They say the British are obsessed with the weather and in my experience that is also true of the greenkeeping profession! Last month I wrote of drought orders in the midst of about five weeks of constant rain, and this month we bring better news on the irrigation front whilst the sun absolutely ‘cracks the flags’. The dramatic changes and extreme weather patterns we are experiencing make the need for highly trained, committed greenkeepers even more important, if we are to ensure that golfers have courses that are fit to play on.

The bright sunshine may be not what the water authorities are looking for but I was delighted that the European Tour’s flagship event, the BMW PGA Championship was played out in stunning conditions.

It provided a glorious end to Chris Kennedy’s epic career at Wentworth. As number 1 in superb style was a fitting climax to the 52nd Tour event to be held under Chris’s stewardship. Now retirement awaits, enjoy it Chris, you’ve certainly earned it.

Many of you will be aware that we have been going through a period of change at BIGGA House as we seek to ensure the Association is, to use the modern vernacular, fit for purpose. The Board of Management and I have been working closely together to produce a Business Plan to provide direction over the next three to five years. The principles of the Plan will be made available to members on www.bigga.org.uk in the near future.

This month we welcome two new additions to the staff replacing the recently retired long standing Regional Administrators. John Young from Gourouck has taken over the reins from Peter Boyd in Scotland and Sandra Raper fills the vacancy left by Peter Larter in the Midlands and North.

Both brought great energy and ideas to the recruitment process and will I am certain serve the needs of the membership with great diligence.

Having watched Luke Donald show us all how it is done our attention turns to finding out who will be BIGGA’s Champion Golfer of 2012. I am delighted that Kobotia and Charterhouse have once again chosen to support the BIGGA National Championship as title sponsors.

The event will take place on 8th and 9th October with the excellent Irvine GC on the West coast of Scotland providing the examination for all those bidding to succeed Jason Hunt to be engraved on our prestigious trophy.

The entry form is available now on page 58, and at www.bigga.org.uk. Entries are limited so don’t delay.

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JUNE 2012
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Welcome from BIGGA

Changes (also in the weather)
High hopes

Jim Cook visits High Post Golf Club, in Wiltshire, the subject of the 2011 BIGGA Photographic Competition, won by it’s greenkeeper, Paul Hope.

Last year, Paul Hope, a greenkeeper at High Post Golf Club, won BIGGA’s 2011 photographic competition with a stunning shot of a deer prancing over the course at first light.

After a visit to the club, one of the striking features was how much of an oasis, or even haven, this picturesque Wiltshire course offers for many other types of rare and elusive wildlife as well as deer.

It was a warm day in mid-May when I met with Course Manager, Lachlan Morrison and the team at High Post. Lachlan was keen to speak about the importance of ecology to this club and said: “We’re in the process of sympathetically clearing scrub areas and regenerating our gorse areas. We’ve re-planted gorse in new areas and it’s looking quite impressive, with new plants sprouting through where we cleared. We’ve also exposed a pine tree next to the 6th tee which was previously covered and some holly trees.”

Paul Hope said: “The wildlife is abundant out there as well. Of the birds, we’ve had red kites over the course for the first time in several years and sparrowhawks, kestrels...”
High hopes

Jim Cook takes a trip to Wiltshire, to meet the team at High Post GC, a club with ambition as high as the level of beauty it entails.

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**Rogue Rider Wreaks Havoc for O’Hara**

Leven GC Head Greenkeeper and BIGGA Member, Andy O’Hara, was left devastated last month when a motorbike-driven vandal rippet up greens on his course. It could take months to recover.

The damage was caused to the putting surfaces on the 1st and 18th holes at Leven Links Golf Club and further damage continued at the 18th of Seacroft Golf Club.

The damage to the greens is extensive with much of the turf dug out by the motorbike’s tyres. Leven Links has had to carry out repairs to make them usable for the 500 members of Leven Golfing Society and Leven Thistle Golf Club, who both play on the course.

Mr O’Hara has ruled out fencing-off the course despite this being the second time it has been attacked in the space of a month, saying: “We would like to appeal to whoever is doing it to stop. If anybody has any information then get in touch with us, or the police.”

“Fencing the place off is not what we want. It would cost us a fortune and take away the natural beauty of the place.”

Local Community Inspector Donald Jenks said: “Additional patrols will be operating in the area to deter the vandalism and gather information that will help identify those responsible.”

**Braemar Extends Commitment**

Braemar Golf, the international golf services provider, based in the home of golf, St Andrews, Scotland is determined to enhance its commitment to sustainability across the development and operational projects within the Braemar portfolio. The programmes and guidance provided by the Golf Environment Organisation (GEO) as preferred solutions, Braemar has asked that all clients embed GEO OnCourse™ programme to achieve the international recognised for golf, GEO Certified™. Additionally, Braemar will help new development projects integrate sustainability into planning, design and construction according to comprehensive new guidance developed by GEO in collaboration with a number of golf industry groups.

Braemar Golf has for many years been implementing environmental best practice as part of their standard operating procedures but recognise the benefits of participating in such recognised and worthwhile programmes.

“After discussions with our clients, both in development and operation, there is overwhelming support to ensure that the guidance provided by GEO we can build and manage golf facilities to the highest environmental standards. “We recognise not only the traditional environmental benefits but also the financial and efficiency gains that will be made and we are delighted to be involved to such an extensive level.”

**Farewell from Peter Larter, BIGGA Regional Administrator**

At the end of May 2012 I retire from the post of Regional Administrator for the Midland and Northern Regions of BIGGA.

In September 1996, after 35 years in the RAF, I took over the post of Regional Administrator for the Midland Region of BIGGA and, a few years later became full-time, also looking after the Northern Region. During my 16 years with BIGGA I have worked with many members, BIGGA HQ staff and the Trade, and I am very grateful for the support and friendship I received from all I came into contact with. I have had the great experience of working at BTME, and in recent years I have had the honour to work with our members at The Open Championship.

As I head into retirement I will miss the friends I have made during my time with BIGGA. However, I will be fully occupied with grand children, rugby, golf and, like Peter Boyd, my wife’s “to do“ list.

I wish BIGGA and all I have known throughout the last 16 years success in the future.

Good Luck

Peter J Larter
BRAEMAR EXTENDS COMMITMENT

Braemar Golf, the international golf services provider, based in the home of golf, St Andrews, Scotland is delighted to announce a new commitment to sustainability across all development and operational projects within the Braemar Golf portfolio. Selecting the programmes and guidance provided by the Golf Environment Organisation, GEO as preferred solutions, Braemar has asked that all client environments enhance GEO OnCourse™ programme to achieve the international recognised golf, GEO Certified™. Additionally, Braemar will help new development projects integrate sustainability into planning, design and construction; this new environmental guidance provided by GEO in collaboration with a number of golf industry groups.

Braemar Golf has for many years been implementing environmental best practice as part of their standard operating procedures but recognise the benefits of participating in such recognised and worthwhile programmes.

Jonathan Pendry, GEO’s Chief Executive, said: “Our project teams have driven this through their efforts and desire to manage their facilities in an environmentally sustainable manner.

After discussions with our clients, both in development and operation, there is overwhelming support to ensure that the guidance provided by GEO we can build and manage golf facilities to the highest environmental standards.

We recognise not only the traditional environmental benefits but also the financial and efficiency gains that will be made and we are delighted to be involved to such an extensive level.”

This commitment to GEO programmes is a natural and rewarding approach to sustainability underlines our commitment to sustainability is a valuable pursuit, for resource efficiency, environmental and social benefits, and a strong reputation for individual clubs and the game.

GEO’s Chief Executive, Jonathan Smith, added: “We are very pleased that our guidance and programming is providing a platform for Braemar Golf to re-affirm their commitment to sustainability and to support their clients efforts.

“It makes good business sense for every golf course and development to be environmentally sustainable, a responsible, resource efficient business set in an ecologically rich landscape, and this leadership by Braemar Golf and the clubs and developments in their portfolio will bring tangible benefits and serve as a good example for others.”

Sandra Raper

Due to the retirement of Peter Larter, Sandra Raper has been appointed on a full time contract to cover Northern and Midland Regions.

Sandra was previously employed by BIGGA in an administrative role and has good experience in many aspects of Association activities.

During her time with the Association she developed an excellent rapport with members and suppliers alike. Sandra will commence her post on Monday 18th June 2012.

BIGGA Appoints New Regional Administrators

The Association is pleased to announce the appointment of two new Regional Administrators.

John Young

Following the retirement of Peter Boyd, John Young has been appointed on a full time contract to cover Scotland. John is a skilled administrator with a strong track record in event organisation and has been heavily involved with the management of Grunock Golf Club, where he is a full member with a handicap of 13. John will commence his post on Monday 28th May 2012.

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Kent take Challenge Crown at Home of The Hammers

At the ground of West Ham United, recently reinstated to the FA Premier League, Challeners, The Kent team constituted victory at the hands of last year’s winners, the Essex Section, in this challenge Football match organised by Lely UK (Toro). A keenly contested match played in good spirit finished 3-2 to Kent.

On a damp but perfect pitch Essex made a bright start with Ben Scrivener firing just over the bar from long range and two minutes later had a shot well saved by Rob Holland in the Kent goal. After some good football and missed shots by both teams Mark Todd beat the Essex defence allowing Kevin Morris to intervene and nod the ball on for Lee Austin put Kent two goals up. Early in the second half Kent had plenty of possession, but against the run of play and after an error by the keeper, Mark Turner scored for Essex to make it 1-2. Frequent substitutions were now being made by both sides to rest tired legs. After a succession of corners Stewart Rogers latched on to a shot from 30 yards to level the score 2-2.

Plenty of action followed with the Kent keeper tipping a shot over the bar and Adam Marmale having a good game in the Kent midfield.

The winner came from a powerful shot from just inside the box by the great “Zaffa” to make the Score 3-2 to the Kent Section. In the end after a hard fought and thoroughly entertaining game the Kent team held on to win the game. Final Score Essex 2 v Kent 3.

After the match players and supporters enjoyed the hospitality in the Billy Bonds Lounge where Larry Pearman of Lely presented the Trophy to the winning Kent Team and Roger Lupton from Toro Irrigation awarded the Man of the Match Trophy to Ben Adams from the London Club.

Special thanks to Larry Pearman helped by Richard Freeman for making all the arrangements and organising the day so well. All commented on the immaculate condition of the pitch, after a long hard season. Hopefully this event will take place again next year with more Sections being involved.

Calculate your savings from the Ultimate Fairway Programme

Greenkeepers and golf club managers can now find out exactly how much money they could save on their course from taking advantage of the Primo Maxx Ultimate Fairway Programme. A new interactive calculator on the GreenCast website enables them to enter their current costs and routine of fairway mowing, and gives an instant answer on the cost savings.

A recent independent survey of fairways on a range of golf courses revealed the average area was 14 hectares - taking just under 11 hours for each cut. For courses cutting fairways three times a week, the use of Primo Maxx to eliminate one cut per week through the season would see a cost saving of over £3850 per year.

The calculation takes into account details of the individual club’s costs including mower operator and mechanic’s wages, machinery repairs, fuel and depreciation, along with their replacement policy for fairway mowers. Fuel costs at the time of the survey averaged 74p/litre, but a 20% rise in the intervening time will be equally as important as the cost savings. “Our survey identified that having their ball sit proud on a consistent fairway surface was the single most important factor that they want.”

Elmwood College, Cugar, Scotland, through a licence agreement with The Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC), is extending its greenkeeper training provision by embracing the latest eportfolio technology.

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Rick Bond, Head of Faculty, Golf, Land & Environment at the college says, “the eportfolio provision is already available for students studying for a management qualification and we see the new additions supporting learners such as apprentices and students across the world looking to be part of the Elmwood College Sports Turf Learning experience.”

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“We did notice a thicker surface was the single most important factor that they want.”

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There are exciting times ahead for London Golf Club as it announced recently, that, together with its joint venture partner, The European Tour, has submitted plans to local authorities for the construction of a new European Tour Performance Institute (ETPI) complete with driving range and an innovative 9-hole Academy course.

Alongside the existing 36-holes of championship golf and 130-bedroom 5-star hotel and spa, for which planning permission has already been granted, these significant developments encapsulate the club's vision of becoming a world-class destination primed for hosting major golfing events.

The state-of-the-art European Tour Performance Institute (ETPI) complete with a fully-covered driving range and inventive short-game facility, will be the first of its kind in the UK and promises to raise the bar in golf coaching and sports science.

Commenting on the significant developments on the horizon, London Golf Club's General Manager, Austen Gravestock said, “I firmly believe the new ETPI, Academy and 9-hole golf course will elevate our status on the International golfing arena.”

David MacLaren, Director of Property and Venue Development at The European Tour, added: “I am confident that the creation of a state of the art practice and learning facility at London Golf Club will be of great benefit to club members, visitors and the wider community.”

Designed to complement the club’s Heritage and International courses, that have both hosted high profile professional tournaments and events, including The European Open in 2008 & 2009 and Golf Live, the new 9-hole academy golf course will be located alongside the ETPI on the eastern side of South Ash Road.

With the plans now submitted to the local authority for their consideration, Jeremy Slessor, European Golf Design’s Managing Director, said: “It’s been a fascinating start to the project - combining the evolutionary approach to performance training of the ETPI with an Academy facility that will support, without replicating, the two existing courses at The London Club. Trying to marry the requirements of the European Tour with the need to provide a bespoke training course, concentrating on game improvement, has been challenging - but we feel confident that this is what we’ve achieved. Added to this has been the desire to restore the terrain from an open agricultural field to one with a diverse environment, supporting diverse habitats resulting in a richer ecological landscape.”

UK’s 1st European Tour Performance Institute with 9-Hole Academy Course

The Primo Maxx Ultimate Fairway Programme offers the unrivalled opportunity to enhance the condition of your course - and make big cost savings.

Speak to your local supplier or advisor for more information about this fantastic new offer.