On 25 March, the candidates made their journeys from England and Scotland and descended on Ipswich. A tour of the facility was first on the agenda which was a real eye opener for all.

The majority of us take machines for granted when we start work at 6am in the morning, however the attention to detail when a machine is being built is incredible to see from a nut to a cylinder.

Jacobsen have a three hole golf course on site which is kept to a high standard by Jamie Hughes – the greens are immaculate. We had the opportunity to play the par three course, and the winner was Gregor Mackintosh from Turnberry with a score of one under par. The day concluded with each delegate completing an ‘ice breaker’ task, dinner and an insight from Dr Frank Rossi focusing on our futures in the industry.

We had an early start on the Wednesday, with Lorna Shicklen giving a detailed presentation on writing a CV which made us all realise how important CV’s really are. Lorna then spoke about all aspects of interview techniques. Effective communication strategies followed later in the morning which was put into practice when we split into small groups to complete a presentation on ‘your dream job’. The winner was Sam Evans from Oakland Park Golf Club who spoke about replacing Sam Allardyce at West Ham United. Dr Frank Rossi then returned to present on ‘Maximising Performance and Minimising Stress’ which we were all lucky to listen to before he flew back to the States. Frank clearly feels passionately about the subject and was able to present evidence to support his beliefs.

Later in the afternoon, we enjoyed a seminar from one of the mentors, Steve Chappell. Steve is the Head Greenkeeper of the PGA Course at Gleneagles which will be hosting the 2014 Ryder Cup. Steve discussed his career to date and spoke about the volunteering opportunities at tournaments. The evening was completed by dinner and an open forum with Mike Sawicki.

After two intense days the pace continued on the final morning with ‘Building a Budget’. This was presented by Lee Strutt MG. Candidates were introduced to budgeting, how to formulate a budget and coatings to create their own budgets using Excel. The week was brought to an end by David Bancroft-Turner, who gave a presentation on dealing with club politics. This helped to identify politics in the workplace, how to manage them more effectively, provided tips and suggestions to improve performance and also introduce us to the four different political ‘animals’.

For me, being selected for the FTMI was an honour and one that I would strongly recommend to any greenkeeper to apply for. Everyone on the course shares the dream of becoming a Course Manager and the FTMI showed many aspects which you don’t think about necessarily when doing the day job.

As one mentor said, being a Course Manager is 10% greenkeeping and 90% managing. All the seminars were beneficial and highly interesting, but if I had to pick highlights I would go for Lee Strutt’s, David Bancroft-Turner’s and Steve Chappell’s. Throughout my career I have been told that networking is a great way to learn, meet fellow greenkeepers and yourself known around the industry. To speak to 20 other candidates and five mentors was fascinating as you can discuss aspects of the job you would normally discuss. The FTMI has made me focus more on what I want from greenkeeping - become a Course Manager. The skills I have taken away will improve the knowledge and experience I’ve taken from Gavin KinSELLA MG at Royal Mid Surrey.

To conclude this was a fantastic opportunity and one I would like to thank BIGGA and Jacobsen for hosting.

WALTER HELPS GRADUATES CELEBRATE TURF DIPLOMAS

BIGGA Life Member Walter Woods helped a dozen graduates celebrate their diplomas in turf maintenance at the home of golf.

Walter served as Superintendent for the St Andrews Links Trust for 21 years, and was on hand as the 12 graduates from WINSTONUniversity passed their six-month course.

The trip to St Andrews topped off six months of a unique education for golf course and club managers at the university, which is based in Germany and focuses on teaching all manner of disciplines in the turf industry.

During the trip to Scotland the group gained new insights in the maintenance of world class courses like the Duke’s Course and the links of Kinghorn.

On the way to Scotland the group visited the headquarters of Ransomes Jacobsen in Ipswich where they received first hand information on the turf care equipment of one of the world’s leading manufacturers.

One of the graduates, Frank Ahern, said: “We not only learnt about turf and resource management but also gained a solid background in the economics and strategic marketing of golf courses.”

Ian Butter, the English director of WINSTONUniversity added: “Proof of how much our graduates are sought after is demonstrated by the fact that all the graduates are now working in the industry. At present the application process is open for the second course at WINSTONUniversity starting in October. Hubertus von Treskold, CEO of WINSTONUniversity, said: “The demand is already very high. Since we can only accept 20 students per course we are in a very comfortable situation where we can choose the best applicants. This being said I like to stress that we do not want to deter anyone to apply for the new semester which will start in October 2014 and run until the end of March 2015.”

BIGGA AND EVERRIS PARTNERSHIP

BIGGA are delighted to announce the details of our latest Partnership as we join forces with Everts. Announced last month, we’ve created a series of new packages designed to improve the recognition given to our supporters.

BIGGA and Everris will be linking with Everts for many years, who are well-known across the turf industry for developing technologically advanced fertilisers and plant protection products.

This Partnership is built on the ongoing relationship while promoting greenkeepers’ opportunities and developing new initiatives and events, more details of which will be revealed over the coming months, including the exciting Turf Rewards initiative.

BIGGA’s Business Development Manager Jill Rodham said: “We’re very excited about this partnership which consolidates our relationship with Everris, and will allow us to join forces more effectively. “It’s a very pleasing working with them over the last few years and their status as BIGGA’s small partners means how much we value their support.”

Richard Walton (shown with Jim Crustoe), Business Manager at Everts, said: “As a company, we believe everyone benefits from working and learning together, and we’re delighted to have become a BIGGA Partner. “As our new partnership is cemented out and turf management products and practices develop and evolve, our partnership and the launch of Turf Rewards offer us the opportunity to develop our own knowledge and expertise both on and off the golf course.”