Master Greenkeeper Anthony Davies MG, Course Manager at Prestbury Golf Club, was one of the BIGGA delegation chosen to attend the CGSA Conference and Show in Vancouver.

BIGGA shakes Vancouver

The visit to Vancouver, Canada for ten BIGGA Greenkeepers started last September. The trip was open to all BIGGA Greenkeepers whose only qualification was to own a BIGGA Blazer. The ten candidates were chosen after a rigorous interview conducted by the well known supplier of grinding machines, Bernhard & Co, who were the main Sponsor together with Officials from Headquarters. After a few short months the week to attend the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association’s Convention had arrived.

All the party arrived at Heathrow Airport eager to board the Boeing 747 and head off to Canada. After what seemed an endless wait, the big plane flapped its wings and we were off. Off to share and exchange views with our counterparts in Canada. The nine and a quarter hour flight wasn’t too arduous the worst part was being subjected to ‘Charlie’s Angels’ on the in-flight movie channel. As soon as we landed in Vancouver we were met by a guide who took us to our hotel and there to greet us were Sam and Peter from Bernhard & Co. Sam, who was a brick during the week, bought the team a very welcome drink and briefed us on the week ahead - and what a week was in store for us.

The next morning we boarded a coach and travelled a short distance to North View Golf & Country Club. The 36-hole complex, was designed by Arnold Palmer and is described as a public course but with prestigious private club standards. The courses are laid out on 400 acres of land and cater for 65,000 annual rounds of golf. Both courses were in great condition for the time of year and it is no wonder that the USPGA have a Tour event there. The $80 dollar a round courses are owned by two sawmill owners who leave the day-to-day running of North View to Dave Fair, the Superintendent. Dave, whose working compound resembles that of Manchester Airport, has a large open service yard where stone and its like are deposited and swooped up by mechanical
loaders. The machine store, or should I say the 'hanger', was well stocked with various machinery. A total of 53 staff are employed to look after the two courses with every nine holes having their own team of Greenkeepers for that section who compete against the other members of staff who are then rewarded for the best nine holes at the end of each month. The list of machinery is endless so I will not bother to bore you with such details but just picture this:- seven Cushmans, eight Jacobsen Greens King, four Toro Reel Masters and three full time Mechanics working from a 60' x 40' repair shop. I didn’t just envy Dave Fair, I wanted his job!

Over the next few days the BIGGA team attended the well organised educational seminars. Their system is not too dissimilar to that of Harrogate but one thing was noticeable that the seminars were well attended by like-minded Greenkeepers whose intention was to exchange ideas and to listen and learn from their peers who offered advice willingly and freely - I told you it was like Harrogate! As soon as the seminars ended the Trade Show opened. The neatly arranged rows of machinery were gleaming in their entirety trying to entice the onlookers to at least talk about their golf course requirements. The BIGGA team were welcomed...
on all stands and we engaged in ver-
bai chit-chat and made many new
acquaintances and desirable future
contacts.
On the morning of our departure
home, while working on a few notes
in my hotel room and chatting with
my room mate, Jimmy Richardson,
on various pertinent subjects, he left
from his armchair and, in his
sometimes understandable accent,
ponted out that he could feel tremors
vibrating within. I jibed him and said
that he had too late a visit in Gas
Town the previous night - Gas Town
being the local place to unwind.
Alas, however, he was right. On
looking out of the bedroom window
I noticed that the water in the swim-
mimg pool below resembled that of
boiling water bubbling away in a pan.
It was then that our hotel and other
hotels within the vicinity started to
move. The large pane glass window
in our room started to creak and the
sound of distant thunder rang in our
ears. The vibration and swaying
seemed endless but in fact only last-
ed some five to ten seconds. We
switched the TV on and instantly the
news headlines reported that Seattle
and Vancouver had just experienced
an earthquake and for all persons to
stay calm. I can report that Jimmy
and I were very calm for within sec-
onds we were looking for ways out of
the hotel. Just then a voice came over
the tannoy reporting that we had in
fact gone through an earthquake and
for us to remain calm and stay in our
rooms until further notice.
That really put Jimmy and I at ease.
Knowing that we had 24 floors above
our bedroom we donned our coats
and got outside. The local news
reported that the earthquake had
measured 6.4 on the Richter Scale -
the highest yet in Vancouver. I didn't
realise that ten Greenkeepers from
the UK could make such an impact!
So what have I learned from this
trip? I have realised that Greenkeepers
who have never met before can
become friends, exchange opinions
and work together to break down bar-
rriers between local and international
Greenkeepers.
What has BIGGA achieved from
this trip? BIGGA was exposed on the
international stage and was also suc-
cessful in breaking down barriers and
ten proud BIGGA Members assisted
with the performance.
What did Bernhard & Co achieve
from this trip? I cannot answer this
question, the Company would have
to answer this in their own words but
I go as far as to say that they spon-
sored the trip to allow the selected
men the chance to travel to Canada,
mingle with other Greenkeepers giv-
ing them the opportunity to listen
and learn and to present their views
on modern Greenkeeping in the UK
today.
The highlights of the trip for me
were to meet nine other like-minded
Greenkeepers from home being intro-
duced to the British Consulate
General, making many new friends
and surviving an earthquake.
On a final note I would like to
extend my sincere thanks to my
Section and in particular to Bert
Cross for putting my name forward
for the trip and to BIGGA for select-
ing me to represent the Association
for which I was honoured to do so
and a big thank you to Bernhard &
Co for their generous sponsorship.
Lastly my thanks to Jimmy
Richardson my room mate.