**Stri Research Day**

More than 100 greenkeepers travelled from across the UK and Ireland, to attend the first STRI Research event at its research facilities in Bingley.

The day was set up in a ‘station rotation’ format and demonstrated the latest products, machinery and techniques that are being tested and developed for the effective management of sports turf.

The format worked well and looks set to be followed in future years – with many advance bookings already being taken for 2012 from those who attended. Each year will showcase the latest developments and different focuses for turf improvement.

This year’s event focused on seven separate research aspects and included disease and nutritional management research, demos from the latest machinery and innovative techniques to help improve the quality and performance of turf.

Bayer, Becker Underwood, Forra (formerly Scotts), R&A, Kettner, Ransomes Jacobsen, Sheriffs Amenity and Syngenta were the companies supporting and presenting at the event, each of which is having research conducted at Bingley and investing time and resource into the development of new products for the industry with the support of STRI’s research team.

Ruth Mann, who manages many research trials for STRI, commented on the day, ‘What a great day! The weather worked well for us and the new rotation format was very successful, allowing lots of questions and interaction from delegates. We’ve had some amazing feedback, with lots of people already asking what we’ve got planned for next year! We’re going to try again with delegates who attended to let us know what worked well on the day to help us plan for next year’s event, which we hope will become an annual feature in the industry’s calendar.’

Gordon McKillop, STRI CEO said, ‘The response for STRI Research has been remarkable, we were already oversubscribed for the event within two weeks of the invitations being sent out.

“This shows the desire for knowledge within the industry and we believe that the STRI Research event offers a great platform for turf managers to see, first-hand, the innovations that are being made in sports turf research and management.”

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**European Golf Bodies to Promote ‘Grow the Game of Golf’ Website**

A group of pan-European golf organisations including the European Tour, ERPGA, PGA of Europe, CGCSA, EGCOA, GEOS, GCSPA and ERPGA, have agreed to expand and promote the Grow the Game of Golf website with the aim of encouraging and inspiring golf clubs and other golf organisations to help develop the game, particularly at grass roots level.

The website, www.growthegameofgolf.org, describes best practices within the industry and aims to provide feedback from the leading experts in golf development. For further info. visit: www.growthegameofgolf.org

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**“More sand, Honeyman…more sand”**

“More sand, Honeyman…more sand” Memoirs of a greenkeeper by Walter Woods’ story, in his own words, was launched officially at the Toro Turf Professionals meeting, at Goodwood Hotel and Golf Club, last month.

Walter, who was St Andrews Links Superintendent from 1974 to 1995 and BIGGA’s first National Chairman, in 1987, is synonymous with greenkeeping and his stellar career has earned him the BEM, the GCSSA Old Tom Morris Award and BIGGA’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

The book, which was published by the Toro Company, takes the reader through every aspect of Walter’s life from his birth in 1913 in Tillycoultry, where he also started his greenkeeping life at the age of 22 and where he is now Club President, through to his fourth and final, Open Championship at St Andrews in 1995.

The book is full of thoughts, reminiscences and an insight into Walter’s own greenkeeping philosophy. BIGGA and Toro are currently working together on a distribution policy for the book and a full review of it will appear in next month’s Greenkeeper International.

**Chairman’s Word**

National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

*Working together for a better future*

As you will read in the magazine Matt Perci, First Assistant/ Mechanic at Ham Manor Golf Club, in West Sussex, is the 2011 winner of the Toro Student of the Year Greenkeeper of the Year. As previous winners, including Alan Pierce his own Course Manager, will no doubt testify, the effort required to achieve this accolade is more than justified when you see the benefits to be gained both in terms of personal development and more tangibly in the New Year in the form of a six week study course at the University of Massachusetts, a trip to the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas and visits to Toro’s base and many other facilities I’m sure.

The runners up and all the entrants should all be equally proud as they exemplify the passion and dedication that members of our Association apply to their careers, in seeking to fully educate and prepare themselves.

I was extremely fortunate recently to attend the Toro Turf Professionals reunion, in the company of many of our country’s finest Greenkeepers, and especially fortunate to travel with Walter Woods, BEM, formally Links Superintendent at St Andrews Links.

I’ve known Walter for a few years now and have been fortunate enough to listen often to him share his experiences with myself and many others at local Section events or at BTME.

Toro have published his book, “Walter Woods, Memoirs of a Greenkeeper,” and it is a great pleasure to see those experiences taken to a wider audience.

Many of Walter’s peers were also present at the reunion, Jack McMillan, George Brown, Chris Kennedy, and many top managers from the next generation also.

The collective experience of the group was very inspiring. These gentlemen, and many others, were able to share their efforts and collaboration were the foundations of the BIGGA we know today.

Their effort and their recognition of how important education and sharing of good practice would in the development of greenkeeping standards, has led to such an improvement in golf course conditions that many Greenkeepers today are expected to, and are capable of producing consistently high course standards which would once have been the preserve of only the top professional tournaments.

We must not be complacent and allow the legacy they have created to be diminished. The importance of your Association cannot be underestimated. Times are tough, but they have been tougher before, and these gentlemen would tell you that it was through associating with and supporting each other, through hard work and dedication that they persevered and were better for it.

The resources available to you now through BIGGA are constantly improving and developing and are far more extensive than them but you must play your part. It is collectively that we are strong, united in supporting one another as we face challenges we have not experienced before.

The forum on our website is a modern and excellent way of communicating with hundreds, if not thousands of your peers. You only have to look at that to see how much Greenkeepers are prepared to help and support one another. The education and networking opportunities available, locally at Section events, regionally at their conferences, and nationally at BTME in Harrogate each year, provide you with great opportunities to learn from industry experts, and share experiences with your colleagues.

I started my greenkeeping career a relatively short time ago in 1997, at the remote Stornoway Golf Club, on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland, where I learnt a great deal from working in a small close knit dedicated team.

But it was through taking advantage of the BIGGA network, that I was able to explore further horizons, make useful contacts and take advantage of the abundance of learning opportunities available, at BIGGA, at College and from fellow Greenkeepers, who were always willing to help.

I’m a great believer that you get out of it what you put in. I would encourage any Greenkeeper who is seri-ous about their career to take that step and start participating in BIGGA, through the resources available, locally at Section events, and our annual gathering in Harrogate in January. Put yourself out a bit, demonstrate your professional ethics and standards and soon you will reap the benefits to you. In turn your employers will see the improvement in you as a committed valued member of your team. That can only be of benefit to you and our profession as a whole.

The Golf Industry Trade companies, the R&A, the Golf Unions, the PGA, the Club Managers Associations, and many more have all seen the benefit and improvements in golf brought about through better greenkeeping hence their willingness to support and work together with us in our efforts.

Let’s continue to work together and ensure that the legacy created by the founders of BIGGA and its predecessors, continues and strengthens, for our benefit and for the game of Golf.

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