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Get blogging

Robert Laycock looks at how greenkeeper blogs can help communication within golf clubs

It is often said that if golfers knew the reasons why maintenance activities were being carried out by greenkeepers on the golf course, they would be much more tolerant of their activities.

At one golf club where I used to advise, any attempt to improve the course by aerating the greens, for example, was met by the members replacing the Chairman of Green.

Every year a new Chairman was appointed and as a result the course condition was never allowed to improve.

You can guess why I don't visit that club any more!

Greenkeepers use various ways to communicate with golfers - possibly word of mouth as they go about the course or a note posted on the club notice board.

Alternatively, there might be a paragraph in the club's newsletter or in a report from the Green committee, which may be posted on the members section of the club's website.

But is this the best way to get the message across? Information needs to be as up to date as possible.

A number of greenkeepers in the UK now have a blog to let members know what is going on at their course.

Richard Jacques of Malton & Norton Golf Club was encouraged to start blogging by seeing other successful blogs, such as his favourite from the team at Sawgrass.

In the UK, Richard also looked at blogs from this side of the Atlantic, including that produced by Bob Meikle at the Crail Golfing Society.

Another successful blog is Richard Lightfoot's at Bearwood Lakes Golf Club.

Richard Jacques's blog has a direct link from the club website homepage, so that members can easily find it.

He says, "The greenkeeper's blog gets a lot of visitors.

We started getting visitors early on and within a few months

there were many more as the blog became better known within the club and by the time we had been going for seven months we had had 5,000 hits.

"I find that if golfers know why things are being done around their course they are more supportive and tolerant.

If specific problems are being addressed to improve the course, they feel as if they are being listened to."

Even in winter, the blog has to be kept fresh.

If the course is closed or work such as bunker renovation and drainage is being carried out which many of the members don't ordinarily see, the blog emphasises the unseen work which goes on day by day around the course.

Blogs are not for everyone and, if not kept up to date, visitors will lose interest.

However it only takes minutes to download a few pictures which have been taken on the phone during the day and these are easily downloaded onto the blog.

Bob Meikle, Richard Jacques and Richard Lightfoot all use Google Blogger, but there is other software, such as WordPress.

So what are the secrets of success?

Richard says: "If you are going to blog, it is important to do it frequently so that it remains topical and worthwhile for visitors to return to.

All the greenkeeper bloggers I know have told me that if you can do it several times a week, so much the better.

It is important to keep it interesting and up to date, with lots of pictures.

"If done well, a blog is better than a paragraph in the monthly newsletter provided it is kept up to date and members can easily find it.

The blog also forms a good record - both of jobs that have been done on the course and also the effects of weather on areas of the course.

"Tell the members about it through conventional means or



sending out an email or text.

A link from the club's website homepage so that members can easily access it is also a good idea."

Does the presence of the blog improve the golf club membership's understanding of the greenkeepers' role? Or are the people who read it the usual suspects who show up to trips to the workshop to see the machinery or who attend course walks? Does it draw in the people who are still sitting around in the bar and who would benefit most from this education? Hopefully, by making the information easily accessible, the message will get through to golfers.

The greenkeepers I have spoken to think blogging is a worthwhile thing to do, so I say get signed up to WordPress or Blogger and start blogging

Are you a blogging greenkeeper? Or are you the avid reader of a fascinating blog by another greenkeeper?? If so email steve.castle@bigga.co.uk and you could be featured in an upcoming edition of Greenkeeper International!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Robert Laycock specialises in golf course agronomy and advises at some of the top UK courses. He has worked in turfgrass research and agronomy for the last 35 years and first began working as an independent professional agronomist 20 years ago. He is a Chartered Biologist, a Fellow of the Institute of Horticulture and a founder member of the Register of Independent Professional Turfgrass Agronomists. www.robertlaycock.co.uk

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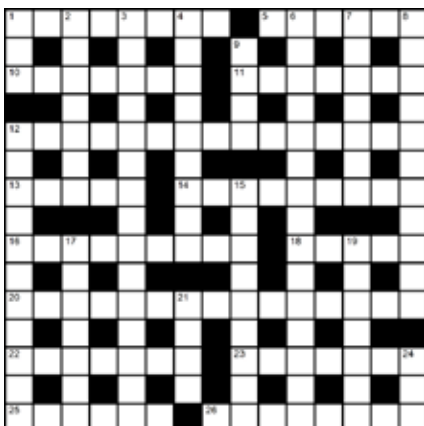


in the shed answers

QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ ANSWERS:

- 1) Essex
- 2) Rowing
- 3) Rowan Atkinson
- 4) Three
- 5) Didier Drogba
- 6) Five – won one, lost four
- 7) 3-2
- 8) Bradley Wiggins
- 9) York City

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9	2	F	C	D	3	5	E	1	8	6	4	A	B	0	7
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4	5	7	8	2	9	6	3	1
1	9	2	3	4	6	8	7	5

The Back Nine

A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

As a busy year comes to an end, Richard Campey explains why BTME will remain 2013's premier event

Well another year has flown by and despite the misgivings and apprehensions most of us are still here and have kept our jobs. I know that in our immediate vicinity some golf clubs have made rash decisions, and made qualified Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers redundant. Two years down the line they may well will be paying the penalty for this.

Here at Campey Turf Care we have been active throughout the year with shows, seminars and demo tours here in the UK, as well as further afield.

We started the year attending the Sports Turf Managers Associations (STMA) at Long Beach, California.

A week later we were at BTME, and the following month back in the USA for the Golf Industry Show (GIS) in Las Vegas.

We are looking forward to attending BTME in January.

Campeys has always placed a high value on showcasing new and established products and will maximise the potential BTME offers.

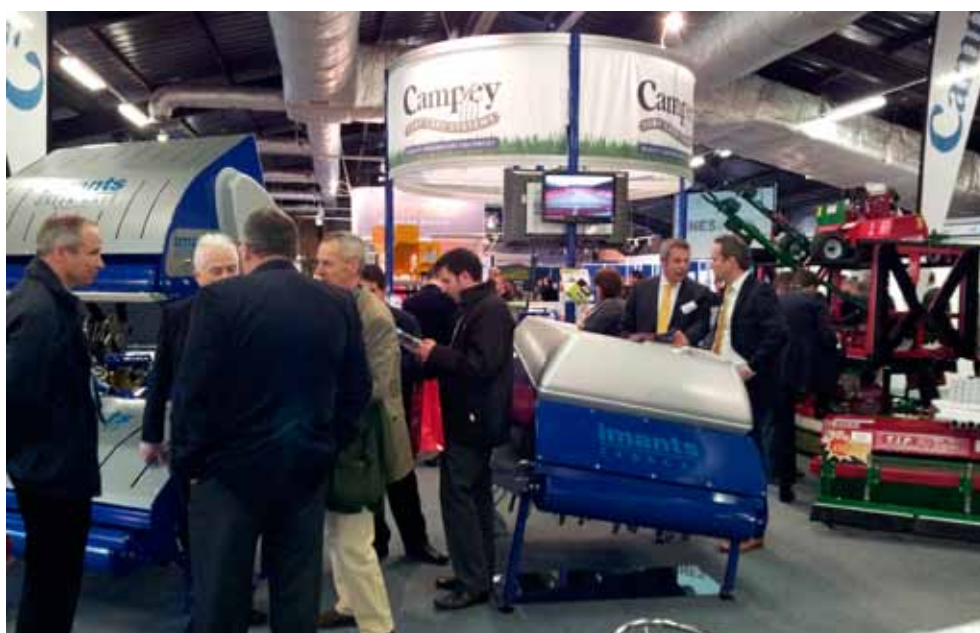
With BIGGA putting 100% effort into promoting and encouraging its members to visit the show, we hope it will be a well-attended, successful platform for everyone concerned.

Our first field day in the UK saw us at Birch Grove Estate; a private enclosed golf club in East Sussex.

We showed and demonstrated our products, carrying out a total renovation on greens and tees in the most atrocious weather conditions I have ever seen in my few years in the industry.

Despite this, our methods worked and greens, tees and fairways are now fit to play on.

This was then followed by our 2012 European Demo Tour to



North Germany, Denmark, Norway, Finland and back on to Jutland, Denmark.

Many hundreds of turf professionals had the opportunity to see our Koro, Imants, Dakota and Vredo machines carrying out actual jobs of work, not just a quick run up and down. This left all absolutely impressed.

It is amazing how far our fellow European counterparts will travel to see machinery working, and how eager they are to see and learn new methods and techniques.

It would be good to see more of this enthusiasm in the UK.

Summer came and went, but we never saw much of it at all as we were busy with demonstrations and seminars in the USA, Japan, and Malaysia.

Then it was home for a disappointing Saltex at which attendance was well down.

Despite being disillusioned with Saltex, a week later this was soon dispelled when we were back in Germany for GaLaBau, where we exhibited with our German distributor, GT Equipment.

Attendance over the three days was over 60,000 visitors.

Successful demos have been carried out this wet autumn, resulting

“It will be time for some of us to have a well earned few days off, ready for The Big One – BTME”

about the author



Richard Campey is the Managing Director of Campey Turf Care Systems. He's spent the past 25 years promoting a strategy of best practice sports ground renovation and maintenance, which has not only enabled him to build a successful company but importantly also help ensure that young people especially have the best possible playing surfaces at their disposal. In addition, Richard's 'natural instinct' for the turf care business has also earned him a reputation as someone who sets industry standards – he was the person who introduced the revolutionary Koro machine to this country in 1997.

in immediate orders from some golf clubs, so it is not all doom and gloom on the golf front.

The present economic climate has certainly made greenkeepers more resourceful.

Instead of going for those large package deals, more are reverting back to how they used to purchase – buying the best individual machines – which smaller companies can offer.

At the end of the day the club will benefit too.

Well here we are now in December.

Regional greenkeeping seminars are nearly over; we have just attended the Slovenia Golf Conference last month.

The IOG Conference and Awards night will soon have come and gone and it will be time for some of us to have a well earned few days off, ready for The Big One – BTME! Campey Turf Care will be exhibiting again this year and hope to see you all there supporting your industry at your show.

Best wishes for the festive season to all.

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International

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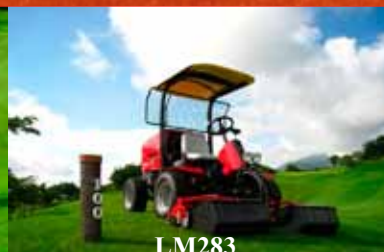
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