Bernhard’s team of trainers have visited Scotland as part of a series of workshops in conjunction with BIGGA. The workshops presented to greenkeepers, club managers and mechanics are designed to inform and advice – and offered the opportunity for delegates to pick up CPD Credits.

The workshops, held at Royal Ayrshire, Turnhouse and Dundonald Golf Courses and Elwood College covered a range of subjects including the setting of cutting units, reel maintenance, grading and the benefits of correctly setting cutting units.

Willie Nisbet, himself a former greenkeeper at St Andrews Links and now Bernhard’s man in Scotland, said: “We have been very pleased with the feedback that we’ve had from these seminars. It is vitally important for busy greenkeeping staff to be able to set units quickly and efficiently. There is always something new to learn and judging by the comments we received afterwards, even the oldest dog can learn new tricks!

“Good players notice the quality of the surface not just in terms of how it plays, but how the place looks. An exceptional shine on the course shows up in the definition in the greens. As there’s no dead tissue, the green retains its colour and plays faster and more evenly.”

Ben Taylor, Bernhard Training Manager, began the seminars. He commented: “I introduced the delegates to the company and product, including the technicalities of angles, attitudes and details of cutting units. After a short presentation we went into the workshop where we ran through all features and benefits and demonstrated exactly what makes this machinery unique across the world. We then demonstrated how to sharpen quickly and efficiently.”

David Grey, First Assistant at Ladybrook Golf Club, and former Bernhard Delegate, said: “This was a fantastic in-depth presentation which detailed the importance of maintaining sound sharp units and the many consequences of failing to do so.

“It was very interesting learning the various angles and how vital these are to achieve the perfect finish.”

Stuart Green, BIGGA’s Learning and Development Executive – Technical, added: “CPD is a vital tool in a turf professional’s career toolkit.

“It’s essential that greenkeepers update their skills, keep abreast of changes in legislation and maintain an awareness of current industry trends to benefit themselves and their employers. “BIGGA offers its members the opportunity to record their CPD through an online system and reward them for their efforts.”

Bernhard team with a seasonal member joining in July to Spray

The latest news from around the globe

AERIAL BLITZ AGAINST OPM RETURNS

Aerial application of insecticide over West Berkshire in May 2013 against oak processionary moth (OPM), and reported first by Greenkeeper International in April 2013, will be repeated in May 2014 said the Forestry Commission in a surprise announcement.

Given the success of the 2013 operation clearly failed to ‘do the trick’. In 2013 FC admitted they were unsure as to whether there were actually any pest insects in the treated woodland and therefore Conservation branded the operation a ‘wedgehammer to crack a nut’.

And what about the even stranger decision taken this year to spray just very small part of a single wood called Sullumh Woods, in the same general area as last year (to the south of Pangbourne) but this time nearer to Tilehurst on the western outskirts of Reading. Male oak processionary moths are strong fliers with flight distance capabilities of up to 25 km, which means they could have exited nests and mated with females over a potentially extensive area. It is now over one year since the May 2013 aerial application ‘trial’ took place with no sign of the results being made public by FC. In January 2014 I asked someone who was operationally involved in the ‘trial’ of how it was privy to how it went. He had asked to see the results but was told he would have to go through the Freedom of Information Act to retrieve them.

I thought he was joking until I discovered that a Pangbourne resident had already used the Freedom of Information Act to find out why Natural England had sanctioned aerial spraying of an OPM oak woodland in the first place, and especially since most conservation organisations thought the environmental and ecological risks were a ‘no-brainer’. According to BBC Berkshire, the Freedom of Information request revealed how Natural England has sanctioned aerial application of insecticide despite believing that it would not eradicate the insect pest, and also believed it would have ‘very significant impact’ on other species of moths and butterflies in the area. Natural England was right to think a single pair of BTk sprays will not eradicate OPM in 2013, even if present in the treated woodland, but for entirely the wrong reasons.

Spraying BTk as a stand-alone measure is essentially a pest management tool rather than a pest control tool and requires repeat applications over a number of years to achieve pest eradication at all. If the capture of five male adult moths in 2014 shows one thing it is that aerial spraying with BTk in 2013 failed to eradicate OPM, so why should the same treatment prove any different this year. And especially since there is no hard evidence of pest presence in the woodland earmarked for spraying this year.

BTk is a biological insecticide lacking the potency and persistence generally required to achieve eradication with a single application, but which is possible using more powerful chemical insecticides like diflubenzuron (an insect growth regulator) and deltamethrin (a pyrethroid insecticide acting through contact and ingestion). These insecticides are used in ground based spraying against OPM but are not licensed for aerial application.

UK plant health authorities are apparently keeping the results (if any) from these trials’ very ‘close to the chest’. It will probably take another ‘leak’ or ‘source’ to make a Freedom of Information request to secure the findings for general viewing and scrutiny - any volunteers? Dr Terry Mabbett

40 YEARS FOR DAVE AT CHILDWALL

BIGGA member Dave Macauley has celebrated a 40-year stint at Head Greenkeeper at Childwall Golf Club.

Dave began his greenkeeping career at 15, assistant eight years at Royal Birkdale before joining Childwall – a parkland course close in the Hoyton area of Liverpool – which was established in 1912.

He heads a five-strong greenkeeping team at Childwall – a