Chairman’s Word

National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

So – You Want to be Promoted?

November is conference month and I had the great pleasure of attending the Midlands and Northern regional conferences in Leicester and Rotherham respectively.

They were exceptionally well attended and the content was informative, interesting and entertaining. It’s not just the educational aspect of these events that make them so valuable – I always look forward to meeting members old and new. I also attended the BIGGA Midland Team Challenge at Burton on Trent Golf Club.

Gavin Robinson did an excellent job in arranging the sponsors, as did Sandra Raper with the running of the event.

It’s really important that members across the Sections and Regions support these type of events – I’m well aware that everyone is extremely busy but without your support they will simply be unable to continue.

They also couldn’t continue without sponsors - thank you to Toro for providing superb prizes for the winners and also Bearing Transmission and Pneumatics, Inturf, Complete Weed Control and North Staffs Irrigation.

The other main event for me this month was the South Wales Section dinner which was a great night with a considerable number of members in attendance, and an impressive amount of money raised for charity. Well done to all concerned.

We've also seen the ‘So You Want to be Promoted’ training and educational programme begin across the country – see page nine for further details.

I’m absolutely delighted that we are able to support Jacobsen in this fantastic initiative and to get this very important project off the ground. There are many young members out there who want to make greenkeeping a career rather than it just be a job and this scheme gives those individuals valuable information on how to climb the career ladder.

It’s delivered by Course Managers who have trodden the same path so they can offer genuine insight.

Education is our lifeblood and I urge all interested members to find out more about this and other opportunities.

The picture accompanying my article this month shows me in the late seventies (where has the time gone?) – at that time there were none of the educational opportunities which are available now so make the most of them. At my own Golf Club at Tresseil, it’s the autumn leaves which have caused all the nightmares this month and I’m sure it’s been a similar story for many of you.

There have been twice as many leaves as last year and we’ve had the additional problem of localised wet spots which we’ve needed to drain.

We’ve also had too much rain again throughout autumn. It really feels like we’ve only had about three days of good weather this year - the promised Indian Summer never materialised did it?

BTME is now firmly at the forefront of everyone’s minds and for anyone still unsure about the logistical details, this issue has all the information you could ever prepared for what I’m sure will be another hugely successful event. BTME offers so many educational opportunities – and places for the seminars and workshops are going fast so book now!

All that remains is for me to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I’ll also like to congratulate all members on the all the hard work you’ve put in this year. We all know it’s been such a testing year with the worst summer that many of us can recall.

But together we’re a strong association and I’m very optimistic about the new year.

Roll on 2013. Season’s Greetings Tony.
Learning & Development

Sami Collins, BIGGA Learning & Development Manager, with an update on education issues

As we approach the festive season (which seems to start earlier each year) let’s take your mind off fighting to grab that last Tracey Island or deciding if it’s acceptable to watch the Great Escape on +1. So curl up with your Continue to Learn brochure in front of a roaring fire with a glass of port and plan your design at BTME.

Continuing the overview, this month we’ll concentrate on the Turf Managers’ Conference and the workshops.

SUNDAY 20th JANUARY/MONDAY 21ST JANUARY

Once again the workshop programme is proving very popular and is a highly valued educational experience for those who have attended in previous years.

Two Day Workshops

So You Want to be a Golf Course Manager, Peter Jones & Kevin Murl Moving into Management, Frank Newbery Irrigation System Management and Design, Adrian & Dennis Mottam Business IT, Jacky Lowe

One day Workshops

The ABCs of Putting Green Management, semi annual Pt 2, Shona Garner The Turf Disease Centre, discussing new cool season diseases. Finally, Dr Thom Nikolai from the University of Michigan State University will be presenting two papers. Firstly, The Top 10 Reasons for Lightweight Rolling. Thom has been leading the research into its effects for nearly twenty years. His second paper will be on surfactants, covering soil science, hydrology and concepts including plant available water.

This is a must-attend conference for all managers of fine turf.

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The month of November has been a busy month for conferences, with four of the regions holding theirs across the country. They were really well attended and thanks go to all those who came, the speakers who gave up their valuable time to share their knowledge and experiences and the organisers, without whom these events could not take place.

Please spread the word about the conferences and how valuable a resource they are to members. Plus all those who attended and signed the CPD register will receive their CPD points.

LIBRARY

The library has now been re-categorised and the database updated to include all the new books that have recently been purchased thanks to John Deere.

If you would like to view the library you can see and order one or you can arrange to visit BIGGA House and browse at your leisure.

BIGGA HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Four scholarships have been awarded this month to; Peter Collins – NVQ Level 4 Sports Turf Management, Guildford College Philip Worth – Foundation Degree (landscape), Myerscough College Craig Sanderson – Foundation Degree, Ashland Bryan College James Parker – HNC Sports Turf Management (online), Elmswood College Hardyn Drinkwater – BSc Sports Turf (online), Myerscough College

Finally…

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your Learning and Development Team!
As we approach the festive season (which seems to start earlier each year) let’s take your mind off fighting to grab that last Tracy Island or deciding if it’s acceptable to watch the Great Escape on +1. So curl up with your copy of Learn brochure in front of a roaring fire with a glass of port and plan your education at BTME.

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Two day Workshops
So You Want to be a Golf Course Manager, Peter Jones & Kevin Muir Moving into Management, Frank Newbery Irrigation System Management and Design, Adrian & Dennis Mortram

Friday Workshops
The ABCs of Putting Green Maintenance, Thom Nikolai

As a result of feedback from last year, we have added a late workshop on managing turfgrass plant diseases. This half-day workshop will be presented by Dr. Tom Nikolai of Michigan State University and is scheduled for Wednesday 19th January.

Some of the other features of BTME 2013 are the National Skills Competition and the BIGGA Golf Challenge in partnership with the European Tour and The Woodall-Norton Company. The Skills Competition will take place on Monday 21st January and will see teams of golf course professionals from across the country compete in a range of tasks. The big highlight is the BIGGA Golf Challenge on Tuesday 22nd January, which is a unique opportunity for golf course professionals to show off their skills on the course.

BTME 2013 is a great event to attend and is packed with valuable information for golf course professionals. Whether you are looking to improve your skills, network with others in the industry, or simply enjoy the golf course, BTME 2013 has something for everyone.

Lifestyle Counselling Helpline and Online Support Service – upgrade service to Members and their families.

Lifestyle Counselling Helpline and Online Support is available to all BIGGA Members and members of their immediate family living at the same address.

This upgraded service can help with a range of problems from practical everyday matters to sensitive or emotional issues. Specialists will help members deal with personal relationship problems, problems with colleagues in the workplace and other issues affecting their general wellbeing.

Counsellors and information specialists are also trained to help members with practical problems like debt.

The helpline is complemented by a comprehensive online information and support service, through which members can access information and advice on a range of issues and problems which often impact on everyday life.

Topics are diverse and include relationships, childcare issues, consumer issues, stress, health and fitness.

Information is updated regularly by a team of experienced counsellors and information specialists.

For details on how to contact the Lifestyle Counselling Helpline or connect to the Online Support Service visit www.arclegal.co.uk. The helpline is complemented by Counsellors and information specialists.

To purchase tickets please call Elaine Jones on 01347 833800 (Option 1) or email moneypass@bigga.co.uk

BIGGA Stand – Hall B stand 23

Come and see us on stand B23. The stand will be packed with lots of information about BIGGA, meet the Membership Team, Tracey and Elaine, and pick up information about education and training.

Come and find out how BIGGA is split into five regions and 26 sections around the UK and meet your Regional Administrator, John (Scotland), Sandra (Northern and Midlands), Clive (South East) and Jane (South West/South Wales).

We will also be selling BIGGA logo jumpers and windproof tops.

BTME 2013 – Register NOW and avoid the queues

Visit www.btme.org.uk and click on the register now button, the BTME website also includes bags of information about the big week including who’s exhibiting, travel tips and a product guide.

For Your Eyes Only…..

Come along to the BIGGA James Bond evening to be shaken not stirred, with fantastic entertain-ment.

Further details coming soon…

To be held - Tuesday 22 January 2013 @ 7pm to 10:30pm at THE OLD SWAN HOTEL, Swan Road, Harrogate, HG1 2BH.

Tickets – £25 each including Carvery & Arrival Drink.

Dress Code – Smart/Casual

To purchase tickets please call Elaine Jones on 01347 833800 (Option 1) or email moneypass@bigga.co.uk

BIGGA Regional Conferences

The Regional Conferences are a great opportunity for networking and our regional conferences will be happening BIGGA wise on Facebook, Twitter and international Golf Greenkeepers’ Association website.

Keep up to date instantly with BIGGA Facebook, Twitter and International Golf Greenkeepers’ Association website.

Keep up to date with all that’s happening BIGGA wise on Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook

Twitter
Toro Sprinklers clinch deal for windswept links course

With its spectacular cliff-top course regularly subjected to strong coastal winds, it’s no wonder finding sprinklers that could cope in these challenging conditions became a deal-breaker for Royal Cromer Golf Club when choosing a new irrigation system – and course manager Mark Heveran has plumbed for Toro’s Dual Manager Mark Heveran has

Bayer launch turf disease mobile app

As part of their planned series of new innovations Bayer has launched a dedicated smartphone app for the turf and amenity sector. The Bayer TurfSport app has been specifically developed with turf professionals in mind and has been designed to help identify turf weeds, diseases and insects whilst in the field.

Bayer’s Product Manager Claire Matthews explains that this particular application is an evolution of Bayer’s very popular turf weed, pest and disease wall that “We’ve taken all of the valuable information that our turf wall chart displayed, added it in a simple to use weed and disease identification tool and then tailored it into an interactive smartphone application.

“We had positive early feedback when we previewed the app to greenkeepers in September at STRI Research event, and so now we’re working on a version for the iPad which we plan to launch at BTME in January next year.

We’re confident there will be good take-up,” The Bayer TurfSport app is now available free of charge from the Apple App store; simply enter Bayer TurfSport into the Search facility. An Android version will soon be available.

Polaris meets the boss

Polaris owners here can benefit from The Boss technology with its introduction by Farmquip, the UK and Ireland’s sole distributor.

The Boss set the bar in creating ground-breaking technology to make snow ploughing fast, easy and efficient.

The specially engineered plough for Polaris UTV and ATV use is built to the same standards as the full-size Boss ploughs and offers a tough, contractor grade solution to handling snow removal.

The hydraulics are enclosed to protect against corrosion and freezing, with a chainless lifting system to reduce snowplough bounce during transportation.

A revolutionary hitch system makes the plough easy and incredibly fast to attach to a UTV. Teamed with a Polaris Ranger Diesel for example you have the traction and power to deal with the most extreme terrain and conditions, with in-cab control.

But clearing snow with the plough is only part of the story. The Boss TGS 800 tailgate spreader is quickly attached to the rear of the Polaris. The rotary ‘paddle action’ makes the spreader a true glitter, so you can spread rock salt, grit, sand and other de-icing materials to provoke traction.

FANTASTIC FAIRWAYS WITH MULTIGREEN

In 2010, Telford Golf Resort Course Manager Matt Robbins was unhappy with the fairways. “We were using liquid feeds but getting poor results, and soil samples suggested that the fairways needed more nitrogen.” Discussions with Headland Amenity’s Area Manager Adrian Masters prompted Multigreen 725 as the ideal solution, giving a lasting nutrient boost from a single application using Headland’s temperature controlled release technology.

The 28:0:0 + 3MgO formulation gives a steady release of nutrients throughout the summer, boosting growth and vitality without the risk of flushes. The release of nutrients from Multigreen is solely controlled by soil temperature, giving a long lasting response from a single application, unlike fertiliser, fertilisation is costly in terms of the amount of materials used and the labour involved.

“An contractor applied 140 bags to the 18 fairways using a tractor mounted spreader in April 2011, and the results were superb,” comments Matt. “The fairways lasted all through the summer, and although the growth fell off in the dry summer, as soon as the temperatures and moisture levels improved this spring, we saw the effects of the fertiliser come again, so we gained almost 12 months’ action from a single application.”

NEW FACE AT EVERRIS

Everris has appointed Simon Taylor as Product & Business Development Manager, Grass Seeds, EAMF & turf.

He will join the international marketing and business development team from January 2013. Grass seed is an important part of Everris’ product portfolio and an essential part of the company’s iTurf integrated turf management solutions.

Simon’s appointment is a key strategic move to strengthen turfgrass industry leadership.

Simon’s primary role will be to integrate and foster the turfgrass seed and turfgrass industry sectors of Everris by working closely with the Turfgrass sale and marketing in the UK and Ireland.

Simon began his career studying an HND in General Horticulture.

Simon has more than 20 years’ experience in the grass seed sector in which he has strongly driven the development of turf grass seed mixture sales and marketing in the UK and Ireland.

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Commenting on his appointment, Joan Verhoeven said "We are very happy that Simon, with his experience and great grass seed know-how, is joining Everris to further strengthen our service and to enhance the role that grass seeds play in our integrated turf solutions for greenkeepers, groundsman and landscapers.”

The latest turf industry news from around the globe
It's no wonder finding sprinklers to strong coastal winds, it's the course regularly subjected to challenging conditions that could cope in these windswept conditions. The 18-hole North Norfolk coastline course has been designed to ensure uniform coverage. Available in two types – full-circle-only or full-and-adjustable part-circle – customers can opt for the most cost-effective solution for their course conditions. For example, a full-circle-only sprinkler is more suited to fairways, while part-circle capability is not needed. Better yet, conversion assemblies are available so that existing systems can be upgraded to this far more efficient technology. Commenting on the sprinklers, Mark says: “The real dinker for us was the adjustable trajectory sprinklers – they’re vital in our windy conditions. The course gets battered by the wind and, without effective irrigation, the most exposed areas just go bare because we can’t get the root development to keep the fescue grasses alive. But the way the DT35s throw against even the strongest gusts is so impressive.”

**BAYER LAUNCH TURF DISEASE MOBILE APP**

As part of their planned series of new innovations Bayer has launched a dedicated smartphone app for the turf and amenity sector. The Bayer TurfSport app has been specifically developed with turf professionals in mind and has been designed to help identify turf weeds, diseases and insects whilst in the field. Bayer’s Product Manager Clive Matthewman explains that this particular application is an evolution of Bayer’s very popular turf weed, pest and disease wall tool. “We’ve taken all of the valuable information that our turf wall chart displayed, added in a simple to use weed and disease identification tool and turned it into an interactive smartphone application.”

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Reporting to Global Vice President of Marketing & Business Development, Joan Verhoeven, Simon will drive the growth of this category and the positioning of Everris’ seed portfolio in the European turf & amenity business.

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It's a freezing December morning in 1962 and a 15-year-old boy is pushing his bike through thick snow to reach his first ever job at Sutton Coldfield Golf Club.

Trainee greenkeeper Alan Kite picked one of the worst ever winters to begin his career – with atrocious weather preventing any real work on the course from December to April. But Alan is now preparing for retirement after spending his entire working life at the same club.

He was just 21 when he became Head Greenkeeper, and during an eventful career he’s had to cope with a devastating fire, various recessions and generations of irritating cattle.

The unusual heathland course commands 200 acres of the vast 2,400 acre Sutton Park, which is an SSSI protected site.

Joggers, dog walkers and families mingle with the cattle that roam the park – and the fairways – from April to October.

His tale is fascinating. He can recall a time where four greenkeepers would tow a green by hand over the course of a day, and golfers rarely ventured out in the winter months – and he reveals why he believes half a century in the same job is now impossible.

The biggest influence on his early career was former Head Greenkeeper Jack Toy. Amazingly, he also spent 50 years at the club – and Alan has emulated his mentor’s longevity.

“I always wanted to work outdoors, and my mother knew Jack and mentioned I was looking for a job.

“But as soon as I got here, there was snow on the ground until April. It was unbelievable – I didn’t see any grass for 14 weeks. I didn’t have a clue where anything was – I remember disappearing into a bunker on the 14th when I was trudging round in this deep snow.

“All I did was shovel snow around the car park and I had to listen to these old men boring me about the past and as a young teenager, I didn’t want to know.

“But later on I realised it had been the best education I could possibly have had. Formal education was non-existent so they gave me the benefit of all those years of experience.

“When I started we had three Gang Mowers, a little tractor, a spiker and some scythes which were used on the greens at that time. The rest were hand machines.

“The greens were pure fescue, cut twice a week.

Four of us would take a day to time a green by hand.”

By now Alan had thrown himself into greenkeeping, and was determined to further his career.

He even took up golf – having previously never picked up a club in his life – and was quickly playing off a single figure handicap.

“Jack retired and I fully expected to take over from him at 18 – that shows the confidence of youth! I eventually took over as Head Greenkeeper at 21. People didn’t pressure you and you learnt as you went along, and I also attended courses at the STI – now the STRI - which was just starting up.”

He was appointed Course Manager in 1979 - but three years before this appointment came the toughest test of his half-century reign.

Blazing hot summers in 1974 and 1975 had left the heathland like a tinderbox – and the famously scorching summer of 1976 triggered a series of fires which raged across Sutton Park, engulfing the course.

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Born: Coventry, 2 December 1947
Marital status: Married to Gill
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Alan Kite flies off into retirement

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“We did so much of our work in the winter. People didn’t play much winter golf then, and they wouldn’t play if it rained because the rubber outfits golfers wore then weren’t waterproof. There’d be nobody out there from November to March, and even in the summer there was no play on Sundays.”

It’s safe to say that Alan has no plans to retire to a farm, or anywhere near cattle, after spending “48 years shoveling cow dung”.

“Apart from foot and mouth and the year after the fire, we’ve had cattle on here every year. This year we’ve been picking up half a ton of muck a day.”

Because the ground was bone dry, all it took was one fire and the embers would float off and start more fires.

“We held a big charity amateur tournament with the likes of Nick Faldo and Sandy Lyle, which we got through, but the tournament ended and in the last few days of August the wind got up, a fire started and that was it.

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“We did so much of our work in the winter. People didn’t play much winter golf then, and they wouldn’t play if it rained because the rubber outfits golfers wore then weren’t waterproof. There’d be nobody out there from November to March, and even in the summer there was no play on Sundays.”

It’s safe to say that Alan has no plans to retire to a farm, or anywhere near cattle, after spending “48 years shoveling cow dung”.

“Apart from foot and mouth and the year after the fire, we’ve had cattle on here every year. This year we’ve been picking up half a ton of muck a day.”

Because the ground was bone dry, all it took was one fire and the embers would float off and start more fires.

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50 Years

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However, Alan harbours a greater dislike of bunkers than of bovines.

“We should have designed inland courses to be without bunkers, they’ve been the bane of my life. You’re told you’re never raking them properly and in the summer the finer sand blows away. Somebody should have said we’re not on the seaside and we don’t want or need bunkers. You can put other features in like gorse and bushes.”

He believes his generation will be the last to ever have ‘a job for life’.

“There’s no loyalty now either from the club’s side or the employees’ side. You’re not going to get people staying 50 years anymore. It’s not just this industry, society generally is more cut and thrust.”

He has no doubts when asked about the most satisfying part of the job.

“When everyone pulls together for a tournament. We do the best we can with what we have, and on the day the adrenaline’s flowing and it’s a great feeling.

“I do love this course. One of the best things is that it’s open to the public, so it’s not just the same old faces. I’ve got to know so many people down the years.”

Alan was a Midlands secretary for BGGFA – one of the forerunners of BIGGA – and was a big supporter of its 1987 amalgamation with the English and International Golf Greenkeepers Association and the Scottish and International Golf Greenkeepers Association.

“I passionately believed we had to amalgamate, it was common sense. We’d have been in a much worse position without BIGGA, but there’s still a way to go.”

Two things disappoint me. One is the number of Master Greenkeepers who seem to leave the trade.

“These young men are returning to their clubs after this fabulous achievement but aren’t properly rewarded, so they leave to become agronomists, advisers or do contract work. That means they’re not ploughing their knowledge back into the trade.

“Secondly, when I started we were considered as nothing better than a gardener. I have to say that some things haven’t changed.

“When the financial pressure is on, as it is now, some clubs don’t help us and our skills are still undervalued.

“Cutting back on greenkeepers is short-sighted because it will obviously affect the condition of the course long-term.”

It’s been a humbling experience to meet a man who’s poured his heart and soul into the industry and he’s also given me a priceless insight into how greenkeeping has developed over 50 years.

Happy retirement, Alan.
More market choice for the clubhouse Christmas tree

Dr Terry Mabbett provides some timely advice on selecting the perfect tree to add the festive touch to your club

More market choice for the clubhouse Christmas tree have changed out of all proportion over the last twenty years, in the range of trees on offer, country of origin, method of production and even in the method of marketing.

Childhood Christmas tree memories for those on the other side of fifty will be of Norway spruce, the traditional and often gangly conifer that dropped its needles en masse as Christmas moved into the New Year. Norway spruce is still used to today and continues to take a healthy slice of the lower cheaper end of the Christmas tree market, but has long been overtaken by the Nordmann fir.

Nordmann fir is a much more compact and better-looking tree and providing it has not been harvested too early will retain its needles when taken inside for decoration.

Ironically Norway was never the main supplier of Norway spruce as Christmas trees and in the same way the Nordic-sounding name of ‘Nordmann fir’ belies the tree’s true native origins.

The wild native distribution of the Nordmann fir is the Caucasus where Europe becomes Asia in countries like Turkey and Georgia from where the best seed originates. Denmark was always the biggest producer and supplier of Christmas trees for the European market and is originally responsible for the runaway success of Nordmann fir as a commercial Christmas tree, not only in the UK but all over Europe as well.

It was Danish Christmas tree growers who went into Georgia and collected the seed which started the contemporary Christmas tree industry based on Nordmann fir.

The other big change relates to country of origin.

Ten years ago a Christmas tree purchased in the UK, whether Nordmann fir or Norway spruce, would more than likely have been grown in Europe (probably Denmark), and shipped to the UK for Christmas.

Today your tree’s roots will almost certainly have been embedded in British or Irish soil.

The British Christmas tree industry is one of unparalleled success with the UK going from dependency on European (mainly Danish grown) Christmas trees (mostly Nordmann fir) to virtual self-sufficiency in little more than five years.

In yet another irony, we have the Danes - and the European Union (EU) - to thank for the UK’s ongoing