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One final note is to wish Eric Berridge all the best in his retirement. Eric has been Head Greenkeeper at Orton Meadows Golf Club since it was built.

Best wishes from all in the Section.

Please remember our website and forum pages at:
www.eastofenglandbigga.com

Many thanks.

Steve Beverly, Immingham Golf Club.
steveimmingham@aol.com

Sean McDade

GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL 61

EAST OF ENGLAND

Hello all. Back to business again following a few days escape at BTME in Harrogate. The show seemed to be well attended despite all the problems around at the moment. Thanks must be given to everyone at Headquarters for putting on a good week of events, especially to Sami and her team for the vast array of education available which was no doubt the main focus for a lot of people during the week.

Sitting here looking out at yet more rain, with a golf course that just about has nine playable holes, I wonder how many more people are facing the quandary of keeping courses open to keep members happy and maybe scrape the odd green fee, compared to closing down and giving the place a rest for a while. Golfers tend to stay away as the rain falls, yet as soon as it stops and the sun comes out they expect the place to be open. Oh well, it will soon be spring.

By now everyone should have received a fixture card for 2009. This year it has been kindly sponsored by Aitkens so many thanks to them. Fixtures are as follows: Toft, April 22; Elsham, May 20; Kenwick Park, June 25; Boston West, July 23; Abbotsley vs Trade, August 14; Boston vs Secretaries, September 23; RAF Cottesmore & AGM, October 15; Seacroft Xmas Bring & Win, December 15.

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BERKS/BUCKS AND OXON

The worst of the snow looks to have passed even for the month of March; there are several well-known weather sayings. One of these, dating from the 17th Century, is thought to help you use March’s weather to forecast that of May. And goes as follows: “So many mists in March, so many frosts in May”. In other words, you will see as many frosty days in May as there were foggy days in March. But is there any meteorological fact behind this saying? I will let you decide, as over the last few months we have experienced some of the most severe winter mornings of the last decade.

Golfing events in 2009 have now been confirmed and some great venues to look forward to. Burford Golf Club kick off the season, hosting the Spring National Qualifier on April 30. Oaklands Park Golf Club will host the Summer Tournament on June 18 followed by the Autumn Invitational at Donnington Valley Golf Club on August 13 and finally the Turkey Trot at The Oxfordshire on December 9 to finish off the year.

Gareth Acteson will be organising the ever popular Rigby Taylor Pairs for 2009 and can be contacted on 07734 856 924.

With regards to the social calendar, Adam King a man with local knowledge, is planning a cricket match at Radley College, near Abingdon, where you will have the chance to test your bowling, batting and fielding at one of the most prestigious sporting grounds in the country followed by tea and sandwiches in the historic pavilion overlooking the cricket square, not to be missed, keep your eyes on the website for further information.

On March 26, at Frilford Heath Golf Club, the Section has organised an educational seminar which will feature Chris Lomas, from The Berkshire Golf Club; Murray Long, from Sunningdale Golf Club; Tim Lobb, Golf Course Architect. Topics will include tournament preparation, design, construction and installation of irrigation and water usage. Details and booking can be found on the Section website.

After winning a green card on the lottery to emigrate to the USA a few years ago, Jake Snyman will be going west and uprooting and moving to Austin Texas to start a new life with his family at the University of Texas Golf Club in America. Jake has been working under Adam King, at Radley College, for the last few years and from all the Radley staff and fellow greenkeepers far and wide, we wish Jake and family a safe trip and best of luck in his new career and life abroad.

Just a quick mention to Gordon the Hun - who thought he might have got away with it. It was Gordon’s first ever Harrogate Week experience this year and it certainly won’t be his last, after a few wee nippy sweeties at the bar, Gordon left his bath running and managed to flood all and sundry at the hotel - one I just can’t let him forget.

As usual if you have any news or views please contact the Section Secretary, Adam King, on: ajk@radley.org.uk The new website for the Section is: bbogreenkeepers.co.uk

Let’s hope for a good long summer!

Mark Day
mark.day@tacitgolf.co.uk
AROUND THE GREEN

**MID-ANGLIA**

A quiet month, this month which is just as well as hopefully, by now, all have recovered from Harrogate and the batteries are recharging ready for the onslaught that spring will bring.

Not much to report either other than the spring tournament is still to be confirmed but will most likely be at Hatfield London Country Club at Essendon in Hertfordshire on April 21. The summer competition has yet to be arranged, the autumn leg is at Mid-Herts Golf Club on October 7 and the “Tour” concludes at John O’Gaunt Golf Club on December 7.

Although it is a little late by the time this goes to print, congratulations to Roger Clark for chalking up a half century - and amazingly he doesn’t look a day over 60!

Now if anyone can offer a friend of mine some advice it would be most welcome. For a while now he has suspected his wife of having an affair. The usual signs are there: The phone rings but if he answers, the caller hangs up. His wife has been going out with “the girls” a lot recently, although when he asks their names she always says “just some friends from work, you don’t know them”. When she comes home, quite often he is sure he can smell male aftershave on her clothes. He has tried to observe who is dropping her off back at their house but his view is obscured so just recently he took to hiding in the garage to get a better view. She came home around midnight the other night and as the car drew up my friend crouched down in the garage behind his golf clubs when he noticed a hairline crack where the grip meets the graphite shaft on his 3-wood.

Is this something he can fix himself or should he take it back to the pro-shop where he bought it?

Craig Spooner
craig.spooner@limagrain.co.uk

**SOUTH EAST REGION - SURREY**

Monday, February 2. We have had in excess of 12 inches of snow - and it’s still snowing. There will be few greenkeepers at work in Surrey today and those that have managed to get in will be putting out the ‘course closed’ and ‘no slogging’ signs, then giving the sheds a quick early spring clean before going home to get under their wives’ feet. I managed a walk to the local shops for milk, beer and wine, just in case it keeps snowing. Be prepared is my motto, this could be a long white week. I have not seen snow as deep as this in Surrey ever before and if this is global warming I don’t want to see an ice age.

Harrogate has come and gone but it is always a pleasant change to have greenkeepers visit me on the stand instead of me driving all over the South East of England to call on them. We were able to entertain a few of our customers on the Tuesday and Wednesday evenings and it is always gratifying to know how much they enjoy themselves. Ronny, Dougie and Roger(sampled the chippy on Tuesday while Gavin followed the wrong group out of our hotel on Wednesday and we, that includes John and Bob, never saw him again until the next morning. I haven’t used surnames just in case there are any possible repercussions or recriminations and if there are, I know and saw nothing.

I have just received a text from Jon Budd telling me that he has written and had a book published and I was going to offer a prize for guessing the title but Jon has since text again with that information. I had expected ‘The Greenkeepers Guide to the Galaxy’ or maybe ‘Lady Chatterley’s Greenkeeper’ or even ‘Noddy and Big Ears visit Saltex’. How wrong can you be, Jon’s book is entitled ‘40 Buddy Marvellous Years’ in which Jon reminisces on his life, the universe and everything - and would you believe it I’m not even mentioned.

Well done, I hope it’s a huge success and if so, will you help me with mine, it will consist of my ramblings taken from Around the Green over the past years and will be called ‘Stop the Van I Want to Get Off’.

Brian Willmott

**KENT**

Snow, snow and more snow. The worst snow we have seen in this neck of the woods for two decades has virtually shut every course for days on end. At least I’ve got plenty of time to write this report for a change!

I shall begin with my verdict on Harrogate week 2009. Even though the show was slightly smaller than usual, I, for one, thought it was probably the best one I have ever attended. There were several reasons for this. Firstly I was asked to attend a meeting hosted by BIGGA HQ about the future direction of the magazine. The couple of dozen people who were invited were all extremely committed individuals and a lively debate with the Editor, Assistant Editor and Designer present should ensure some changes very soon.

Secondly, the show itself was alive with energy. The exhibitors I spoke to all said that although numbers were probably down, there were more senior representatives from all walks of turf management which made the trip worthwhile for them. The BIGGA AGM I also thought was very interesting. The proposed inclusion of Groundsmen to our midst did seem to be a confusing thing but Jon has since text again with that information. I had expected ‘The Greenkeepers Guide to the Galaxy’ or maybe ‘Lady Chatterley’s Greenkeeper’ or even ‘Noddy and Big Ears visit Saltex’. How wrong can you be, Jon’s book is entitled ‘40 Buddy Marvellous Years’ in which Jon reminisces on his life, the universe and everything - and would you believe it I’m not even mentioned.

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Brian Willmott
be favourites for the “who can build the biggest snowball competition” Gold medal. I’m probably favourite for the “Who can get hit by most snowballs”. As long as the snow isn’t yellow, I don’t care!

Our fixtures for the year begin in earnest this month with our spring qualifier being hosted on the links of Walmer and Kingsdown. We are truly privileged to be allowed to play this James Braid designed, delightful course in its centenary year. Alternatively, if this snow hasn’t cleared our national qualifier will be decided by a tournament of Super Swing Golf on the Wii at my house. Bring your own beer! Seriously though, please be sure to contact me or Kev as soon as possible to confirm your place at Walmer, it promises to be a great day for all. Full results and exploits of the day to follow soon.

Lastly, I would like to thank all our sponsors for 2009 who have graciously given us their support for the year. I will give them all an individual mention next month.

Roll on summer. Best of British

Rob Holland
kentgreenkeepers.co.uk

SOUTH WEST & WALES REGION - SOUTH WEST

It’s difficult to know whether to laugh or cry during this miserable winter weather. I’m sitting writing this with three inches of snow on the ground, and wondering whether or not I’m going to get to Gatwick tomorrow for a week in Madeira (or more likely a week in the terminal at Gatwick if the weather gets much worse). At least the course is nice and quiet at the moment - I well remember working at a previous club which was right in the edge of town, and it only took a couple of centimetres of snow for the whole course to be swarming with kids on makeshift toboggans. By 4pm on a snowy day, any and every moveable item of course furniture (and some of the toboggans) would end up in one of the course lakes. I remember being really upset as a young apprentice being forced into the waters’ edge on a rope and floundering around trying to drag the “Captains Bench” out of the pond, only for the Secretary, red-faced, to fling open his window and bellow – “what the hell do you think you’re doing – you’ll damage the blasted liner!”

Just now plenty of frustrated Seniors & Ladies, but hopefully by the time this is published we’ll be much nearer spring.

Harrogate Week was an outstanding success – happily even the weather was just about okay. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard on it. Well done to everyone who attended from the South West; you helped make the week a huge success. Next year will be even better, and HQ welcome any suggestions for education themes and subjects, which could be emailed to rachael@bigga.co.uk (or me). Chris Sealey worked tirelessly for the Section as usual during the week, canvassing our Patronage Partners and introducing Simon Broome – winner of the annual sponsored place - to demonstrate the good use of their sponsorship funds.

Jane Jones, Laurence Pithie and I are sitting on an Industry Liaison panel at Cannington College. Cannington is looking to improve their services and range of training courses available in the South West. One suggestion is to make better use of their Golf Course with practical training sessions. We would welcome your suggestions, as the employers, as to what you want for your staff – for example short courses, bolt-on type learning, more involved science and botany courses, or even just simple “mower” training. Drop any one of us an email with ideas or requests – or mail Will Bowden, the Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Programme Manager at bowdenw@bridgwater.ac.uk

Here in the Section, we’ll make more short courses available as interest dictates – Occasional Users Chainsaw Training is proving popular – I would point out this is not CS30 or CS31 which a Tree Surgeon would need, but this “Occasional Users” version allows for us to legally use a chainsaw as part of our daily duties on the golf course. There will be further Excavator Safety Training, and also the latest initiative is dry-stone walling. Please contact

The Section Seminar will have passed when you get this bulletin, but be sure, I will give you the news of the event, in the next month’s news.

Any information for this inclusion on this page or on our website should be sent to me at: essexbigga@talktalk.net or on: 07764862337.

Arnold Phipps-Jones
Press Officer

GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL 63

AROUND THE GREEN

ESSEX

As I write this we are in the throws of the coldest spell for many a year. Around the corner should be warmer weather but who knows.

I spent a couple of days at Harrogate week back in January and linked up with Don Clark (Section Chairman) to attend the AGM, information from which you will no doubt have read in this magazine either this month or in the last edition.

At the beginning of February, I completely revamped and changed the website over to a new host, the reason for this was to be able to have more control over the way the site was laid out. It has enabled me to be given the chance to get the most up to date information out faster. I can input most things within minutes of receipt, even when I’m away from home as long as I have access to a computer.

There will be a full list of events, information, photographs, our sponsors, useful links and much more, plus downloadable entry forms and anything that Martin (our Secretary) throws my way.

Along with anything that I receive from the Region or BIGGA Headquarters.

The site is there for you all, so I would appreciate some input from you in the Section. Look us up: www.essexbigga.co.uk

Tony Kirwan is on the lookout for clubs to host four golf days next season. So if you would like to be considered please contact Tony at: antz16@btinternet.com

As I was sat writing these notes, I received an email from Tony Barker, Course Manager at North Weald Golf Club, he wished to inform you all that he is leaving the club to take over ownership of Loughton Golf Club. It’s a big step up from managing someone else’s. I for one wish him much success for the future.

Ian Denny, late of Symbio, has taken his place. Ian had been a greenkeeper in the Essex Section, before he went to work as a representative for Symbio. Tony wishes Ian good fortune in his new roll, as I think we all do.
me for further details, and please monitor the bulletin boards on the BIGGA website for up to the minute details.

Back here in the Section - Jon Jarvis emailed me with an addition for your diaries: Ladies Nite, at Bath Racecourse, Friday July 31, tickets £11 each, first race 6.05pm, email Jon Jarvis at jon Jarvis2@hotmail.com if interested - it's possible the golf club bar will be open prior to event. Thanks very much to Jon for making these arrangements.

We still hope to run a Section ‘Away Weekend’ at Dartmouth and are looking at April 3/4. The cost is likely to be around £180 per person with a sponsored mini-bus. Please get in touch with me straight away if you're interested.

Finally, because I’m feeling completely fed-up just now I’ve turned to my wife for a little input. She is a medical receptionist, and recently came home with a list of “misprints” from hospital typists. I thought I might share them with you, but if you are squeamish, or easily offended, you might be better off skipping this bit...

He was in his normal rudest of health, until his aeroplane ran out of fuel and crashed. Her husband said she is very sweaty and clammy, and was very hot in bed last night. She was examined – x-rayed, and sent home. This patient has no previous history of suicides. Patient has two teenage children but no other abnormalities.

By the time he was admitted his rapid heart had stopped and he was feeling better. An examination revealed the patient is circus sized. The patient was to have a bowel resection. However, he took a job as a stock-broker instead. The lab test indicated abnormal liver function. When she fainted her eyes rolled around the room. Patient was seen in consultation with Doctor Smith who felt we should sit on the abdomen and I agree. Discharge status – alive - but without my permission.

Well I did warn you - and we thought greenkeeping was dangerous. The moral is to stay away from doctors! Good luck in the aeration season and look forward to a mild spring with gentle showers and no frost.

Any news welcome – Paul Worster
paulw@mgcnw.co.uk

SOUTH COAST

At the time of writing this month’s report we in the South Section are in the grip of the worst snowfall for 18 years. Extra days off for Assistant David and myself!

The committee met at Chris Bitten’s club in late January and had a very good but long meeting. I have been advised to inform you all to look at the BIGGA website (www.bigga.org.uk) for up to date information about the Section, including the fixtures for 2009. At this time not all fixtures have been arranged but should be available from Chris Bitten so phone him on: 07796887633 or: 02380679385.

Due to lack of interest the Jim Fry Trophy will not run this year but we hope to next year.

The numbers of members in our Section is 261 as at the end of December.

Two fixtures are being held at Barton On Sea this year - the Course Management Trophy on June 1 and the annual match against the Secretaries on June 14. Other venues are Parkstone for the spring tournament and Hampworth for the summer.

Please phone me or email me with any news you think we would all like to be informed about.

Until next month

Chris Sturgess 07773138409
chrismaggisturgess@tiscali.co.uk

DEVON & CORNWALL

First off on behalf of everybody in the Section I would like to offer our condolences to Abi Crosswood, our Section Administrator, after her recent family bereavement.

Our January meeting was held at the lovely Yelverton course on the edge of Dartmoor where we held our ‘individual medal’ qualifying competition for the BIGGA National Championships. We had three different categories, 0-8 h’cap, which was won by Jason Brooks, from Torquay, with a 75. 9-16 h’cap won by Gavin Moore, from Launceston, with 73 and the 17-28 h’cap was won by Eric Barber with a 75 after a four way count back, congrats to all and good luck at Burnham!

The course walk was taken by George Pitts, Course Manager, with around 30 in attendance. Thanks to George for his time and effort and to his team for the use of their superb course, in lovely condition. Thanks also to Yelverton for their hospitality and to the catering staff for the wonderful meal.

Stuart Dymond, a very knowledgeable and much respected Course Manager and one of our original committee members, retires shortly after 49 years in greenkeeping. Stuart started at Bude moved to North Wilts and for the last 24 years has been in charge at St Enodoc. Congratulations Stuart and on a personal note I would like to wish you good luck in the future!

Congratulations also to Billy Mitchell who was presented with the Unsung Hero Award at Harrogate, something many of us feel is long overdue and thoroughly deserved! As Bill has been one of the stalwarts of the Devon & Cornwall Section since the beginning, Billy has been at Perranporth for nearly 45 years and is currently in charge and has been for a number of years. Well done Bill and thanks from us all!

The Devon & Cornwall Section would like to thank Pete Bond and ‘The Greenkeeping Depot’ company for sponsoring the mini bus to Harrogate this year. A total of 11 from the far West of Cornwall all the way up and all the way back, a big thanks to Keith Kemp for getting everyone there and back safely. Cheers drive!

The two students from Duchy College who were sponsored jointly by the Duchy & Section to go to Harrogate were Adam Mitchell, from Tehidy Park, and Tim Parker, from Woodbury, (both NVQ 2). I understand they were a credit to themselves, the College and the Section alike and had a lovely time. They found it very educational and would highly recommend it to any future Duchy students!

Jerry Cole 07764 224582
Greenwaysjrc@aol.com
Hello everyone/Sut mae?! Hope you are all well.

Firstly, an apology for a few errors in last month’s column, the date for the Parc y Scarlets evening was February 17 and not the 10.

But before anyone sues me for wasted petrol and/or post traumatic stress for spending a Tuesday evening in Llanelli, let me just say that the information given to me by the sponsors was believed correct at the time of going to print - so there!

I also still cringe when I am reminded that I congratulated our Secretary, Steve Chappell, for being picked to go to America with Bernhards, only to hear a few days after the magazine went to print that the trip had been cancelled! Sorry Steve!

So, here are the final two dates for the winter series of evening lectures: Tuesday, March 10 - A talk by Mark Hunt, of Headland Amenity - Pencoed College - 7pm until 9pm. Tuesday, April 14 - Cardiff City Old & New - 5.30pm until 8.30pm - A tour of the new CCFC stadium with Stadium Manager, Wayne Nash, followed by a talk on top dressings and rootzones by Nick Gray, from Bathgate Silica Sands. Please note that all known ‘Jacks’ will be searched on arrival at the site for Swansea City shirts that they may attempt to bury under the pitch.

Still on education, our Section’s Spring Seminar will again be held at Royal Porthcawl on Thursday, April 23. Details of speakers will follow in next month’s magazine.

The following night (April 24) sees the return of the IOG Annual Dinner. Many Greenkeepers have attended this excellent event in the past and a good time is usually had by all.

The event offers you the chance to take your loved one (or if she can’t make it - the wife) for an excellent meal, a chance to put faces to names and then to boogie the night away! Please contact Steve Chappell if you are interested.

The Section’s golf days will be starting in late spring (details to follow.) If you haven’t attended our golf days in the past or maybe you’ve stopped attending for whatever reason, why not give it a go? You can be assured of a warm welcome and a chance to play some great and varied golf courses that we are blessed with in this beautiful country of ours. So whether you’re on the Cardigan coast, or the Welsh Marches, we would be only too glad to see you.

Finally, just to let you know that my wife, Donna, finally saw sense and instead of giving birth on the day of the Wales v England Rugby International, decided instead to have our baby three weeks early. Carys Evana was born on January 26 weighing 7lb 3oz. Both mother and baby are doing well. Dad, however, can’t wait to get back to work to have a rest!

If you have any info that you would like mentioned in this column, please contact me on the following number/email address:

Ceri Richards
07831 168645
celticceri@aol.com
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BIGGA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Dear BIGGA

Please could I pass on my thanks to all the many friends, colleagues and associates, not just at BTME but also from various parts of the world, for their warm and kind words.

During these past 55 years, I have been most fortunate to have worked, and been in the company of likeminded greenkeepers and golf enthusiasts, sharing experiences and knowledge of various golf course management programmes – sometimes through attending seminars and more often than not, over a pint of two!

To be awarded this honour is a most flattering and humbling experience, especially to follow in the footsteps of Sir Michael Bonallack OBE; Jack MacMillan MBE; and Walter Woods BEM. Indeed it has been a most fascinating journey.

Thank you all so much.

George Brown
Turnberry Golf Course & Estate Manager

MISLEADING GRINDING ARTICLE?

After reading an article ‘is relief grinding essential to achieving the perfect cut?’ in the December issue I felt slightly confused and questioned my own beliefs and practices.

I felt the writer was writing for their own gains and did not even mention the importance of maintaining a quality bottom blade, which is the most critical aspect of ensuring the perfect cut.

I strongly disagree with certain aspects of the Charmian Robinson article especially that one needs to spin grind units every four weeks. I personally grind my greens units once a year in the spring and maintain ‘no contact’. However, I do occasionally use a bottom blade facer to ensure that my bottom blades are kept in tip top condition. Also I should add that I apply in excess of 130 tons of top dressing onto 0.75 hectares of greens so there are many occasions that the units could lose there sharpness.

I do appreciate the many benefits that were mentioned in the article. However, it has been my experience that by maintaining bottom blades and running no contact between my cylinders and bottom blades I have actually enhanced the benefits to my turf and cutting equipment and given additional ones.

It was good timing that the STRI have published an article reviewing the principles of ‘no contact’ and ‘back lapping’ which can been seen on their website, or the January magazine. They concluded ‘that running mowers using the ‘no contact’ method of setting up the cutting units and using grinding to maintain sharpness was an improvement on the ‘back lapping’ method.’

Thanks

Graeme Gallimore
Devon & Cornwall

Please email your letters to Scott MacCallum, scott@bigga.co.uk or Melissa Jones, melissa@bigga.co.uk
Pond Liners

Geomembrane liners provide a cost-efficient means of waterproofing pond, lake and reservoir areas on golf courses. Plastic linings are used not only to line newly constructed ponds and lakes, but also to seal existing, typically clay-lined, water areas that may be leaking.

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When selecting a liner product, the Greenkeeper is recommended to consider Polyethylene (PE) or Polypropylene (PP) type materials that combine performance and durability with cost-efficiency. Expensive products such as Butyl Rubber should only be considered for highly complex water-features – where the liner must be welded and tailored to match exactly the profiles of the pond, eg formal ponds constructed from blockwork with multi-layers and staggered vertical sides etc. Products like PVC, which are carcinogenic and prone to premature failure, should be avoided.

Logic suggests the End User makes use of the services of a competent Lining Contractor able to offer bona fide Warranties and Professional Indemnity Insurance together with ISO 9001 Quality Assurance Accreditation.

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