People

Major American Award for Walter Woods

Neil Thomas writes an appreciation of BIGGA's first Chairman

It was with much pleasure that BIGGA received the news that Walter Woods has been selected to receive the 2002 Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America during that Association's 73rd International Golf Course Conference and Show in Orlando next February. GCSAA's most prestigious honour is presented each year to an individual who 'through a continuing lifetime commitment to the game of golf has helped to mould the welfare of the game in a manner and style exemplified by Old Tom Morris'. As well as being the professional and golf course custodian at the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, Old Tom (1821-1908) was a four-time winner of the Open (1861, '62, '64 and '67) and ranked as one of the top links designers of the 19th Century.

It is a fitting time then for us to pay tribute to Walter's services to the greenkeeping profession as well as to BIGGA. For many years now he has been regarded as one of the leading figures in British greenkeeping. Although officially 'retired', this is an incongruous term to apply to Walter as he continues in a consultancy role and is still hugely influential with his advice and guidance to greenkeepers and within BIGGA where he remains on the Board of Management in his capacity as a Guardian. When one recalls that he was BIGGA's first Chairman in 1987, it is surely testimony to his dedication and commitment that he remains so actively involved with the Association today.

I first came to know Walter when appointed Executive Director of BIGGA in 1987. My first impression was of his total enthusiasm for the cause and it did not take me long to conclude that I was to have the privilege of working with one who was at the very pinnacle of his profession. In a large member organisation, concern is for the individual and Walter stands out in this regard, ever willing to support and guide the greenkeeper, whether young or old, in times of adversity. Generations of greenkeepers have benefited in this regard as have those privileged enough to have received 'training under' Walter's supervision. Practical training on the golf course at St Andrews where he was Links Supervisor for 21 years has produced many fine greenkeepers who now occupy top positions within the game, while Walter's work at Elmwood College in Fife was instrumental in raising the standards of greenkeeper education. He has been a major contributory force in establishing that college as one of our leading greenkeeper training colleges. Today, greenkeepers can gain first class qualifications and commensurate salaries and conditions of service. Much of the good work for this enhancement of status can be traced back to the seventies and eighties when Walter and a few like-minded professionals grasped the nettle in leading the way as far as greenkeeper education and training were concerned. Their pioneering work led on to the structure which has produced the trained professional greenkeepers ever more apparent within the game today. In the past 20 years the greenkeeping profession within the United Kingdom has been transformed from a 'know your place' attitude to greenkeepers within many golf clubs to today when those working within the profession enjoy a status commensurate with their technical skills, knowledge, qualifications and dedication. To this changed scenario, Walter has contributed so much.

At St Andrews, Walter hosted numerous tournaments including four Open Championships and 11 Dunhill Cups and he remains an instantly recognisable figure to whom you are immediately directed on mention of his name. He is a true and worthy successor to Old Tom Morris.
not only as a former 'Keeper of the Green' on the links of the Old Course at St Andrews, but in the legacy he will leave for the greenkeeping profession and the game of golf as was the case with Old Tom. As did his revered predecessor, he has taken greenkeeping forward albeit in different times and perhaps a world apart from Old Tom's days. However, the profession must continually evolve in line with the game and its increasing demands and expectations in relation to course maintenance and presentation. Walter is at the forefront in this regard in the finest tradition of Old Tom Morris. Walter had already served as President and Director of Education for the Scottish and International Golf Greenkeepers Association when he first took up the reins as the first Chairman of BIGGA in 1987. He had an unenviable task. The preceding two years, at the instigation of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club, had finally seen the coming together of three previous greenkeeping Associations - the British, the English and International to form the new British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association. These had been difficult times before the three previously volunteer led Associations finally united to form the first professional Association for greenkeepers in the United Kingdom. Walter was charged with the task of establishing the new Association and had no effort in this regard. BIGGA inherited 1200 members from the old Associations and today it has some 7300 members worldwide. Walter's work in BIGGA's formative years was crucial and personally one he is proud to voice his opinions within the game of golf and has always promoted the greenkeeping profession in membership of influential committees within the R&A at St Andrews and elsewhere. His kindly and considerate manner masks a fierce determination to protect and enhance his profession. At times he may be perceived to move in 'mysterious ways' but I have long since realised that, with his intimate knowledge of all matters golf and greenkeeping when he received the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Now he is a most worthy recipient of the Old Tom Morris Award. Within BIGGA and the profession in the United Kingdom, there will indeed be much pleasure derived in learning that the GCSAA's most prestigious honour has been given to Walter and he joins a role call of illustrious names who have previously received this Award. Essentially Walter has a love and passion for greenkeeping and the game of golf which come second only to his family. His integrity and concern for his fellow men are widely acknowledged and he was recognised in 1991 for his contributions to golf and greenkeeping when he received the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. Now he is a most worthy recipient of the Old Tom Morris Award. Within BIGGA and the profession in the United Kingdom, there will indeed be much pleasure derived in learning that the GCSAA's most prestigious honour has been given to Walter and he joins a role call of illustrious names who have previously received this Award. For me it has been a great privilege to have known and to have worked so closely with Walter in the development and progress of BIGGA and to have enjoyed his company and friendship throughout the years.
This month, Tracey and Susannah from BIGGA's Membership Services Department, would like to welcome almost 75 new members to the Association and keep you up to date on 2002 Membership news.

Get the most from your membership

If you have renewed your membership or joined BIGGA this year, you will have received a Membership Pack through the post which includes information on all the benefits and services offered to you as a BIGGA Member. This pack is important and needs to be referred to if you require further information, or in the case of a full greenkeeper member, require the use of the legal helpline or need to claim from the personal accident insurance cover. A second membership pack will not be sent unless requested.

From 1st January 2002, the Membership Department are going to issue plastic Membership Photocards for all Greenkeeping Members of BIGGA. This card will be sent to you together with a renewal letter and an update letter updating you on the benefits and services of membership to BIGGA. If you have mislaid your membership pack you will need to contact Membership Services for a replacement. We cannot send you your membership card until we have a photograph of you! Beat the rush and send your photograph to Tracey or Susannah in the Membership Services Department today! Don’t forget to write your name, date of birth and membership number on the back.

BIGGA to introduce Minimum Qualification

As from 1st February 2002, all NEW applicants applying for Greenkeeper membership will need to state on their application form whether they hold a minimum NVSQ Level 2 Sportsturf qualification (or equivalent) and enclose proof of competence e.g. a copy of an NVQ certificate or indicate whether they are in training to achieve this minimum qualification. This will effect the category of membership for which the applicant is applying.

The application form, although longer than in previous years, will be easy to complete and will include guidelines. See Education Update on page 10 for further information on the minimum qualification.

Increase your personal protection benefit

As part of the Greenkeeping Membership, all Greenkeeping Members are covered by the standard BIGGA personal protection package. This provides cover for Greenkeeper Members for any accident they may have at home, work or even on holiday. Each member can increase this personal protection by completing the tear off slip attached to the information leaflet in the membership pack. A simple, one off payment could secure members up to £50,000 in increased benefits. If any member would like further information please contact the Membership Services Department.

Important news for members

The December and January membership renewals will be mailed out in November, if you have moved and need to advise us of your change of address please contact Membership Services as soon as possible. BIGGA HOUSE, Alnwick, A690 1LF; telephone 01347 833800, fax 01347 833801 or email: tracey@bigga.co.uk susannah@bigga.co.uk

Leisurewear that’s well worth a look!

BIGGA now offer you a fantastic choice of BIGGA logo Leisurewear

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win a fantastic BIGGA sportswatch. Our congratulations go to October’s winner, Martin Mabe, Wareham Golf Club.

Cutter & Buck Classic Polo Shirts complete with BIGGA logo

Available in sunflower with navy trim, and navy with cream trim only £29.95 inc. VAT, post and packing. Sizes Medium, Large, XL available.

Peter Scott BIGGA logo Jumpers

Available in three styles: 1. Round neck, available in navy and charcoal shades, sizes from 40” to 46”, £29.95 inc. VAT, p+p. 2. V-neck long sleeve, available in navy only, sizes from 40” to 46”, £29.95 inc. VAT, p+p. 3. V-neck no sleeves, available in navy only, sizes from 40” to 46”, £29.95 inc. VAT, p+p.

Shankle Golf Ball Caps

Available in khaki with navy peak, one size fits all with adjustable strap £12.95 inc VAT, p+p.

Membership Services for a replacement. We cannot send you your membership card until we have a photograph of you! Beat the rush and send your photograph to Tracey or Susannah in the Membership Services Department today! Don’t forget to write your name, date of birth and membership number on the back.

This provides cover for Greenkeeper Members at the special rate of £25.00 inc VAT, p+p.

BNGGA Members Loyd Badge

BIGGA have introduced a new “Members” adorned lapel badge. Available to all members at the special rate of £25.00 inc VAT, p+p.

For further information contact Tracey or Susannah in Membership Services.

October’s Monthly Membership Draw Winner

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