"Any golfer who has not visited this marvellous club with its two magnificent courses, the Red and the Blue, has missed one of the great pleasures in golf."

Sir Michael Bonallack, OBE, BIGGA President

This year’s BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota and Charterhouse, is being played at one of the most iconic golf clubs in the country – The Berkshire, near Ascot. But don’t just take my word for it. Listen to what five time Amateur Champion and BIGGA President, Sir Michael Bonallack, OBE, says about the club.

"Any golfer who has not visited this marvellous club with its two magnificent courses, the Red and the Blue, has missed one of the great pleasures in golf."

I have always loved both links and heathland golf, and the two Berkshire courses are the finest example of the latter. Sand based fairways and greens are set in a superb arena of pine trees and heather and the design and placement of the bunkers are a tribute to the skill of the golf course architect.

In particular, the par three holes are as good as any to be found, with each having its own character and not like the 250 yard tests that are a feature of contemporary design. The goals were to continue improving the course and I was concerned about the woodland at the time. The headline of the article was “A Woodland Course with Heather!” Chris recalled.

"It’s been an amazing seven years and it is with an extremely heavy heart that I leave, but it is a career decision. It is where I want to go and it is what I’ve been working towards for a long time,” said Chris, as we sat in the committee room on the first floor of the splendid clubhouse, not long before he left.

"Becoming a Secretary has been a goal and ambition of mine for quite some time. I am a career orientated person and I feel very lucky to have been at a club as revered as The Berkshire. As a greenkeeper it would’ve been difficult to find anywhere as special to continue my career and I could see more doors opening for me as a Secretary.

Not long after Chris began his time at The Berkshire, Greenkeeper International visited him and discussed his aims and aspirations.

The irrigation was another major advance for the club with the instalation of a new £1.25 million irrigation system and reservoir. “I am very proud to say that The Berkshire is now totally self-sufficient for water with all water that comes off the clubhouse and the course being collected in the reservoir, while we have our own bore hole for use in the summer months. We don’t rely on outside water at all and are saving approximately £40,000 a year by not having to use mains water. With the reservoir costing us in the region of £180,000 it doesn’t take long to get your money back and it means you are ticking all the right boxes for the environment.”

The vast majority of the woodland management work was carried out in-house and the legacy that has left the club is a group of staff who are trained and qualified in the use of chainsaws.

"It was something we could really get on with at times like last winter when we couldn’t get on to the golf course.”

But don’t run away with the idea that Chris and his team spent so much time in the woods they were on first name terms with the nation’s picnicking bears.

They have also built a fantastic practice ground, importing half a million tonnes of soil.

As testimonials go they don’t come much better than that and those who tee up in this heartland of the Home Counties’ stockbroker belt at the beginning of October will be able to see whether Sir Michael was on the mark.

While there will be a full field competing over the two wonderful heathland courses one of the main instigators of BIGGA’s visit will not be there, not in an official capacity, at any rate.

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Sir Michael Bonallack, OBE, BIGGA President
very envious that I’m leaving my successor this as I really wanted to get stuck into it.”

As a former winner of the BIGGA National Championship, clinching the crown at Cox Moor and Hollinwell in 2004, Chris can talk passionately about the event.

“Hollinwell went straight to the top of my list of favourites after that and I hope the players who come here get a similar experience to the one I got at those two wonderful golf courses.

“It is difficult to say what October will bring weather wise – the Championship starts the day after the Ryder Cup finishes; hopefully we will be reaping the benefit of a dry summer”

Chris will remain a Golden Key BIGGA member and will encourage the greening staff at Worplesdon to consider the Association if they do not already do so.

“I’d never force anyone to become a member but I’d like to think that they’d want to be BIGGA members as education is hugely important.”

The Berkshire’s Secretary, John Hunt, is also a big supporter of BIGGA and encouraged Chris to go for Master Greenkeeper status, something he achieved in 2006.

“It is really down to John Hunt that the Championship is being played here. He really pushed for it and is looking forward to welcoming everyone.

“Being a Master Greenkeeper made me comfortable that I was doing things correctly and didn’t have any glaring omissions from a greening sense,” added Chris. He is not sure if he will make an appearance during the Championship but you can be sure that wherever he is at the time his thoughts will be with his old club and the greening staff who are tackling his two favourite courses.

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Win a car, courtesy of Rigby Taylor!

Rigby Taylor is sponsoring a fabulous prize at this year’s BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota and Charterhouse, where entrants who achieve a hole-in-one on selected holes during the two days of the tournament will win the 2010 BMW Mini Countryman worth £20,000!

The holes selected during this year’s tournament at The Berkshire are the par 3, 221 yard 16th on the Red Course and the par 3, 199 yard 10th on the Blue course. Any player who achieves a hole-in-one on those holes will win a car, an example of which will be on display during the tournament.

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Chris Lomas’ fault anyway…or take his shoulders and say it was all Rigby Taylor! Rigby Taylor is sponsoring a fabulous prize at this year’s BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota and Charterhouse, where entrants who achieve a hole-in-one on selected holes during the two days of the tournament will win the 2010 BMW Mini Countryman worth £20,000!

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As time goes by

Jonathan N Knowles delves into the archives

Advances in the developing and forward thinking sports turf industry is important. Nevertheless, sometimes it’s good to stop, think, stare into a distance point and think where we’ve journeyed from and reflect. After all, there may be something worth getting back to the basics for.

In 1942, the song As Time Goes By, from the film Casablanca, delivered the poignant lyrics - ‘The Delicate things apply, as time goes by in turf care.

Chosen are a selection of seminal industry texts from the time of around seventy to a hundred years ago, including; ‘Golf Greens & Green-Keeping’ edited by H. G. Hutchinson, ‘The Seeding and Care of Golf Courses’ by O.M. Scott & Sons, ‘The Lawns’ by H.B. Spaight and ‘Turf for Golf Courses’ by C.V. Piper and R.A. Oakley.

In the 1917 publication ‘Turf For Golf Courses’, it contains information on climate for turf, soils, fertilisers, nutrients, identification, lime, purposes of turf, care, machinery and interest, scientific experimental work. In the experimental chapter, the authors Piper & Oakley cite the work of J.B. Olcott, a recognised early pioneer of turf. The ‘Olcott Turfgrass Garden’ also known as the ‘Connecticut Experimental Farm’ was said to be located in Connecticut. He knew not of any better wearing variety. Further recommended grasses and plants include: created dog’s tail (Cynosurus cristatus), vernals (Anthoxanthum spp), yarrow (Achillea millefolium), and wild thyme (Thymus vulgaris) or could be in reference to Veronica serpyllifolia), and the small leaved clover (Trifolium dubium). It’s not uncommon to read in these old texts the recommendation for a seed blend to include clover and yarrow. Surprisingly, the best turf surface to the author’s mind is that of Mat-grass (Nardus stricta) and Brown Bent (A.vulgaris). Colt, in the 1906 publication describes how he had observed a mixture of smooth-stalked meadow grass (Poa pratensis), created dog’s tail and red fescue (Festuca rubra var.) had been seeded at Sunningdale across a ridge in the land. He observed and noted how the fescues had become predominant on the dry ridge, but in the rest of the nursery the grasses were growing more equally, highlighting the difficulties to establish similar species on all greens without variation to the pace. Hopefully, Colt, too, could see that the importance here was not just to apply a standard seed mixture, but also implement a standard root zone and drainage capacity, as addressed later by Taylor. The notorious Harry S. Colt offers the ultimate advice to Head Greenkeepers regarding club membership.

“Worthy men and excellent growers of tomatoes and cucumbers, but possibly without any experience in greenkeeping”}

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In 1917, book, Piper & Oakley clearly depict Taylor’s work in detail with care but, at the same time, analysing some of Taylor’s methods. It’s insightful to see these early pioneers questioning each others methods. Even in those early days, the use of lime as a soil additive was opposed by Piper & Oakley, while many promoted ground limestone. Taylor had suggested the use of lime and multi-laying a foundation incorporating peat-moss and himean-when cultivating a putting green. While Piper & Oakley dismissed the use of lime for growing turf, as they had observed that the lime encouraged weeds and discouraged Red Fescues – a fundamental against the use of lime that is still widely observed in greenkeeping today. However, at the time, many other authors such as Harry Colt, Herbert Fowler, Fred Taylor, and, indeed, Howard Spaight were recommending lime. It should be noted that Taylor was the pioneer of the infamous ‘Acid Theory’. Indeed, some authors, such as Spaight, dismiss the ‘Acid Theory’ as failing to suppress weeds, making the soil infertile and losing its permeability to rainfall. Personally, I place the ‘Acid Theory’ as an over-theorised piece of science of the time, when root zone, plant nutrition, irrigation and pesticide technologies were in their infancy.

The alternative British text to the Piper & Oakley technical manual was the 1906 publication ‘Golf Greens and Green-Keeping’ edited by Horace Hutchinson. Experiences and entries are made on subjects such as; ‘the formation of turf’, ‘the treatment and upkeep of seaside links’, ‘silt inland soils’, ‘beach land’, ‘pine forest courses’, ‘chalk downs’ and laying out and designing the links’. Authors of the book include; Harry Colt, Herbert Fowler, James Head and Hutchinson. Whether American or British, all the old texts refer to Agrostis vagularis, now known as Agrostis tenuis, as the desirable bent grass. In 1906, the author H. Hamilton described the best varieties for the golf green as Agrostis vagularis, as he had experienced unerring and true putting qualities at St Andrews; he had noted it to be present on the east side of the fifth and thirteenth greens and northern side of the ninth green, adding that he knows not of any better wearing variety. Further recommended grasses and plants include: created dog’s tail (Cynosurus cristatus), vernals (Anthoxanthum spp), yarrow (Achillea millefolium), and wild thyme (Thymus vulgaris) or could be in reference to Veronica serpyllifolia), and the small leaved clover (Trifolium dubium). It’s not uncommon to read in these old texts the recommendation for a seed blend to include clover and yarrow. Surprisingly, the best turf surface to the author’s mind is that of Mat-grass (Nardus stricta) and Brown Bent (A.vulgaris). Colt, in the 1906 publication describes how he had observed a mixture of smooth-stalked meadow grass (Poa pratensis), created dog’s tail and red fescue (Festuca rubra var.) had been seeded at Sunningdale across a ridge in the land. He observed and noted how the fescues had become predominant on the dry ridge, but in the rest of the nursery the grasses were growing more equally, highlighting the difficulties to establish similar species on all greens without variation to the pace. Hopefully, Colt, too, could see that the importance here was not just to apply a standard seed mixture, but also implement a standard root zone and drainage capacity, as addressed later by Taylor. The notorious Harry S.

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In 1942, the song As Time Goes By, from the film Casablanca, delivered the poignant lyrics, ‘The fundamental things apply. As Time Goes By’. Around the same time, many turf, lawn and greenkeeping publications were being printed. Are these texts still relevant in the 21st century? Do the same fundamental things apply, as time goes by in turfcare?

Chosen are a selection of seminal industry texts from the time of around seventy to a hundred years ago, including; Golf Greens & Green-Keeping’ edited by H. G. Hutchinson, ‘The Sowing and Care of Golf Courses’ by O.M. Scott & Sons, ‘The Lawns by H.B. Sprague and ‘Turf for Golf Courses’ by C.V. Piper and R.A. Oakley.

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When Olcott died in 1910, the legacy was up taken by F.W. Taylor, who purchased the plots and transplanted them in Highland, Philadelphia. Like Olcott, Taylor himself was a Turfgrass pioneer. Taylor was the first to identify the need for a standard approach for constructing a putting green. Taylor fundamentally identified the need for a rooting medium or ‘Foundation’ that had to have a high water holding capacity that, at the same time, provides the perfect drainage. These are still relevant fundamentals for root zone specification and construction today. Taylor also theorised and pioneered what could be described as an early form of hydro-seeding.

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“Worthy men and excellent growers of tomatoes and cucumbers, but possibly without any experience in greenkeeping. This golfers believe any silly fool can grow grass. The Head Greenkeeper should therefore be prepared to hear criticism from every member of the club and have his methods discussed in every corner of the smoking-room. But
“On Monday mornings, brush the dressing in carefully with new bird brooms, on Tuesday sweep or not at all? Thus, by Wednesday or Thursday there will practically be no inconvenience.”

What’s insightful here is the importance of brushing in by hand, and look to apply more dressing in the hollows. How often these days do we apply an even blanket of top-dressing on bumpy or hollow? Does this application method exacerbate the difference in hollows? Working the dressing in by hand will allow the opportunity to manipulate the dressing carefully across the green in toportions that require different quantities.

Understandably, not a favourable manual task, however, we should question again does a handcrafted top-dressed green perform better than a mechanically dressed one? —Perhaps a workable approach is combining the old with the new. Sprague writes in ‘Better Lawns’ (1945) that the top-dressing should be spread over the entire surface and then worked into the low spots; he also makes an early reference for the recommendation and use of a steel door mat on a rope to drag in dressing.

The American methods of greenkeeping have long influenced greenkeeping in the UK, in the 1906 publication there is a quote of an ‘American’s’ opinion of St Andrews dry turf.

“We had a links like you have at St Andrews, I guess we should keep the grass properly watered, if it took a pipe made of gold to convey the water out to the end hole.”

Does this sum up an age-old American view that British Greenkeeping is under-resourced? Does it suggest that if the Old Course was State-side, vast amounts of cash would be pumped into maintaining the verdure ‘properly’? If so, then the statement arrogantly discards the Scottish Greenkeeping tradition of maintenance firm, dry and fine turf. However, the quote in context is a recommendation for British seaside golf courses to have an irrigation system.

The author proposes that laying a 3-inch pipe with a hydrant to all greens, will see less wear, little seeding, less feeding and less re-turfing. If it was suggested that the present British golf green is over-watered, we could not blame the education by American turf management methods.

But clearly, the Americans’ techniques have maintained their influence on British Greenkeeping over the years. Although, in the American 1922 handbook ‘Seeding and Care of Golf Courses’ By O.M. Scott and Sons it does state ‘little damage caused by over-watering’, but again, this is in the context of the American turf. Are, or have we been taking these Americans out of context?

In these contemporary times of over-feeding and excessive close mowing, are we forgetting these immovable fundamentals? It goes on, Sprague continues, with the affliction of springtime close mowing, identifying as particularly harmful, since root development is limited by removal of top-growth, leading to the grass being limited to utilise soil resources for the remaining growing season.

For turf establishment, it can be tempting to apply a disproportionate amount of seed. Sprague identifies this as initial heavy seeding, and he clearly explains it as a flawed obtained price, as it produces such competition between the plants, that there is little opportunity for any to develop strongly, until many have died in the struggle. This accounts for slow development of a vigorous healthy sod, in comparison with thinner sowing rates.

My final comment comes from 1945, whereby Sprague offers what he describes as the Holy Trinity of turf care, as they are three fundamentals that will remain no matter what duration of time goes by.

Sprague’s three fundamentals for vigour and growth:
1. Provide adequate leaf area to receive sunlight by controlling the mowing height and controlling the leaf area
2. Supply of adequate moisture, adequate root development and soil moisture levels
3. Supply of carbon dioxide; this is abundant and inexhaustible from the atmosphere.
"On Monday mornings, brush the lawn in carefully with new
brush brooms, on Tuesday sweep off what is left. Thus, by Wednesday
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Opportunity knocks

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award is one of the highlights of BIGGA’s calendar. Meet the 2010 finalists.

“The challenge of identifying the Champion Student Greenkeeper of the Year gets under way later this month with the final of the Award taking place.

Eight highly talented and motivated greenkeepers will descend on BIGGA HOUSE for the 22nd Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year final. Each year the standard of the finalist rises and to reach the final attaches a beacon to a CV drawing its attention to potential employers.

Last year Rhys Norville, from Newport Golf Club, in South Wales, was the man who made that final push to claim the title, but such is the man who made that final attaches a beacon to a CV.

He has set up the Greenkeeper’s Blog for Carnoustie which can be found on the BIGGA Central Section Website as well as the Facebook page for Carnoustie Golf Links. He is a keen golfer, playing off 7 and enjoys football.

The winner will win an eight week course on Toro’s Californian HQ.

The runners-up will receive an expenses paid trip to the Continue Development Sub Committee; Bruce, Junimiseon, of Toro, and Sami Collins, BIGGA Head of Learning and Development.

The winner will win an eight week trip to the United States beginning next January, which includes a six week study course at the University of Massachusetts and a trip to the USGA’s Golf Industry Show, in Orlando, Florida, and Toro’s Californian HQ.

The runners-up will receive an expenses paid trip to the Continue to Learn Education programme in January.

Exceeding the standard and has rowed for Great Britain at junior level.

Sean, 29, has been a golf lover since the age of 10 and was Junior Captain and Club Handicap Champion of Haulsowry GC. He started work at a nursery and achieved Level 2 in Animal Husbandry before moving into greenkeeping at his old club, Haulsowry.

After five years he moved to Launceston where he still works. An active BIGGA member he is a regular at Devon and Cornwall Region meetings and played in the BIGGA National Championship last year.

He is a keen football fan and recently became a father.

Sean, 29, arrived at a greenkeeping career having first gained a Honours Degree in Business and Finance from Oxford Brookes University and a job within the finance department of Mc Cormack’s (UK) PLC. A part time job raising bunlers at Ellesborough sparked the desire for a change of path.

He has completed his NVQ Level 2 at Bridgewater College and is currently completing his Level 3 and possibly a degree. He has completed his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and has just taken up mountain biking.

He also plays guitar and designs websites.

Robert Mills, Sunningdale Golf Club & Merriot Wood College

Robert, 23, became interested in greenkeeping at the age of 7, as his father was Deputy Head Greenkeeper at The Manor of Groves GC (now Head Greenkeeper for Bishope’s Stortford GC), and use to take him to work on weekend mornings, where he developed a love for new mowed early morning golf courses.

He started at a local bughouse at the age of 17 and just a few months later took over as Head Greenkeeper for three months. Under a new Head he attended Sheds College and when Briggsian Park closed in 2000 he moved to the 18 hole Whitehills, before arriving at Mill Ride, following time spent as a seasonal worker at The Badgesh mongale He has been working alongside a previous Terri winner, Murray Lang.

A keen cricketer, he is also an animal lover with two dogs and two cats, and is currently studying at Merriot Wood College.

Andrew Stanger, Horsforth Golf Club & Askham Bryan College

Andrew, 24, began as an apprentice at Calverley Golf Club and was Student of the Year at Askham Bryan College before being placed at Liberty National Golf Club, New York, as part of the Ohio State Program. From there he worked at Augusta National on the “Hole Care” Team initially on holes 8 and 9 and later on 11 and 12 on Amen Corner for the 2009 Masters.

A keen booker, he returned to join Horsforth, filling in as Head Greenkeeper during sick leave on a three week contract which was extended to three months, before taking over full time in June of this year. He has just completed his NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf Maintenance.

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After five years he moved to Launceston where he still works. An active BIGGA member he is a regular at Devon and Cornwall Region meetings and played in the BIGGA National Championship last year.

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Sean, 29, arrived at a greenkeeping career having first gained a Honours Degree in Business and Finance from Oxford Brookes University and a job within the finance department of Mc Cormack’s (UK) PLC. A part time job raising bunlers at Ellesborough sparked the desire for a change of path.

He has completed his NVQ Level 2 at Bridgewater College and is currently completing his Level 3 and possibly a degree. He has completed his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and has just taken up mountain biking.

He also plays guitar and designs websites.

Stephen Thompson, Bearested Golf Club & Hadlow College

Stephen, 36, started out as an agricultural engineer and became interested in pursuing a career while working on equipment as Wells of Kent Golf Club was being constructed, and became friendly with those working on the course.

Followed his work on Longley Park Driving Range in Midsland for seven years and moved to advance his career to Bearest as an Assistant in 1999 and he is currently the process of completing his Level 3 at Hadlow College.

Engaged, with a child on the way, Stephen is a keen walker and cyclist.
The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award is one of the highlights of BIGGA’s calendar. Meet the 2010 finalists.

“Winning the award has been a unique experience which has enabled me to learn lots, meet some fantastic people and has helped me to understand more about the industry,” said Rhys. “Every stage of the trip to America was more than I ever expected and I have to thank Toro and Lely for putting on such a fantastic trip. This award has helped me to realise that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to,” he added.

This year the finalists will arrive at Adagio Manor in Sunday, September 12, when they will meet with the judges and get to know each other before they start what could be one of the most significant events of their careers. Dinner with fellow finalists and the judges should tee up Monday just nicely for the candidates, when they will be set a project for the day and interviewed by a panel comprising Peter Marasfield, of Lely; Chris Sealey, Chairman of the BIGGA Learning and Development Sub Committee; Bruce Janinson, of Toro; and Sami Collins, BIGGA’s Head of Learning and Development.

The winner will win an eight week contract which was extended to three months, in as Head Greenkeeper during sick leave on a three month’s work. He has worked at 20 Open Championships, 10 Dunhill Links Championships, one Scottish Open, a British Senior Open and numerous other amateur events. He has set up the Greenkeepers’ Blog for Carnoustie which can be found on the BIGGA Central Section Website as well as the Facebook page for Carnoustie Golf Links. He is a keen golfer, playing off 7 and enjoys football.

“His true vocation”. He has just completed his NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf Maintenance. He still plays Category 1 golf. He has also played squash to junior county level. He has completed his NVQ Level 2 at Myerscough via distance learning and has ambitions to become a Head Greenkeeper on a links course.

The challenge of identifying the Champion Student Greenkeeper of the Year gets under way later this month with the final of the Award taking place.

Eight highly talented and motivated greenkeepers are due to descend on BIGGA HOUSE for the 22nd Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year final. Each year the standard of the finalist rises and to reach the final attains a beacon to a CV drawing its attention to potential employers. Last year Rhys Norville, from Newport Golf Club, in South Wales, was the man who made that final push to claim the title, but such is the standard of finalist now it could have been any one of the eight.

Toro House Hotel and Golf Club & Merrist Wood College

Robert Mills, Sunningdale Golf Club & Merriot Wood College

Robert, 23, became interested in greenkeeping at the age of 7, as his father was Deputy Head Greenkeeper at The Manor of Groves GC (now Head Groundsman for Huskisson’s Mitford GC), and used to take him to work on weekend mornings, where he developed a love for new mown early morning golf courses.

He started his real time at Briggens Park at the age of 17 and just a few months later took over as Head Greenkeeper for three months. Under a new Head he attended Shadkyn College and when Briggs Park closed in 2006 he moved to the 18 hole Whitehill GC, before arriving at Mill Ride, following time as a seasonal worker at The Buckinghamshire. He has since made the move to Sunningdale working alongside a previous Toro winner, Murray Long.

A keen cricketer, he is also an animal lover with two dogs and two cats, and is currently studying at Merriot Wood College.

Tom Hayward, Frome Golf Club & Bridgewater College

Tom, 19, has a great love of the outdoors and considered a career in Countryside Management but having been a golfer since the age of eight, and having asked his local club if they had any summer work he was bitten by the greenkeeping bug immediately.

He has just completed his NVQ Level 2 at Bridgewater College and is already considering Level 3 and possibly a degree. He has completed his Duke of Edinburgh Award and has just taken up mountain biking. He also plays guitar and designs websites.

For Ever, the Enterprise

Stephen Thompson, Bearest Golf Club & Harold College

Stephen, 36, started out as an agricultural engineer and became interested in turf management while working on equipment as Weald of Kent Golf Club was being constructed, and became friendly with those working on the course.

Following his Level 2 at Myerscough via distance learning and has ambitions to become a Head Greenkeeper on a links course and to add a degree and the Master Greenkeeper Certificate to his CV.

Initially he did have ambitions to become a professional golfer and still plays Category 1 golf. He has also played squash to junior county standard and has rowed for Great Britain at junior level.

Gavin Moore, Lanecost Golf Club & Duchy College

Gesto, 29, has been a golf lover since the age of 10 and was Junior Captain and Club Handicap Champion of Holsworthy GC. He started work at a nursery at an early age and achieved Level 2 in Animal Husbandry before moving into greenkeeping at his old club, Holsworthy.

After five years he moved to Lanecost where he still works. An active BIGGA member he is a regular at Devon and Cornwall Region meetings and played in the BIGGA National Championship last year.

A keen football fan and recently became a father.

Sebastian Cavilla, The Manor House Hotel and Golf Club & Cumnor College

Sebastian, 25, spent two years as a gardener and one as a Racecourse Groundsman before starting his apprenticeship.

He has worked at The Manor House since 2007 and in that time has been studying for a Foundation Degree and increasing his knowledge base while working on environmental clearance work on the golf course. His ambition is to become a Course Manager.

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Craig Boath, Carnoustie Golf Links and Elmwood College

Craig, 30, is Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Carnoustie Links. Having spent 15 years at the famous Open venue – initially during his October school holidays and again the following Easter before he started as a youth trainee in June 96.

He has worked on two Open Championships, 10 Dunhill Links Championships, one Scottish Open, a British Senior Open and numerous other amateur events. He was the man who made that final push to claim the title, but such is the standard of finalist now it could have been any one of the eight.

He has completed his NVQ Level 2 at Myerscough via distance learning and has ambitions to become a Head Greenkeeper on a links course and to add a degree and the Master Greenkeeper Certificate to his CV.

Initially he did have ambitions to become a professional golfer and still plays Category 1 golf. He has also played squash to junior county standard and has rowed for Great Britain at junior level.

Andrew Stanger, Horsforth Golf Club & Askham Bryan College

Andrew, 24, began an apprenticeship at Calverley Golf Club and was Student of the Year at Askham Bryan College before being placed at Liberty National Golf Club, New York, as part of the Ohio State Program. From there he worked at Augusta National on the “Hole Care” Team initially on holes 8 and 9 and later on 11 and 12 on Amen Corner for the 2009 Masters.

A keen golfer, he retired to join Horsforth, filling in as Head Greenkeeper during sick leave on a three week contract which was extended to three months, before taking over full time in June of this year.

He has just completed his NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf Maintenance.

The runners-up will receive an eight week contract which was extended to three months, in as Head Greenkeeper during sick leave on a three month’s work. He has worked at 20 Open Championships, 10 Dunhill Links Championships, one Scottish Open, a British Senior Open and numerous other amateur events. He has set up the Greenkeepers’ Blog for Carnoustie which can be found on the BIGGA Central Section Website as well as the Facebook page for Carnoustie Golf Links. He is a keen golfer, playing off 7 and enjoys football.

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Brooklime is commonly found as a water margin plant around ponds and along brooks. There are over 20 different speedwells native or naturalised in the UK but slender speedwell (Veronica filiformis) is the only one found growing as a weed in well formed and tightly knit professional sports turf.

Slender speedwell as the name suggests is one of the ‘puniest’ speedwells but more than makes up for lack of stature by being one of the ‘worst’ weeds in turf. Slender speedwell along with field woodrush was given the dubious honour of being the most stubborn and difficult to manage weed of sports turf. Bayer Environmental Science conducted a survey by questionnaire at Saltex 2004 to find out which weeds were regarded as the most difficult to control. Slender speedwell came out top of for stubbornness with 33% of respondents identifying the weed as the most difficult to control on their ‘patch’.

A well travelled weed

Veronica filiformis is a garden plant introduction that must have seemed like a good idea at the time in the early 19th century. It was originally introduced from the Caucasus in 1808 as a ‘Georgian rock gardener’s delight’ but subsequently found a more favourable and fruitful habitat in grassland. Slender speedwell was already well established as a garden plant in 1830 when the cylinder mower was invented. Eight years later saw first reports of slender speedwell escaping from rock gardens into the wider world of turf.

Turf was clearly ‘on a roll’ following invention of the cylinder mower by Edwin Budding and on sale two years later at Ransomes. The ‘Collins Wild Flower Guide’ describes slender speedwell with its pretty blue/mauve flowers as ‘a worthy addition to our flora’ but the greenkeeper and groundsman would disagree seeing slender speedwell as a pernicious weed of fine turf.

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But mowing has little effect on slender speedwell which sneaks through the turf at ground level via long, slender, creeping stems eventually consolidating into relatively large patches of stubborn weed growth. Slender speedwell is one of the most deceptively damaging of weeds of sports turf and mowing can actually make it worse.

A die-hard weed

There is no doubt that slender speedwell is one of the hardest weeds to control and along with Field Woodrush is the most resis-