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This month, Rachael Palmer from BIGGA's Membership Services would like to welcome 47 new members to the Association and also welcomes Gemma Lee to the department

Remember your benefits!

Now that summer is well and truly here we are all more likely to be out enjoying the sunshine, playing sport or even indulging in a spot of DIY or gardening.

Whatever you get up to this summer it's worth remembering that all Greenkeeper members are covered by the personal accident insurance that is provided as a benefit of membership.

The personal accident package provides cover for any accident you may have at home, work or even on holiday subject to certain

exclusions. The schedule of benefits include payments for total disablement through to loss of fingers or toes and temporary disablement. You can also increase your own personal protection with a one off annual payment which could secure you up to £50,000 in increased benefits.

In the event of an accident likely to give rise to a claim you should immediately call 0161 935 2935 remembering to have your BIGGA membership number ready.

A warm welcome

With Rachael having taking over from Tracey Maddison as Membership Services Officer her role of Membership Services Assistant has been taken by Gemma Lee (below).

Gemma (19) was born in Bradford but moved to the York area eight years ago, and now lives in Easingwold, just a few miles from BIGGA HOUSE. In fact she was at Easingwold School at the same time as another BIGGA staff member, Brad Anderson.

Prior to joining the Association she worked in the Customer Services Department of Norwich Union, based in York, having previously achieved her NVQ in Advanced Health and Social Care at York College. Her interests include socialising with friends, going



out for meals, cinema and swimming. "I'm delighted to have joined the Association and am looking forward to getting to know many of the members over the next few months and years," said Gemma.



How well do you know the people who work for the Association? In this new series we give you a chance to learn a little more about a member of BIGGA's Headquarters staff



Rachael Foster

Name: Rachael Foster

Position: Receptionist/Administrator

What does your role involve? Organisation of the reception area; booking Key Room hire; the magazine database; merchandise and BIGGA blazers

How long have you worked for the Association? One year and five months

Where were you born and brought up? Marlborough, Wiltshire but spent 17 years living in Jersey before moving here two years ago

Where did you work before you joined BIGGA? Kleinwort Benson (Jersey) Ltd

What are your hobbies? Teaching aerobics/step/boxercise and personal training. Also swimming, touch rugby and cooking

What is your favourite food? Seafood/Spanish

What is your favourite film? Dances with Wolves

What was the last book you read? How to be Good by Nick Hornby

Who is your all time hero? Jimmy Connors

What was the best event you've ever attended? 1. The birth of my daughter, Stephanie. 2. Seeing Robbie Williams in concert

What is your claim to fame? (None not acceptable) 1. Taking an aerobics/boxercise class for 100 people to raise £5000 for Cancer Research. 2. Meeting Ian Woosnam at a party in Jersey

Personal Accident Insurance

If during the period of insurance a member sustains accidental bodily injury resulting solely and independently of any other cause within two years in Death or Disablement the Company will pay the amount of benefits specified.

Claims arising from the following causes are excluded - being under the influence of drugs; having a blood alcohol/drugs level in excess of the legal limit whilst driving a motor vehicle; war & terrorism; pregnancy; sickness or bodily injury resulting from a gradually operating cause; intentional self injury, suicide or any attempt thereof; engaging in any form of aerial flight other than as a passenger; Active service in any of the Armed Forces of any nation. Own criminal act, deliberate exposure to needless peril (except in an attempt to save human life).

In the event of an accident likely to give rise to a claim you should immediately notify: Health Lambert Group, Riverside, Claxton House, New Bailey Street, Manchester M3 5AG Telephone: 0161 935 2935 Fax: 0161 839 2839 To avoid delays please quote your membership number and give brief details of the claim. You will be advised of any further action to take. Medical Certificates will be required, at your own cost, to substantiate your claim.

All policies operate from receipt of your membership application by BIGGA.

The scheme is insured by Royal & SunAlliance Group.

The Scheme Brokers are: Health Lambert Group, Tower House, Merrion Way, Leeds LS2 8PQ Telephone: (0113) 246 1313

Health Lambert Ltd is a member of the General Insurance Standards Council (GISC) Note: This is a summary of cover only, a full policy wording is available on request from the Scheme Brokers.

Benefit	Amount
Death	£100,000
Temporary Total Disablement	£2,500
Permanent Total Disablement	£25,000
Loss of limb	£2,500
Loss of sight	£2,500
Loss of hearing	£2,500
Loss of speech	£2,500
Loss of use of hand	£2,500
Loss of use of foot	£2,500
Loss of use of eye	£2,500
Loss of use of ear	£2,500
Loss of use of nose	£2,500
Loss of use of tongue	£2,500
Loss of use of throat	£2,500
Loss of use of larynx	£2,500
Loss of use of pharynx	£2,500
Loss of use of oesophagus	£2,500
Loss of use of stomach	£2,500
Loss of use of intestines	£2,500
Loss of use of bladder	£2,500
Loss of use of rectum	£2,500
Loss of use of vagina	£2,500
Loss of use of penis	£2,500

IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT, PLEASE CALL 0161 935 2935 TO REPORT THE ACCIDENT AND TO OBTAIN A CLAIM FORM. YOU SHOULD ALSO REPORT THE ACCIDENT TO YOUR EMPLOYER.

July's Membership Draw Winner



Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win a fantastic BIGGA Clock/calculator/calendar and alarm. Our

congratulations go to July's winner, Alan Gibson, of West Lothian Golf Club.

Membership renewals

Keep those renewal forms coming in! Remember we can use any clear photograph of yourself on your new membership card as long as it is approximately passport photo size. If you are still having difficulty getting a photo organised send your renewal form back to us anyway so that you don't miss out on the benefits of membership and we will sort your photo out at a later date. It's not too late to renew if your membership expired in December, January, February, March or April just return your green renewal form and we will issue a new expiry date. If you have mislaid your form then call either Rachael or Gemma in Membership Services on 01347 833800 and we will issue a replacement.

BIGGA welcomes...

Scottish Region

- Thomas Aitchison, Central
- Alan Brown, West
- Martin Fabiani, West
- Marc Gray, North
- Mark Roberts, Central
- Jeff Ryce, Central
- Edmund Wood, West

Northern Region

- Alex Haworth-Law, N West
- Eliot Parker, N West
- Paul Roorcroft, N West

Andrew Somerset, N West

- Guy Webster, Cleveland

Midland Region

- Adam Amos, Mid Anglia
- Daniel Barnes, E England
- Robert Collins, BB&O
- Lee Folbrigg, Mid Anglia
- David Gass, Mid Anglia
- Paul Harris, Mid Anglia
- Michael Johnson, BB&O
- Tim Needham, E Midland
- Marc Pritchard, Mid Anglia

Robert Sandilands, Midland

- Robert Siggers, BB&O

South East Region

- Stuart Ashley, E Anglia
- Keith Howard, Surrey
- Murray Long, Surrey
- Jason McBride, Surrey
- David Parker, Surrey
- Christopher Parratt, Surrey
- Matthew Summerfield, Surrey
- Chip Thompson, Surrey

S West/S Wales Region

- Jamie Evans, S Wales
- Andrew Gogan, S West
- Matthew Perry, S West
- Graham Smedley, S West

International

- Gary Finnerty, Ireland
- Steve Gonyea, USA
- Paul Malone, Ireland
- Patrick Truchan CGCS, USA

Associate Members

- Martyn David, S Wales
- Tim Hath, Northern
- Dennis Humphries, N West
- Sean Malherbe, Midland
- John Wanklyn, S West

Corporate Members

- Geoffrey Burgess, S West

Student Members

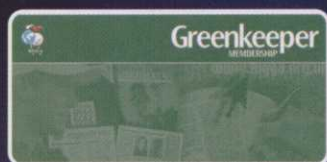
- Steven Porteous, W Scotland



BIGGA MEMBERSHIP

HOW CAN YOU benefit?

BIGGA membership isn't just for greenkeepers. We have four main categories to suit everybody. All membership categories are utilised by people seeking to create a greater understanding and awareness of greenkeeping, the skills, knowledge and training involved, and the rewards to be gained from this profession. All categories of membership benefit from a monthly copy of our award winning magazine Greenkeeper International and an annual copy of the BIGGA Golf Directory.



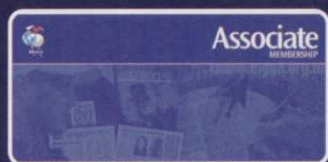
Greenkeeper Membership
(any person employed in the 'keeping of the green at a golfing establishment') offers:

Education opportunities for professional greenkeepers

Exclusive discounts and benefits for Greenkeeper Members

Exclusive access to our Greenkeeper Members Area

Through Membership, BIGGA also aims to create a safer working environment for our members



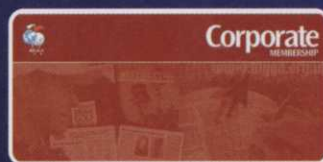
Associate Membership
(any person who is not a working greenkeeper, but wants to be part of a growing Association, i.e. Chairman of Green, Secretary, Company Sales Representative etc.) offers:

Engaging media products which educate and entertain

Networking with members, clients, suppliers and potential customers

Exclusive discounts and benefits for Associate Members

Online information & opportunities for Associate Members



Corporate Membership
(for those companies who want to join up to 4 members of staff) offers:

Engaging media products educate and entertain

Network with members, clients, suppliers and potential customers

Exclusive discounts and benefits for Corporate Members

Online information & opportunities for Corporate Members



Student Membership
(for those who are studying full-time) offers:

Research tools to help with your study

Exclusive discounts and benefits for Student Members

Get exclusive access to our Greenkeeper Members Area

BIGGA MEMBERSHIP IS ABOUT MAXIMISING RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF MEMBERS AND ENSURING THAT GOLF CLUBS RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF EDUCATION WITHIN THE PROFESSION



For full information on any of the four categories of membership, please call Rachael Palmer in the BIGGA Membership Services Department on 01347 833800, email rachael_p@bigga.co.uk or find us on the web at www.bigga.org.uk or write to us at BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF

Harrogate 2003 is six months away but already much of the preparation required to make it a week to remember for all who attend has been put in place

THE COUNTDOWN'S UNDER



For those visiting BTME they can expect to find all their favourite companies in one of five main halls of Harrogate International Centre while exhibitors can expect last year's record attendance figures to be at least matched if not exceeded.

At the time of going to press 140 exhibitors have already confirmed their attendance, well up on the figure at the same time last year, and although there is still some space available in each of the halls it is going quickly and any company who is considering becoming an exhibitor at the biggest indoor fine turf show in Europe should contact BIGGA HOUSE quickly to avoid disappointment.

Among those companies making their debut at BTME 2003 is Glendale while Rigby Taylor return to the Show, after a break of one year, alongside its sister company, Grass Science. In addition other companies have significantly increased their stand space. They include Allett Mowers, Lastec UK, Kubota (UK) Ltd, Earthquake Turfcare Ltd and Same Deutz-Fahr.

The new improved Education area in Hall Q includes representation so far from the colleges of Askham Bryan, Elmwood, Hadlow, Berkshire, Warwicks and Myerscough. The pop-

ular Careers Clinic will be relocated to this area together with interview rooms so golf clubs, or indeed any of the exhibiting companies, can speak with prospective employees.

Another innovation for BTME 2003 will be the Internet Cafe, to be located in Hall B which will enable visitors to stay in touch with work or home. This will be particularly beneficial to the large overseas contingent the Show always attracts. "We are delighted with the progress



Confirmed exhibitors to date



MJ Abbott Ltd
Advanta Seeds UK
AFT Trenchers
AGCO Ltd (Massey Ferguson)
Aitkens Sportsturf Ltd
Allen Power Equipment Ltd
Allett Mowers
Amenity Technology
Angus Horticulture Ltd
Arden Lea Irrigation Ltd
Askham Bryan College
Association of Golf Club Secretaries
Aventis Environmental Science
Avoncrop Amenity Products Ltd
Barcham Trees
Barenbrug UK Ltd
Barrelfield Golf Ltd
Bathgate Leisure
Berkshire College of Agriculture
Bernhard & Co Ltd
Bioseed Probiotics Ltd
Blec Landscaping Equipment Co. Ltd
Boughton Loam Ltd
Bowcom Limited
Boyd Golf
British Seed Houses Ltd
Campey Turfcare Systems
Cebeco Seeds
Charterhouse Turf Machinery

Club Car - Ingersoll-Rand
CNH UK LTD
Complete Weed Control Ltd
Cooper Clarke Group Ltd
Course Care
DENNIS
Eagle Promotions Ltd
Earthquake Turfcare Ltd
Ecosolve Limited
Elmwood College
Etesia UK Ltd
European Institute of Golf Course Architects
European Turf Technology Ltd
Evenproducts Ltd
Farm & Garden Machinery
Farmura Ltd
Floratine Products
FMW & Distinct
Gambetti Barre UK Ltd
Garden Innovation Products UK
Garfitts International Ltd
Gem Professional
Glendale
Golf Management Europe
The Golf Sign Company
Grass Science
John Greasley Ltd
The Greenkeepers Training Committee

The Greenkeeping Supply Company
Greenlink International Ltd
Groundsman Industries
Hadlow College
Hardi Limited
Hayter Ltd
Haztek International
Headland Amenity
Hunter Grinders Ltd
The Institute of Groundsmanship
Inturf
Irrigation Control Ltd
John Deere Limited
Johnsons Sport & Amenity
Kawasaki Motors (UK) Ltd
Kestrel Golf & Sports Ltd
KSM Safer Surfaces
Kubota (UK) Ltd
Lastec UK
Lewis Equipment Ltd
Lincmaster 'Thiefstoppers'
Lindum Seeded Turf Ltd
Links Leisure
Lloyds & Co Letchworth Ltd
Logic Irrigation
Major Equipment Ltd
Maxwell Hart Group
Maxxis International UK
Mitchell Hire

WAY

being made towards making BTME 2003 the best ever Harrogate and I am sure exhibitors and visitors alike will be delighted with the Show come next January 21, 22 and 23," said BIGGA Executive Director, Neil Thomas.

Anyone wishing to book a stand at BTME 2003 should contact Pauline Thompson at BIGGA HOUSE on 01347 833830 or via pauline@bigga.co.uk



Myerscough College
North Staffs Irrigation
Ocmis (UK) Ltd
Pentagon Amenity Marketing Ltd
Prestige Sports Surfaces Ltd
PSD Agronomy
Rain Bird Europe
Rigby Taylor Ltd
Riko UK Ltd
Rolawn (Turf Growers) Ltd
Rousseau Equipment Ltd
Rufford Soil Technology
Same Deutz-Fahr UK Ltd
Saxon Industries
The Scotts Company (UK) Ltd
Sheltons Sportsturf Drainage Solutions
Sheppy Fertilisers Ltd
Silesia Grill Systems
Simon Tullett Machinery Co Ltd
Sisis Equipment (Macclesfield) Ltd
Spaldings UK Ltd
Speedcut Contractors
STRI
Supaturf Products Ltd
Swan Golf Designs Ltd
Swan Plant Services Ltd
Tactic

Talbot Farm Landscapes
TEG Environmental (Envigro)
Tenax UK Limited
Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products
Tildenet Ltd
DW Tomlin
Tonick Watering Ltd
Toro Commercial and Irrigation Products
Tower Chemicals Ltd
Trelleborg Wheel Systems Ltd
Trimax Mowing Systems Ltd
True Surface Rollers
TT Proturf Ltd
Turf Masters
Turf Seed UK Ltd
Turfmech Machinery Ltd
Turtrax Ground Management
Tyreline Original Equipment Ltd
Verde Sports Ltd
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WHAT'S UP DOC?

Steve Isaacs, STRI Turgrass Agronomist for Scotland, provides some help in the difficult task of explaining agronomic matters to golf club members

A little understanding

One of the major frustrations faced by turf managers worldwide is the lack of understanding from the end users of their efforts, i.e. the players out on the golf course. The fact that, in many instances, laymen have control of maintenance budgets increases this sense of frustration. Most greenkeepers in the UK would sell their soul for the autonomy over turf management given to superintendents in the USA. The few in this country who control their own budgets, either at professionally run clubs or where they are directly responsible to a proprietor, shudder at the prospect of going back to the days of being accountable to a committee of plumbers, lawyers and a myriad of other professions with little or no connection to the turf industry.

Right, now that I've got that out of my system, the reality is that the majority of greenkeepers working in this country have invariably to function in a management framework where decisions on turf maintenance issues are, at best, influenced by the thoughts of laymen. We have to accept this situation and make the most of it, in many instances it can work well given compromise and diplomacy. Unfortunately, not all greenkeepers have these skills in abundance. One of the basic tasks facing the turf manager is explaining his needs when it comes to resource provision and a works programme that will, from time to time, disrupt play. This is where some form of analogy can come in useful, using some area of experience that is common to everyone likely to sit on a committee which can be related to turf man-

agement. Unfortunately, most office-based occupations are wholly divorced from the turf experience. The office is a controlled environment, the antithesis of the golf course, sports pitch or bowling green. If the carpet in the office needs cleaning then you can vacuum whatever the weather! So, is there an area of common knowledge that can help bridge the communication gap?

The surgery is now open

Ever thought that your turf goes through the same life changes as your own body? Don't laugh. Most aspects of managing turf can be related to the workings of our own bodies, something that everyone has some experience of—though a few greenkeepers might question this of their committee men! I was once in discussion with a well respected member of the trade and he suggested that an agronomist is the equivalent of a doctor to the grass, the supplier taking the role of the pharmacist. I liked the idea and thought it could be expanded as a means of enlightening laymen to the basic principles behind turf management.

Let's try therefore and develop this train of thought with a few examples to show how using this analogy may help when attempting to get over a turf-related idea.

Nutrition

If you eat too much, you get fat. You become unhealthy; short of breath, susceptible to other diseases such as heart problems. If you starve yourself, you become weak and emaciated. Turf reacts in a very similar fashion. Over-fed turf becomes lush and sappy with soft tissues more prone to damage and disease. Under-fed turf is weak and anaemic.

When it comes to supplying adequate nutrition, a similar scenario can be seen. The human body will assimilate enough protein, vitamins and other nutritional needs from a bal-

anced diet. The same is true of turf. If turf is managed properly, there should be no need for supplements.

Irrigation

You will be relieved to hear that I haven't developed this idea far enough to find a turf management technique that equates to colonic irrigation, but watering is fairly straightforward.

Living tissue is predominantly made up of water. Humans need to keep drinking, particularly in hot weather, to avoid dehydrating. Turf suffers in a similar way, wilting is the grasses equivalent of collapsing in a heap; a thirst-driven heap that is, not an alcohol-induced one! The corollary is also true. If you drink too much, you will drown. Aeration is the life-belt thrown to waterlogged turf.

Aeration

A simple fact; if we don't breathe we die. So does grass. Fortunately for us, we live with the air all around us. Grasses' breathing apparatus, the roots, are underground so air in the soil is vital to its survival. Any traffic over the turf, from participants in the sport or maintenance equipment, squeezes air out of the soil. It is, therefore, necessary to open up the soil structure with aeration practices from time to time to help the grass breathe easier. If you like, aeration is the turf's ventilator!

Thatch

Thatch is the turf equivalent of cholesterol. Too much thatch clogs the turf's arteries, making it more prone to disease and damage.

I always remember a visit to a golf club whose greens had a thatch problem. The visit was carried out in the early spring and the meadow-grass dominated greens were looking their usual sickly yellow colour. I was asked why this was. The spongy thatch was obviously saturated so my response was to respectfully suggest to the committee member that his legs

might not look too clever if he sat all winter with his feet in a bucket of cold water. I don't think he tried out this experiment. Hey, I'm really getting into this. Step behind the screen and get undressed while I expand this analogy.

The holistic approach to turf management

"Holistic" medicine is a term we have got used to in recent years. It describes a form of practice whereby the whole body and mind is considered a single entity in the treatment of any specific disease or illness. Good greenkeeping takes a similar approach. Considering the benefit of individual maintenance practices in isolation can be misleading, and can even focus attention on a minor ailment while ignoring more serious, underlying problems. This is where a visit from your friendly agronomist can pay dividends, particularly if you go for one with a good bedside manner. An annual, or more frequent, visit should consider the turf environment and the management of it as a whole, certainly discussing the need to adjust specific practices but relating this to the balance necessary in the management programme to achieve the desired end result.

This holistic approach should do away with the feed and water merchants who ruin turf and, indeed, any zealot who preaches a single, inflexible way of managing all turfgrass situations.

"It's a virus"

There is a rather cynical train of thought that when you visit your doctor with an ailment but he can't find anything wrong, the "it's a virus" fall-back comes into play. The same situation happens, from time to time, with turf. Although diagnosis is important, provided the doctor prescribes a programme of treatment which brings about an improvement in the condition, we are generally happy with the "it's a virus" syndrome. Turf management is, in this respect, very similar to the management of our own body. Although we would like to believe it is a pure science, there is a lot we do not know and the greenkeeper's art is still very much an essential part of turf maintenance.

Long-term illness

There is a tendency to blame any deterioration in turf quality on something that has, or has not, been done over the days or weeks prior to the appearance of the condition. This is not always true and one only has

to refer to human health issues to understand this.

The physical symptoms of human diseases do not always appear at the outset of the condition. I suppose cancer is the classic where tissue damage and the growth of abnormal cells can go unnoticed for years before physical symptoms bring about a call to the doctor and a diagnosis. This can happen to turf where inferior growing conditions, e.g. thatch accumulation or compaction, may not cause a deterioration in the appearance of the turf until the condition has developed for a number of years. Even then it may take some extreme weather to trigger turf damage. So, it is important when making a diagnosis not to jump to hasty conclusions.

The turf doctor's role: house calls
Most of us will be familiar with the "well-man" and "well-woman" policy being followed by the NHS, whereby routine check-ups are made to monitor our health and prevent problems from developing. In many respects, the annual visit by an agronomist could be considered a "well-course" policy. It is insurance against major disasters and the monitoring of thatch and compaction during an annual visit is just like having your blood pressure or pulse taken at the doctors. It is also true, as any doctor will tell you, that more frequent check-ups will mean a greater degree of control over potential dangers to your, or your turf's, health.

Just as you would visit a doctor when illness strikes suddenly, an occasional

one-off emergency call may be necessary for unexpected problems with your turf. Fortunately for me though, STRI agronomists are not expected to work the same hours as junior doctors! Treat the agronomist as you would your family doctor, he is there to help. But don't forget that there are a few Quacks out there!

You may think this approach is just a bit of fun. However, I am sure we all accept that communication is a vital part of the greenkeeper's role these days and what value are you getting out of this facet of the job

if the technical detail you are imparting sounds like an alien tongue to your committee? In searching for a common language, terms of reference that we can all follow, we will gain a better understanding and, hopefully, be given the level of support we are looking for and which is, mostly, deserved.

So, next time you see a stranger walking the golf course, talking to the greens - it's either someone who's escaped from the nearest asylum or an agronomist undertaking a psychological assessment of the greens!



Scott MacCallum meets Colin Irvine, the man charged with ensuring Muirfield is at its best for The Open later this month

FIELD OF DREAMS



Above: Colin Irvine

This year The Open Championship sees the golfing elite descend on the East Lothian town of Gullane. There can be few, if any, towns in the world so totally immersed in the game of golf. Everywhere you look there are superb golf holes, with tees and greens coming right up to the edge of the main road, and golfers of all ages and nationalities concentrating on their own games, totally oblivious to the passing traffic and shoppers.

It is the perfect illustration of golf as part of the community but it is on one of the world's most prestigious golf clubs that the 156 players will be focussing come the week of July 15.

Home to The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, widely recognised as being the oldest golf club in the world with records

recognising its existence going back to 1744, Muirfield is also regarded as one of the finest golf courses anywhere in the world.

The entrance to Muirfield is east of the village's three other wonderful courses Gullane No 1, No 2 and No 3 courses, and the magnificent iron gates at the end of a long driveway are a clue to the exalted position the club holds.

When they do they will discover a links which is widely regarded as one of the fairest to be found anywhere – all the trouble is visible from the tee which doesn't necessarily mean you will avoid it! – and 18 holes which have propelled the club to the top of the British rankings – as carried out by Golf World magazine.

A regular on the Open rota, Muirfield has a list of Champions that reads like a Who's Who of golf as it demonstrates an unfailing ability to identify and crown the best players in the world.

Previous winners have included Harry Vardon, James Braid (twice), Walter Hagen, Henry Cotton, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, Tom Watson and Nick Faldo, the winner of the last two Muirfield Opens. Each would have a claim on being the best player in the world at the time of his victory while perhaps the greatest of them all, Nicklaus, named his own club in Ohio after the course. It



may be a good form guide to know that the winner of the Amateur Championship when it was played at Muirfield in 1998 was Sergio Garcia.

The man who carries the responsibility for ensuring that the quality of the Muirfield layout is matched by the condition of the course is 37 year-old Course Manager, Colin Irvine.

While a traditional club in so many ways it is perhaps surprising that Muirfield has a Course Manager and not a Head Greenkeeper, and the more modern approach is extended still further.

"We don't have a Green Committee at Muirfield. I meet with the Secretary, Group Captain John Prideaux, three days a week to discuss the job and any queries we may have and I attend five committee meetings a year. Then I report on the work we are currently undertaking or about to do, machinery purchases, staffing etc and then answer any



Below: Colin with his team



Photography: Brian Morgan; 0141 2216236

questions the committee members may have," explained Colin.

Having praised the modern approach adopted by the club with its structure Muirfield's traditional philosophy, when it comes to the management of the links themselves, is equally laudable.

This can be seen in the club's approach to irrigation. While most clubs install a greens and tees system if they are not in a position to install a wall-to-wall system, Muirfield has a system which starts at the front of the tees and finishes at the start of the greens.

"We are the only club I know which has this approach but the club don't want artificial irrigation on the greens. The reasons we installed the fairway system, after the drought in '95, was as an insurance against another drought and because of the large areas that needed to be hand watered. Also under the old system when the villagers of Gullane woke

in the morning the water pressure available to the club would drop off.

"In '95 we went six weeks without a drop of rain but the greens and tees didn't prove a problem at all. The boys would go out and hand hose them and we'd give them a drink on a Friday so we wouldn't have to irrigate over the weekend. It didn't seem to have had any bad effects on the greens.

"It is easy to sit here with this mouse and just turn on the system if we haven't had any rain in a little while, but if you've got to haul a hose out and take guys off other jobs just to water a green quite often you err on the 'Might rain tomorrow' mentality. In the last two years I think we've only irrigated the greens five times."

It is an approach which has reaped dividends as Colin and his team haven't sprayed a fungicide for seven years.

"In the last couple of years we've had some wet summers and people

have said to me that the course hasn't been looking as linksy but while we can add water we can't take it away."

A fly on the Muirfield wall would see a lot of top dressing, very little fertiliser and a lot of aeration during the winter months.

"We don't aerate at all in the summer so that the surfaces are as smooth as possible for the members," said Colin, who explained that the two high points of the year are the Club's two medals – the spring in May and the autumn in October.

"October is a busy month as we also give the course over to a charity day that month and it means that we never do any verti draining until November, while most clubs are well into their winter programmes."

Colin has been head man at Muirfield since 1994 and but for a two year gap – during which time he was Course Manager of a course in Dusseldorf, Germany – he has been

at the club since he was a 16 year old apprentice in 1981.

"I used to do a bit of caddying in the summer holidays and the old Head Greenkeeper, Dave Kirkaldy, used to do the Caddie Master's job to give him a day off on a Thursday. He asked me if I fancied a job on the greens in the summer. I said I wouldn't mind and he told me to come down the following day and he'd give me a go at cutting a green," recalled Colin.

"The next day I went out with one of the greenkeepers. He cut a couple of lines on the 8th green then I had a shot. That was the sort of interview you had in those days," laughed Colin.

It was supposed to be a summer job but at the end of the holidays Colin was asked if he'd like to stay on and he jumped at the chance.

He missed the 1980 Muirfield Open but was an assistant when Nick Faldo won his first Open in '87 and

FIELD OF DREAMS



Right: The 13th - Tom Watson's favourite par-3

Below: The distinctive bunker which graces the 18th hole

Deputy - to Chris Whittle, who is now at Royal Birkdale - when Faldo repeated the feat in '92.

Shortly after that Open he left to take up the position of Course Manager at the Dusseldorfer Golf Club.

"I enjoyed my time in Germany and it taught me a great deal. It was an inland course and I had to take on

board the different way of managing the course, the different laws that were in place, how different people would do things, as well as, of course, learn the language."

When Colin learned that Chris Whittle was moving back to his home area to become Head Greenkeeper at Royal Birkdale the lure of his own home patch was just too strong and

he applied for the job.

He is quick to admit that it was his experiences while working abroad which created the opportunity to return to Muirfield two years later.

"I don't think I would have got this job if I hadn't gone off and done the job somewhere else first. We have moved on from the traditional way of the job going to the longest serv-

ing greenkeeper when the Head Greenkeeper retired."

The arrival of The Open this July hasn't caused Colin and his team to make many alterations to their normal regime.

"People do say that you could probably have an Open here any year so we don't really need to make many changes to the way we do things when The Open comes along."

There are two holes which have been lengthened for the Championship, the par-3 4th and 13th holes, the latter being hailed by Tom Watson as the best par-3 in world golf while the bunker renovation has been carried out over the last couple of years.

"We do them on a two year cycle. We looked at those which the pros wouldn't see so much and did them last year and the ones where they are more likely to find, particularly on the par-3s, we did them this year.

"We don't want them to look too brand new or surgical looking when we reface them and the members can play them throughout the winter. I think people would feel cheated if they had to lift balls out of bunkers in the run up to an Open. Having said that, there is nothing worse than finishing a bunker then someone coming along and taking a big divot out of the face, but it's a golf course and we prepare it for golfers. It's the same with divoting fairways, someone is going to come along and take a divot. We are here to prepare a golf course for golfers."

One element which has seen a

