The Jacobsen GP400 Diesel ride-on greens mower is full of brilliant ideas. To ensure superior turf conditions, our engineers included free-floating steerable cutting heads with Classic XP™ reels along with a complete Greens Management System including verticutters and groomers. To make the GP400 easy to use and maintain, they added a one-touch joystick for lift/mower, a swing-out centre reel, and onboard backlapping. Add some brilliance to your course with the GP400 ride-on greens mower from Jacobsen.
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Managing golf courses in the Arabian heat

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Chairman’s Word
National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

All roads lead to Muirfield

I was glued to the coverage of the US Open this month and was naturally delighted to see a British player claim the crown.

The moment I saw Justin Rose deservedly lifting the trophy, I realised that all eyes now turn to Muirfield for the next major and started to get excited about The Open.

Other than BTME, I feel The Open really is the year’s highlight for us and our best chance to showcase the Association as yet again dozens of our members from across the UK and the world have the unique opportunity to work on the Support Team.

I know from experience how valuable the Team’s work is and I’m sure that once again they will provide hugely professional, community support for the venue’s existing greening team.

It’s an extremely intense week, with some incredibly tired members around by the Sunday night, but it’s so rewarding on both a personal and professional basis. It’s these sort of opportunities that I’ve repeatedly mentioned as one of the huge benefits of BIGGA membership.

From my point of view, as well as getting involved with the Support Team, it’s my chance to meet countless other industry bodies, turf professionals and all manner of old friends and new faces who will be attending - I can’t wait.

It will also be a proud week for us as well as getting involved with the Support Team, it’s my chance to meet countless other industry bodies, turf professionals and all manner of old friends and new faces who will be attending - I can’t wait.

After 12 months in the role as Chairman I feel it’s the perfect time for me to reflect. It has been a busy time including the conclusion of a difficult restructure at HQ and the implementation of our Business Plan.

With the right team at BIGGA House now in place and our business affairs in a more robust state the Board has the opportunity to focus more on the long-term future of the Association, delivering better benefits to membership and really making the industry stronger for the next generation of greenkeepers.

The last few years have been a big challenge for the Association and whilst there are still some major issues for individual members, some of which are worsened by the volatility of both our climate and economy, we have laid the foundations for a more successful future and feel that we are on track towards our ultimate aim of becoming a must-join Association.

I know this is not the case for the whole of the UK, but generally I sense the weather is behaving itself with not only dry spells but also some of the sunshine that was so sadly lacking last year.

The courses that I’ve seen recently seem to have settled down – I can’t wait.

BTME aside, I feel The Open really is the year’s highlight for us, and our best chance to showcase the Association.

I’m sure he will continue to be a prominent and well-respected figure in the industry. Steve Mason, Course Manager at Stisko Golf Club in Hertfordshire, has taken his place on the Board and I know Steve will be able to bring similar enthusiasm and vigour to the role. I look forward to working with him.

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It will also be a proud week for me as it marks a year in my post as Chairman – which has flown by - and that newly brings me on to some news regarding the Association and myself.

The last few years have been a big challenge for the Association and whilst I know this is not the case for the whole of the UK, but generally I sense the weather is behaving itself with not only dry spells but also some of the sunshine that was so sadly lacking last year.

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You could argue it’s been six or seven years since the last summer worthy of the name.

Next month I hope to be reflecting on last time we were there in 2002 so I’m not remembering wet and blustery conditions the stunning links at Muirfield, although I remember wet and blustery conditions the last time we were there in 2002 so I’m not counting my chickens just yet!

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank Gary for his terrific contribution, energy and enthusiasm whilst on the Board and wish him all the very best for the future.

I am delighted to see a British player claim the crown this month and was naturally delighted to see a British player claim the crown.

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Contact details

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BIGGA SEMINARS AT SALTEX

BIGGA are staging a whole day of free education presentations at this year’s SALTEX (Sports Amenity & Landscape Trade Exhibition) at Windsor Racecourse – with CPD credits available for those attending.

The BIGGA Golf Education Day on Wednesday September 4 will appeal to greenkeepers at courses of every size and type and will focus on drainage, bunkers, composts and disease management.

The day will start with ‘Greens Drainage – Mission Possible’ presented by Andy Wood, Course Manager of Robin Hood Golf Club. He will outline a workable solution for transforming soil-based greens with deep thatch and black layer, highlighting the methods used to solve drainage problems on troublesome greens.

Stuart Yarwood MG, Course Manager of Lynnmouth Golf Club, will then discuss ‘Sand Traps troublesomme greens’. He will look at the high risk autumn and winter periods. BIGGA CEO, Jim Croston, said: “BIGGA is delighted to once again have the opportunity to work with our friends the IOG and bring top-class greenkeeper education to the SALTEX experience. I hope many of our members take the opportunity to attend the seminar programme.”

“BIGGA’s revamped CPD programme launches on July 1 so it is great that SALTEX provides the chance for our members to improve both their knowledge and their CPD profile. I hope many also take the chance to view the exhibition; the turf industry is a constant provider of innovation, and opportunities like SALTEX where new products and services can be seen at first hand are always a benefit.”

One BIGGA CPD credit is available for each seminar and a CPD register will be available at the end of each seminar. Visit www.iogsaltex.com for full details.

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The day will start with ‘Greens Drainage - Mission Possible’ presented by Andy Watson, Syngenta Turf and Landscape Technical Manager, points out how winter disease on golf greens is particularly problematic since there is little turf growth to allow recovery and for scars to heal.

This, he says, can impact the playability of greens right through to the spring period leading to dissatisfied golfers. Simon will highlight how an integrated approach to disease management can reduce the disease pressure, improve turf health and enhance the performance of fungicide applications.

New findings on disease management will also be presented along with practical advice on how to deliver smooth, disease-free greens right through the high risk autumn and winter periods.

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Chris Roars Off into Retirement

Keen motorcyclist Chris Mitchell has retired after working at Maidenhead Golf Club in Berkshire for 45 years.

Chris – currently a 13 handicap golfer – joined the club in 1968 as an apprentice greenkeeper, then moved on to assistant and first assistant before taking the Course Manager position ten years ago. The club has promoted two of Chris’s former colleagues with Barry Gardiner assuming the mantle of Course Manager and Mark Sweeney the new Deputy. Chris said “I’ve really appreciated the support of the club, the members and management in providing the resources to do the job to the best of my ability.”

He added that one of the highlights of his time at Maidenhead was when the members chipped together to pay for a much-needed full fairway irrigation system several years ago. Chris intends to lower his handicap in retirement as well as indulging his passion for motorcycling, and travelling with his wife Jane.

TORO Mower At the Hart Of Wedding

A greenkeeper at Newcastle-under-Lyme Golf Club is so attached to his Toro mower – he took it to his wedding.

Daren Hart tied the knot with sweetheart Stephanie on a glorious June day. He took the opportunity to be pictured with his Toro Greensmaster 1250, which was specially transported to the nearby wedding venue.

Jan Beath, Head Greenkeeper at the Club, attended the nuptials and confirmed a good time was had by all.

GREENKEEPERS VICTORIOUS

Ashley Wood Golf Club placed host recently to the 17th Annual Course Care Cup, this year with the secretaries keen for a win!

Good weather and a fine course ensured good golf with the day thoroughly enjoyed by all. Despite huge efforts the Secretaries could not prevail and the Greenkeepers took the trophy again, winning three matches to two. Thanks from all were extended to Highspeed Group Ltd for sponsoring the event.

Highspeed Group’s Area Manager Paul Dyter presented the trophy to Tony Gould, Chairman of BIGGA South Coast Section.

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Lely not only brings you Tom, Sol and Bee, but also YLM compact tractor, DeLaval water management systems, and Lely health, thanks, brushes and other outdoor maintenance equipment.
Jimmy Read (above left) has retired from his position of Head Greenkeeper at Huissanton Golf Club. Jimmy spent 37 successful years at the Championship links, 34 of which were as Head Greenkeeper. Jimmy’s son Peter is currently Acting Head Greenkeeper.

Club Secretary Bob Carrick said: “He has overseen many amateur competitions over the years and is proud to leave the course in superb condition.

He has seen great changes in the course as part of the recent development work masterminded by Martin Hawtree and Gordon Irvine. All members and staff wish Jimmy all the best for his retirement and we would like to thank him for his tireless work over the years.”

Ben Blampied-Smyth. Ben has used some spectacular pictures from the Head Greenkeeper at Royal Jersey Golf Club – Ben Blampied-Smyth. Ben has used some spectacular photography of the links course in tandem with pages of in-depth Greenkeeping information, all set out in a clean and attractive format.

Ben said: “As a fairly new Head Greenkeeper it’s allowed the members to get to know me professionally. It’s also been extremely helpful when I’ve changed maintenance practices to inform the members why I’m changing things and the benefits of these changes.

For the greenkeeping team as a whole it has hopefully allowed the members to start to know the team better. It’s massively improved communication to the members in terms of why certain procedures are necessary, which is involved in carrying out the procedure, timescales and potential inconvenience.

In my first year we had TPC Thomson Perrett A Lobb golf course architects do an audit of the course. My first winter program involved implementing some of these changes to the course which were fairly major. The blog became very important to a lot of members to keep them up to date with these changes and how they would improve the course long term.

This winter we also carried out changes to three holes, from the TPC proposal and started upgrading our irrigation system which is a massive investment for the course.

It is the mostly likely scenario. North America and Europe this winter was a very bad blight year due to a wet summer. The survival of the fungus was increased and the disease could be about to confirm the presence of sweet chestnut blight in these areas.

Given the ease of spread and speed of blight spread in the wider landscape. There is nothing ‘sweet’ about chestnut blight. It is a killer disease just like Chalara fraxinea, is a fast moving, spore-spreading fungal pathogen. A lot of golf courses have some sweet chestnut trees but those around the Sussex and Kent Weald often have large tracts of sweet chestnut coppice woods as important integral components of the course landscapes. There is nothing ‘sweet’ about chestnut blight. It is a killer disease just like Chalara ash dieback.

No news could be good news but tucked away in a recent Forestry Commission (FC) statement is “a trace-forward exercise has identified a small number of infected trees delivered to a further seven locations in England.” Never mind the ‘small’ numbers - one infected tree will produce thousands of spores!

Other utterings suggest FC could be about to confirm the disease is already in the wider environment. Given the ease and speed of blight spread in North America and Europe this is the most likely scenario. FC say are following their disease outbreak contingency plan and developing a strategy for a longer-term response.

Infected material planted in Warwickshire and East Sussex was sourced from the same nursery in France but FC continues to pressurise.

Sweet chestnut imports from EU countries are subject to plant passporting and since January 2013 are scrutinised by plant health inspectors.

However, FC admits a latent infection phase can still allow diseased plant stock to slip through.

If so, why have EU imports not been subject to a sufficiently long period of plant quarantine (observed isolation) before planting in UK soil, or better still banned just like all Castanea imports from non-EU countries? Even risking the importation of sweet chestnut infected with such a fast spreading and aggressive disease is mind boggling.

DEFRA has finally called for a ban on sweet chestnut imports from infected countries.

Environment Secretary Owen Paterson announced the intention at the government supported “Stop the Spreader” garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show. A six week consultation is underway with expectation of a ban before the autumn planting season, although EU regulations could still thwart these plans.

On past performance I can’t help thinking this sudden flurry of interest and activity in sweet chestnut blight is a softening up exercise and a prelude to the government announcing a ban is here to stay.

Dr Terry Mabbett