The BIGGA Golf Day, sponsored by J. Rothschild Assurance, took place on the longest day of the year but for those who attended the time just flew by...

Rothschilds have been in the news lately on two counts.
The art collection owned by Rothschilds raised the eye popping sum of £56 million when sold at auction while the BIGGA Golf Day, sponsored by J. Rothschild Assurance, was a stunning success.

There is no doubting which event caused the bigger stir in greenkeeping circles. Just who would be interested in an illuminated manuscript anyway? No, Aldwark Manor was where it was and on the longest day of 1999 and by sheer coincidence it also turned out to be one of the most enjoyable.

It was BIGGA's third golf day and in that short time has established itself as a regular event in the diaries of many well known names and faces in the industry... and a few from outwith our industry as well.

Among them this year was England international footballer Lee Clark who kindly took time out from his seven figure transfer from Sunderland to Fulham to present the prizes.

It may have been exactly mid summer but it didn't stop half the field being pelted by hail stones in a freak storm in the afternoon. It certainly didn't dampen the spirits and the scoring suggested that some serious golf was being played.

Golf Day 99
First
Ocmes England, 65-6-59
(Better inward half)
Nick Lawson
Mark Kirby
Dave Dwight
Graham Wallace

Second
Hi-Tec, 65-6-59
Lee Ware
Grant Hutchison
Richard Smith
Andy Taylor

Third
Rothschild 2 62-2.8 - 59.2
Richard Minton
Ian Semple
Nigel I'llingworth
Alan Greaves

Putting Competition winner -
Graham Wallace

Nearest the Pin -
Mark Grant

Longest Drive & Pitching
competitions winner -
Alistair Beggs
Above: Regional Administrators Doug Bell, Peter Larter and Peter Boyd ensured it ran to time

Previous Page: The victorious Ocmis England team with Mike Blunt, Director of J Rothschild Assurance, Lee Clark and Gordon Child

Below: Aldwark Manor's own Bobby Moncur spot a flat on his nearside rear

Below: Hi Tec grabbed a well deserved second place only losing out on countback

Below: Rothschild 2 were the best placed sponsor's team in third
Below: The eventual winners before the off looking confident. And why shouldn't they with Dave Dwight, of Aldwark Manor amid their ranks?

Above: Andy Russell, of Headland Amenity, and Richard Minton, of Scotts, share a joke with Gordon Child

Left: Cheryl Broomhead takes little account of the slippery conditions as she rounds the corner at high speed

Below: Birdies weren't only being seen out on the course! These ducks came to Bunkers Bar to see what all the fuss was about!

Below: Alistair Beggs of STRI collected both the longest drive and chipping prizes

Below: Nearest the Pin winner, Mark Grant

Below: Putting Competition winner, Graham Wallace
Above: To the winners go the spoils

Below: Vice Chairman, Elliott Small turns on the style in the chipping competition

In addition to providing four teams and some fine golfers to the day the event’s new sponsor J. Rothschild Assurance specialises in financial planning for the medium to long term, providing a wide range of financial solutions which include investment, protection and retirement products. BIGGA has entered into discussions with JRA to become an Introducer, so making the financial products and services of the company available to BIGGA members.

"First and foremost we are in the business of providing relevant, expert and realistic advice. We know that most people find the whole subject of financial planning difficult and even daunting and we aim to make the whole process as intelligible and accessible as we can," explained Trevor Downing, a Partner of The J. Rothschild Partnership.

"Our approach to investment is typical of our overall philosophy. We aim to provide investment choices via top quality investment managers who are constantly seeking to maximise returns for clients. You certainly don’t have to be a millionaire to be a client of J. Rothschild Assurance but I would like to think that we will greet you as if you are."

If you would like to hear more about the company and what it can offer BIGGA members call Trevor on 01959 500405.

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Bryan Moor of OCM has recently completed the design and assisted construc-
tion of an eighteen hole golf course at Rutherford Castle, West Linton, an
extension to Easingwold Golf club, and is currently working on an extension to
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Redexim were the company which developed the Vertidrain and together with partners Charterhouse are making an impression on clubs all over the world. Scott MacCallum travelled to Holland to meet Redexim’s President.

Making the earth move

I hadn’t been working long in the golf business when I had the great fortune to be sitting in a caravan during The Open Championship at Turnberry in 1986 listening to Karsten Solheim describe to Sir Henry Cotton how he had invented the first Ping putter. I really did feel in a privileged position to be able to sit and listen in to history being recounted by the very people who had helped to shape it. I got a similar feeling when I sat in an office in Zeist, Holland, listening to Ceese de Bree talk about how a friend, Arie-Jan de Ridder, and he came up with the antidote to one of the greatest problems in greenkeeping - compaction.

Ceese de Bree is the President of Redexim International Trading, the parent company of Charterhouse, and the piece of machinery which owes its existence to the two Dutchmen was the Vertidrain.

“In Holland we suffered from a lot of compaction partly because of the low lying nature of the land and we spent a long time looking for a solution,” explained Ceese.

At the time, in the early 80s, there was a great deal of cheap foreign labour in Holland and to give football pitches some relief it was not unusual to have 60-70 workers out with garden forks spiking.

“We wondered how we could replace the people with a machine and eventually realised that it might be possible to modify a cultivating machine.” Arie-Jan and one of his engineers disappeared into his workshop and eventually emerged with the very first Vertidrain, which provided a solution to a problem people had been wrestling with since the 60s.

“It was the first anti compaction machine built anywhere in the world,” recalled Ceese.

Having produced a machine which could, and subsequently did, make a huge impression on the turf management world the next step was to protect the idea and maximise the potential of it. And this was where Ceese’s legal training came into its own.

“I’m a farmer’s son but I have been and still am a lawyer so I’m always thinking about contracts and how you should protect what you have. We founded Redexim together, patented the idea and came up with the name Vertidrain. We had originally named it the Verti Soil Drain but soon agreed on the shortened version. Verti comes from vertical action and the drain bit is obvious.

“It has become a famous name all over the world as has the act of it which has become known as vertidraining,” said Ceese, which hauled me back to my school days and the conjugation of verbs - I vertidrain, you vertidrain, we vertidrain...

Initially the Vertidrain was seen as a tool specifically for sports fields and football pitches and it was only later that golf was seen as a potential market.

“People didn’t appreciate the revolutionary nature of the Vertidrain at the beginning and part of the marketing was the education of people about its use. The first golf club to use it was Utrechts’ ‘De Pan’ Holland’s equivalent to St Andrews but that was only on the fairways, not the greens.”

Around this time Redexim contacted David Jenkins, of Charterhouse, with a view to enlisting the Hazlemere company to tackle the lucrative British market.

“Two people came over from...
Vertidrain on his greens," said David.

"I think that was one of the major breakthroughs," he added. "To do it really well very well but all the time improvements were being made."

The first machines were very unstable really because of the movement that was required into the holes in the ground down to a depth of 16 inches but every step the company made was carried out in a careful prudent manner.

"My philosophy was not to get too big at once and take things step by step. We had to finance the prototypes and the improvements and secure patents all over the world. We do things slowly but do them well. We saw money own our own buildings and don't have to pay out to the banks," said Ceese.

He operates a flat management style which ensures costs are kept under control while at the same time giving key staff and distributors, a lot of whom have stayed with the company for many years, the flexibility to do their jobs.

Having broken into the European and British markets the next step was America and Redexim and Charterhouse jointly manned a booth at the GCSAA show while Walter Woods starred in a video highlighting the benefits of the machine.

"American superintendents are educated to university standard but our problem was that if a subject wasn't included in their list of courses they didn't believe in it. We had to convince them that because they hadn't already heard about vertidraining it wasn't something to be dismissed. It was quite an uphill battle," recalled David.

"We went out to the course and showed them it working and the physical evidence before their very eyes persuaded them." So the developing relationship between Redexim and Charterhouse that a closer bond was forged in the early 90s and the benefits which have accrued from this marriage have enabled them to make a successful attack on the global market. It also led to the dual Redexim/Charterhouse logo which appears on the new BIGGA Golf Championship which they are co-sponsoring with Scotts.

"To my mind there was a lot of experience within Charterhouse in how to vertidrain seedling, top dressing and the turf tidy and there is nothing to stop us looking wider," said Geoff, the point is emphasised by both David and Marinus.

"To me the future of Redexim/Charterhouse looks rosy but you won't get any outlandish predictions from the company's President."

The results of any crystal ball gazing Ceese de Bree does on behalf of Redexim is not something he publicises but he does know where his company sits in the scheme of the fine turf industry.

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The judges decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. This competition is not open to BIGGA staff or non-members.

Last month, Paul Young of Kirtlington GC, certainly knew his numbers when he correctly identified all three telephone numbers.

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