a nine hole and extended to 18 holes by another Open Champion, Willie Park, in 1912, which included six holes on a hill inland from the rest of the course. When the 1st World War came these six holes fell into disuse and Willie Park was brought back in the '20s to create a stand along 12 holer from what was already there which involved turning Willie Fernie's nine holes inside out retaining only two of the holes in their original form.

In 1936 James Braid was actually commissioned to create a six hole extension to bring the course up to the more conventional number. The

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Course Feature



Distances	Yards	Meters	Par	Yards	Meters	Par	Yards	Meters	Par
1	368	338	4	5	377	4	5	377	4
2	357	328	4	5	368	4	5	368	4
3	323	293	3	9	323	3	9	323	3
4	357	328	3	11	357	3	11	357	3
5	212	193	3	7	212	4	7	212	4
6	296	276	4	3	296	4	3	296	4
OUT		1463	1363	21	1463	21	22	1463	22
7 Hinnaben 162 172 3 10 164 3 10 8 Haden 220 249 4 6 221 4 6 9 Chumabon 477 506 5 2 480 5 2 10 Peadar 150 163 3 12 154 3 12 11 The Millon 186 200 3 4 201 4 4 12 Eilmyry 120 128 3 8 124 3 8 IN 1325 1427 21 1444 22 OUT 1463 1569 21 1472 22 TOTAL 2788 2996 42 2916 44 HANDBAP NET SCORE									

great man produced drawings but the plan was abandoned when the club couldn't secure the ground needed to implement the plan.

That said the 12 holes give the course a unique feel and it's stunning with coastline on two sides complete with rocky cliffs and a view of what is reputed to be the very cave where Robert the Bruce took inspiration from a persistent spider. In the traditional style there are several holes with blind shots and some magnificently placed

high tees, which encourage you to open your shoulders and give it a belt.

Another interesting feature of the club is that the current Captain is Pat Adamson, who is not the Lady Captain but the overall Captain of the Club for this year.

Tennis is another feature of the club with two artificial surface courts, which Stewart is charged with maintaining.

The day before our visit there had been torrential rain that hadn't cleared from the courts and Stewart revealed his plans to drain alongside the courts to ensure dry surfaces more quickly in future.

Arran is Scotland's southerly most island and is 19 miles by 10 miles in size. Despite this it still has room for seven golf courses - Brodick, Corrie, Lamlash, Lochranza, Machrie Bay and Whiting Bay as well as Shiskine - and the greenkeepers form a close-knit community. Each course offers



One of the recently built bridges



One of the club's stunning views