Golf began at St Andrews, Scotland, 600 years ago. Today, golfers from all parts of the globe travel to Fife to play and pay homage to the 'Home of Golf' and site of 25 British Opens dating to 1873. The several-hundred year-old stone 'Golfer's Bridge' across the Swilcan Burn at the 18th, and The Royal and Ancient Clubhouse constructed in 1854, are unique landmarks that anyone who's played there will remember forever.

Historically, the 'links', forming a link between sea and fertile farmland, were sculpted into the dunes by time and the elements. Turfgrass species were naturally selected over the years, a direct result of weather, soils and prevailing maintenance practices.

Though turfgrass cultivars and maintenance practices are greatly improved today, fine fescue roughs and browntop bent-grass/fescue greens remain part of the rich tradition at St Andrews, and the 1995 British Open Championship.

The development of creeping bentgrasses for greens, tees and fairways added a fresh approach to the game. Putting is faster and truer. Fairways allow more roll, and along with tees, recover from divot and traffic damage more rapidly. Today's global golfers expect creeping bentgrass.

Now, more designers and architects are incorporating 'Penn Pals' into their 'dunes look' courses with outstanding results. Penncross, Penneagle and PennLinks contrast well with the perennial ryegrasses, Kentucky bluegrasses and fine fescues in short and tall rough areas.

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The February issue of GREENKEEPER International will be with you on February 17 complete with all the news from BTME 96!

JANUARY 1996

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For 17 months, research officers at the STRI visited golf courses around the UK, in a survey to examine turfgrass and its response to different conditions. Results show that greenkeepers are winning the battle against some difficult odds.

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They're the machines everyone thinks of when considering golf course machinery, but how do they really compare? Hugh Tilley canvases opinions.

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Mike Goodhind, winner of the Miracle Greenkeeper of the Year award

GREENKEEPER International

January 1996

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WIN £50 CASH IN OUR BUYER'S GUIDE COMPETITION: TURN TO PAGE 71

Cover

Mike Goodhind, winner of the Miracle Greenkeeper of the Year award
Early in 1994 we embarked on a journey which was to take us through the whole ambit of BIGGA's structure and activities at national, regional and section level by means of a review which has resulted in the completed "Towards 2000" document. This journey will end in Harrogate at our forthcoming AGM when members will be asked to approve the document and most importantly implement the resulting amendments proposed to the Constitution and Rules of the Association.

Looking back, the exercise over the past two years has seen the democratic processes of the Association at their best. All members with an interest in commenting on the review should have had the opportunity to do so through their sections. At regional level there has been a proper and considered consultation on the proposed changes and representations made to the Board of Management for consideration. Over and above this a Review Body was established which in addition to the Headquarters Management Team included our Chairman and representatives from each of the regions. This Review Body was instrumental in progressing the "Towards 2000" document and I would like to thank those member representatives who gave freely of their time – Barry Heaney, Gordon Child, Ian Holoran, Harry Diamond, Clive Osgood and Richard Barker.

So we come to the AGM with the review document having broad based support from the sections of the Association and the five regional boards. The focus is now on the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Rules and space will not allow me to comment in detail in the course of this article. I will, however, make mention of two key aspects of the changes. One relates to membership of the Association and seeks to give a clearer definition of the entitlement to full membership of BIGGA. This, in future, if accepted, will be limited to "any person employed in the keeping of the green at a golfing establishment" together with Life Members duly elected by the Association in General Meeting. Existing members who feel they may no longer meet the criteria for full membership have no need for concern as a separate clause allows for those persons in paid up membership of the Association at the time of implementation of the revised Constitution by the membership in General Meeting and who do not meet the new criteria for membership as laid down in that Constitution to continue in membership at the discretion of the appropriate section committee.

A second key aspect of the changes relates to the Board of Management which, on acceptance of the proposals, will henceforth comprise of five members being one member from each region, together with a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Past Chairman. An important change is that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman can be appointed by the Board from within the full membership of the Association. Should the Board appoint from within the five regional members then the region in question shall be entitled to elect an additional representative. So the Board of Management will be restricted to eight members. The introduction of a clause allowing the Board to appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman from within the full membership rather than restricting those appointments to members of the board as currently applies is important. It will allow a much greater degree of flexibility and should ensure that those taking on the positions in future can give freely of their time and commit themselves wholly to positions where the demands are ever-increasing.

I hope I have given you just a brief insight to the changes being proposed and that members attending the AGM will see fit to vote in these amendments to our Constitution and Rules.
towards 2000 and beyond, I believe that they will increase the standing and effectiveness of the Association as we look to meet the many challenges that lie ahead.

A welcome for new Golden and Silver Key members
BIGGA's Education and Development Fund was established in January 1992 and is now entering its fifth year. Its achievements are well documented and it has been particularly successful on two fronts. First in providing education and training opportunities for our members which otherwise would not have been possible and secondly in bringing together, through a common programme, those companies within the industry who wish to support greenkeepers in their quest to enhance their knowledge and learning opportunities and to take forward the status of the profession. 1995 saw the publication of "A Practical Guide to the Ecological Management of the Golf Course" as well as a new training video on "Golf Course Preparation". Both were made possible through the resources of the Fund as were the Regional Management Training Courses which will continue across the country and in Southern Ireland during the coming spring. A number of projects for 1996 are being planned and during the BTME in Harrogate we will be launching another new video on the 'Reconstruction of a Green'. The Fund has therefore become a keystone of our progress as an Association and within this magazine we recognise and thank those companies as Golden and Silver Key Members who will be supporting the Fund in 1996. A mention also for those individuals who choose to support the Fund and become Golden or Silver Key members of the Association. This is a very real commitment to the education and training of greenkeepers and I thank them for their support.

A special welcome for our new Golden Key company members - Hepworth Minerals and Chemicals Ltd, Pattisson, Mommersteeg, Levington, Superturf and Ocmis. A welcome too for Rolawn as a Silver Key member. I feel sure that their decisions to support the Fund will be fully justified and I look forward to their playing a full part in the consultative processes through which the Fund and the projects emanating from it have prospered.

At the end of a year in which he prepared his fourth Open Championship course Walter Woods, Links Superintendent at St Andrews, begins his well earned retirement - although the pipe, slippers and SAGA holiday brochures may have to wait a while before they are put to good use because he has no intention of saying farewell to the profession he loves.

Walter will remain as a consultant to St Andrews Links and will expand his consultancy work to share his vast experience with others.

"I go into clubs where the greenkeeper is suffering stress and without the resources to do the job properly and try to provide him with support. I find that the committee listens to me and I can usually improve the situation for the greenkeeper within a couple of months," he explained. As the first Chairman of BIGGA in 1987 Walter has seen the Association grow and been a major influence in what it has done for the profession.

"I see a different type of greenkeeper coming through. One who has a responsible job, is in charge of budgeting and who has a managerial role. The Association is largely responsible for this and is keen to promote the job of the greenkeeper and point the way forward for the profession."

He also gave credit to the Association for improving the image of the greenkeeper. "It used to be that greenkeepers wore overalls and a 'bunnet' but now you see young men who still wear overalls while out on the course but who dress in their BIGGA blazer, collar and tie when they have meetings. That has done a lot for the image of greenkeeping and the Association has been responsible for that."

One thing which does annoy him, however, is the Association's current membership level. "We have moved up from 1,000 members when we first started to 6,000 now but we should have 12,000 members. "Every greenkeeper should be a member of BIGGA and it is down to the clubs to learn that the course won't succeed without a good greenkeeper and that a good greenkeeper should be a member of the Association to tap into all the expertise and educational opportunities it has to offer."

If there is one thing which has surprised and delighted Walter since the birth of BIGGA it is the education which is now on offer. "I didn't think it would ever happen that many greenkeepers would be better educated than the secretaries but it has because the Association not only educates on greenkeeping matters but offers courses in management as well."

"Not just the Opens but the other professional events and the top amateur championships. I got a real buzz out of that," he recalls.

Walter was invited to the Board's Christmas dinner just before Christmas and presented with a token of appreciation from all in the Association by current BIGGA Chairman Barry Heaney.
BE SURE NOT TO MISS THE EVENT OF THE YEAR

We're now only days away from BTME - but it's still not too late to pre-register if you ACT NOW! Call the BTME Hotline on 01347 838581 before January 16 and we'll rush you details. Pre-registration means you'll gain fast access to the Harrogate event - from January 24-26 - and you could win a prize! See you there!

BTME and the Educational Seminar Programme is organised by the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Ainsty, York Y062K

Working for the good of the fine turf industry
Out to grass

The revelation that it takes 15 years to develop a new variety of grass was just one of the interesting pieces of information revealed at the South West and South Wales Region Seminar at Cannington College in Bridgwater, Somerset.

Sponsored by Barenbrug the day was introduced by John Bradley, Area Manager of Barenbrug UK Ltd who reminded the delegates of a passage from Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

"And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where no one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

The talks began with "Perennial ryegrass for the golf green in the year 2005" by Gerard van Klooster, Head of Breeding in the year 2005" by Gerard van Klooster, Head of Breeding at Myerscough College. Martyn Jones, Head of the Turf Section at Myerscough College. Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels - "And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where no one grew before, would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

Martyn Jones was speaking at an evening Greenkeeping Seminar and Supper at Mere Golf and Country Club.

Mike Sheehan, Course Manager, explained that at Mere they now have an established policy to hollow core and top dress at the beginning of August. Disruption at this time of year is minimal and usually within two weeks all evidence of the treatments have disappeared. Competitions are arranged round this programme and generally a large percentage of the golfers are on holiday then anyway. Delegates from Davyhulme Golf Club and Prestbury confirmed that they too regularly hollow core in August with excellent results.

Dennis Mortram from Reaseheath College spoke on aeration and how too advocates summer treatments to prevent problems in winter rather than waiting until the course is waterlogged. He reminded the delegates that they don't manage the grass - they manage the soil. And if that soil is compacted or waterlogged then vital oxygen is restricted and the grass will not thrive. He also made a plea for more research into the whole subject of aeration.

A lively Question & Answer session covered topics ranging from the benefits of sand based greens, to the optimum number of competitions for an average course; overseeding; compaction and the difference between a Head Greenkeeper and a Course Manager. 90 delegates attended from 44 North West clubs, nearly half of whom were Chairmen of Green or Committee members.

The evening was organised by SISIS Equipment and jointly sponsored by SISIS and Rhône Poulenc.

Keeping the course open for 52 weeks of the year

"If golfers want to play all-year-round they must accept that vital preventative maintenance has to be carried out in the summer months and must accept the disruption that goes with it," so says Martyn Jones, Head of the Turf Section at Myerscough College.

"Fusarium can be largely prevented by summer treatments; aeration is most effective when carried out in the summer when the grass plants are most in need of oxygen and overseeding is most successful in the late summer when good germination is guaranteed and Poa annua less likely to thrive."

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Membership milestone

Richard Martin, a 33 year old assistant from Ripon Golf Club is BIGGA's 600th member and as such has had his membership cheque returned. "I'm delighted, it's a great Christmas present," he said.

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Hugh Tilley canvasses opinion on a selection of Greens Mowers currently on the market

Greens mowers are always the first machine anyone thinks of when considering golf course machinery. Perhaps they are the glamour machines because they are in such frequent use, or maybe it because they have the most important visual impact on the course.

Most greenkeepers prefer to use pedestrian operated machines, however, many admit that ride-on greens triples offer time and labour savings and have to be used to greater or lesser extend on most courses. Whether there is any significant difference between quality of cut is debatable, perhaps the greatest difference is visual – the width of those highly desirable stripes.

Groomers, conditioners or rakes are available for most if not all greens machines, and most greenkeepers either love or hate them. Most groomers only work in a straight line – which may be a problem for the perimeter cut, few people are prepared to lift them just for one or two circles of the green. Verti-cutter reels are also an option for many machines, however as these require the cutting unit to be changed most greenkeepers prefer to have a dedicated machine for the task although changing reels may be very quick and easy. The Dennis cassette system is the ultimate in quick change, and perhaps this could be adopted on other machines.

Without doubt quality of cut is the number one criteria in selecting machines with cuts per metre (or yard) the salient figure to consider however the greenkeepers spoken to accepted that a machine sold as a “greens mower” would provide acceptable cut quality. After this other considerations have to be price, reliability, service back-up and ease of use, including of adjusting. Again most greenkeepers took it for granted that the main contenders in this field would be easy to use and reliable. Service back-up was more important in this survey than in any of the previous ones, probably because the greens mower is the mainstay of maintenance – and appearance, not to mention green speed. Greens vary considerably between clubs, and often between different parts on the course. The size of the greens, their level and the surrounds have a significant impact on the ease of using a mower on them. Manoeuvrability is more vital on some courses than on others, while some have a greater requirement for machines with better than average stability and surefootedness. Greens triples have no tread or rib on tyres or rollers, and engine braking and/or all wheel drive may be required.

The Hayter Beaver T93 at Peterstone GC, South Wales
A troubled financial history, i.e. lack of money for investment, was the most critical factor in Peterstone’s purchase of the Hayter T93. The five year old 18 hole private course is in receivership, however consultants advised of the necessity of maintaining the course, and thus the need to invest. A number of different machines were demonstrated, however the T93 supplied through local dealer Ted Hopkins (who took the old GT as a trade-in) performed perfectly satisfactorily and was available “at a price we couldn’t refuse,” said Philip Bowes, joint Head Greenkeeper.

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