The huge economic impact of golf

Recently the results of a major study into the Economic Impact of golf in Great Britain & Ireland and across Europe were released (see page eight and the BIGGA website).

Sports Marketing Surveys carried out the study at the instigation of the PGA and with the support of many British and European bodies including both BIGGA and FEGGA. The conclusions show just how big an impact the sport of golf has on the economy producing a turnover of 15.1 billion euros across Europe and over £3 billion in GB&M alone.

The report encompasses all elements of golf-related revenue. It would be inappropriate to try and estimate just how big a proportion of the overall impact can be attributed to golf course maintenance but what is true is that golfers place huge value on the quality of playing conditions they are presented with. They are far more likely to play regularly when their course is well maintained and therefore more likely to add to the sport’s revenue. Equally, improvements in course management over the years have served to make golf in GB&M a 12 months of the year affair, which undoubtedly adds to the revenue it now generates.

The report demonstrates that golf is indeed big business and needs to be run accordingly, with due recognition of all the elements that go into making it successful.

In this month’s edition we carry an article from Today’s Golfer magazine (page 46) that attempts to give the general public some understanding of the work greenkeepers do. This is a really important area for the Association as it is clear that there are clubs out there where the relationship between golfer and greenkeeper is not ideal. Thanks to all the members who responded to the Today’s Golfer survey.

During the last month BIGGA has been represented at both the GCSAA’s Golf Industry Show in San Diego and FEGGA’s Annual Conference in Zurich. It is fascinating to compare notes with the many other Greenkeeper Associations around the world and discover that all face similar challenges. Delivering good value to members, effective member communication, building relationships with other golfing bodies and working with regulators, particularly with regard to chemical and water use, are all high on the agendas in boardrooms worldwide.

BIGGA certainly has a role to play in supporting some of the smaller and emerging Associations but can also learn from them as they tackle similar problems in different ways.

It was again a great pleasure to spend some time with the ten BIGGA members who made up the annual delegation to the Golf Industry Show through the generous sponsorship of Bernhard and Company (see page 30).

As usual they were a varied bunch in terms of age and greenkeeping experience but they all yelled extremely well and were a credit to themselves, their employers and the Association. I’d like to take this opportunity to formally thank Stephen Bernhard and his company for his long-term support of this fantastic member opportunity.

The ten delegates picked up contacts, expertise and knowledge from their trip to America which will help them significantly in their future careers.

The same can definitely be said for Jason Brooks of Torquay Golf Club who describes in detail in these pages the fantastic member opportunity he had this winter to spend time at TPC Scottsdale preparing for the world’s highest attended golf tournament – the Phoenix Open. Jason’s decision to take time out from his career in Devon to gain such an experience should be commended and will, I am sure, have a very positive impact on his career in greenkeeping.

Jim Croxtton, BIGGA CEO
We enjoy a hassle free income from our land.

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American dream

Mar Hall have brought EuroPro

MARCH 2013

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We find out how the team at Mar Hall have brought EuroPro

32 From the ashes
How an island club lost all their equipment in a blaze – and what happened next

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BIGGA member Jason Brooks takes us behind the scenes at TPC Scottsdale

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BILLY’S HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE RECOGNISED AT BTME 2013

In December’s GI (shown inset) we featured Alan Pike, Head Greenkeeper at Sutton Coldfield GC, who had marked 50 years of service at the club. Remarkably he’s not alone, as another terrific servant to the industry was honoured at BTME.

Billy’s good friend Brian Summers added: “I have known him for a good many years and we have grown old together; I wish him all the luck for the future.”

Billy Mitchell has worked at Perranporth Golf Club in Cornwall for half a century and this achievement was a highlight of the South West and South Wales ‘get-together’ in Harrogate. He’s been a key member of the BIGGA Devon and Cornwall section since its inception in 1977, and has been happy to remain in the background working away to help the section run smoothly.

He is well known in the BIGGA family and has made lots of friends through his many trips to Harrogate to visit BTME. He and his brother John, who has now retired from greenkeeping, were given Life Membership of the association for all the work they have done to promote BIGGA and the Devon and Cornwall section.

They have also been on the Open Support teams throughout the country and hugely enjoyed themselves assisting with the smooth running of the world famous tournament and also mingling with top professional golfers.

Billy is an assessor and helped set up the Duchy College training programme and remains very much involved with the assessing and education of trainees.

He’s also involved with the Links Forum for South Wales and the South West. The promoting of pure links golf is Billy’s passion and he will talk to anyone who is interested on the subject, giving them his knowledge he has gained after 50 years at one of the most unusual links golf courses in the country at Perranporth. He has no immediate plans to retire.

GREENKEEPING LEGENDS AWARDED LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Two hugely prominent members of the greenkeeping fraternity became the latest recipients of the coveted BIGGA Life Membership at the recent BTME show.

John Philip MBE (right) and Chris Kennedy (above left, with Walter Wood) were unanimously awarded the accolade - which less than 50 greenkeepers have ever received - at BIGGA’s AGM, joining an illustrious list.

John will forever be associated with his work at Carnoustie, where his tireless work brought the Open Championship back to the famous links. He even had the 11th hole on the Championship course named after him after 27 years of service.

Despite retiring last year he remains highly active in the industry and gave a fascinating presentation focusing on the history of the Open Championship and modern course performance guidelines during BIGGA’s educational programme at BTME.

Commenting on joining the likes of Walter Woods and Jack McMillan MBE on the roll-call of BIGGA Life Members, John said: “It’s a fantastic honour to receive such an accolade from your peers. I didn’t know anything about it until it happened at the AGM so it was quite unexpected. I’m sure a few people knew about it but they managed to keep it quiet!”

Chris Kennedy spent 22 years as Golf Courses Manager at Wentworth Club until his retirement last summer. During his tenure he was responsible for presenting the courses for a staggering 52 professional events, and renovated the West Course in partnership with Ernie Els.

He was also presented with Life Membership at BTME and is now looking to pass on half a century of industry knowledge in an advisory capacity.

He said: “I’m delighted that BIGGA feel I deserve this accolade. It was a very nice moment for both John and I to be awarded Life Membership and it means an awful lot to both of us.”

BIGGA Chairman Tony Smith said: “Both John and Chris have done wonders to raise the profile of greenkeeping through sheer excellence throughout their careers. They’ve also helped to inspire many young greenkeepers, many of whom have gone on to enjoy terrific careers themselves.

“The accolade of BIGGA Life Membership is only awarded to a select few, they are both hugely deserving of it and I congratulate them warmly.”

MERVIN DOWNING

We were saddened to hear of the death of Mervin Downing, former Head Greenkeeper at Alderham Golf & Country Club, earlier this year. Here’s a Peter Bojbjerg, Branch Manager at George Brown’s in Chesham, with a tribute to his great friend.

“Greenkeeping recently lost one of the good guys. I first met Mervin Downing 40 plus years ago one evening at Alderham for a meeting of the BIGGA London section.

“I remember we attended various educational seminars at the club – one by a young Jim McKenzie with a slideshow of improvements carried out at Wentworth Golf Club. Afterwards we would of course retire to the bar and the company was always convivial, with Brian Anderson, Martin Smith, John Edwards, Norman Edey, Jeremy Hill, Michael Peters, David Low, Don Wilson, Derek Mason, Alex Low, Mervin, Alan Moffat of Parkers, Dennis South of Rugby Taylor and many others. By the end of the evening I always seemed to be chaffing happily with Mervin. I was always comfortable in his company - a capable, hardworking man who understood the countryside, black and white and a cigarette and a chat. Mervin joined Alderham in 1987 and worked with Dave Knight and Graham Pooley under the direction of Head Greenkeeper Alan Low. Always cheerful, Mervin was good company.

“Mervin loved all aspects of shooting, vermin control on the golf course, pigeon shooting on the neighbouring farmland and on the pheasant shoot he set up. “When Alan Low retired in 1995 Mervin was promoted to Head Greenkeeper. In 2009 after 14 years in charge Mervin stepped down, and he continued as course mechanic. He was now able to spend more time with his wife Jenny, daughters Samantha and Melissa and grandchildren John, Molly and Fern. Sadly illness was to strike but Mervin endured the treatment with great stoicism. He passed away on 1 January 2013, and will be missed by all who knew him.”
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GOLF’S BILLION POUND IMPACT REVEALED

A new report supported by BBGAA has revealed that golf is worth over £1.5 billion annually to the economy of Great Britain and Ireland – and a staggering €15.1 billion throughout Europe.

It also reveals the sport is responsible for a combined 80,000 jobs in Great Britain and Ireland and generates employee wages in excess of £1.5 billion.

The report, commissioned by The Professional Golfers’ Association and supported by The European Professional Golfers’ Association, is a comprehensive report is of the economic impact and also in economic impact with eight European countries – Ireland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Belgium, France, Spain and Norway – representing a combined economic impact of €2,007 million per golfer throughout Europe, which is in line with the per golfer economic impact of €1,911 which is exemplified with the Ryder Cup, which is a significant role both in its economic impact and also in the golf industry. The Ryder Cup is enjoyed by several million people and provides nearly 80,000 jobs in Great Britain and Ireland alone. We are grateful to the PGA for leading on this project and all the other stakeholders whose contribution has helped produce this important study.

Key economic findings across the 27 European Union nations plus Norway and Switzerland, which represent a combined population of 510 million, show the sport is responsible for a minimum of 180,000 full-time jobs and employee wages of €4.4 billion.

Based on models employed by the Australian Golf Industry Council (2018) and Golf2020 in the USA (2011), the results show total expenditure per golfer throughout Europe of €9.111, which is in line with Australia’s (€8.917) and America’s (€2,007) golfing counterparts. While the well-documented economic downturn has hit popular European golf destinations such as Spain and Portugal, golf tourism still contributes €1.5 billion of the annual impact.

On the course, the strength of the game manages the economic impact with right men in the top 20 end of year world rankings and nine women in the top 50 of the Asian dominated standings. International team success is exemplified with the Ryder Cup, Solheim Cup, Walker Cup and Curtis Cup all residing this side of the Atlantic.

PGA chief executive Sandy Jones commented: “Golf plays a significant role both in its economic impact and also in delivering social, behavioural and sporting benefits with the PGA professional firmly at the centre of the golf industry. In addition golf is also a huge contributor to charitable causes in Europe and last year generated more than €85 million supporting a range of good causes.”

BBGAA chief executive Jim Croston added: “Such a comprehensive report is of great value to all stakeholders in the golf industry. The largely unseen work of BBGAA members is in managing and promoting the nation’s golf courses constitutes hugely to a sport that is enjoyed by several million people and provides nearly 80,000 jobs in Great Britain and Ireland alone. We are grateful to the PGA for leading on this project and all the other stakeholders whose contribution has helped produce this important study.”

There is no doubt that we have had an awful lot of rain recently and Warren Beanen, Course Manager of the historic Lancaster Golf Club is not a man to let the elements get the better of him. Following one of the wettest years on record, Warren has had a real challenge to keep the course looking and performing at its best.

He has met this challenge head on by tackling flooding on the greens with a grin determination. “We had to combat the sheer volume of rainfall that threatened to overwhelm the greens.” said Warren.

To complement his existing maintenance strategy, he requested delivery of an Imants Shockwave 155 from Campey Turf Care Product Specialist Ian Campbell. “I wanted to source a machine to tackle some deep seated compaction problems and encourage rapid dispersion of water in extremely adverse conditions.”

The worst case scenario would be to close the greens until the water subsides, but that’s not how we do things round here. When the course is closed it affects everything – loss of play, cancelled events, last revenue. We want play to remain unaffected by the weather conditions for as long as possible.”

The Imants Shockwave is a linear decompactor, designed to revitalise heavy wear areas by relieving soil compaction, improving aeration and removing surface water. The important feature for Warren is the working depth – up to 250mm. This is deep enough to penetrate the sub soil layer and allow the water to flow more effectively into existing drainage lines and slits.

Six of the greens have been treated with the Imants Shockwave as have a large number of the traffic routes as well. The effect on the 18th green is dramatic. He has met this challenge head on by tackling flooding on the greens with a grin determination. “We had to combat the sheer volume of rainfall that threatened to overwhelm the greens.” said Warren.

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MARRIOTT HOLLINS SIGN AGREEMENT WITH SHERRIFF

Sherriff Amenity is delighted to announce that an agreement has been reached with Ian Pullan (shown right), the Course Manager of Marriott Hollins Hall, to become their preferred supplier of turfgrass, fertiliser, and seed.

The agreement that has been reached will ensure that Marriott Hollins Hall benefit from our extensive product portfolio. However, this is only one aspect of the agreement. We firmly believe that it will play an increasingly important role in our industry and Ian will be able to benefit from the latest technology that Sherriff Amenity are able to provide to group customers. This, along with bespoke technical and product training for Ian’s staff makes this an exciting and innovative package for our group customers.

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Six of the greens have been treated with the Imants Shockwave as have a large number of the traffic routes as well. The effect on the 18th green has been dramatic. “I’m very impressed”, says Warren. “Following a sudden downpour we had standing water on the 18th green and to my surprise Ian agreed to operate the Shockwave in these extremely wet conditions.

Within 20 minutes of completing a single pass over the entire green, the puddles had gone. The green was playable within 15 minutes. On less affected greens play was back on in within 5 minutes.”
WHERE DO YOU READ GI?

Jack Davies, Greenkeeper at Five Lakes Hotel Golf & Country Club in Essex, posted this terrific picture on the BIGGA Message Board, showing him reading February’s GI on a boat!

Jack said: “After a spell of prolonged wet weather we now have a sixth lake lying on the fifth fairway. I thought I could read February’s magazine on the flood while we pumped it out – my boss was a bit sceptical of the plan though February’s magazine made a great read while I was on the water”.

In what unusual locations have you read GI? Send a picture to steve.castle@bigga.co.uk and we’ll print the best...

BOB’S BLOG

We're continuing to receive some excellent suggestions for blogs posed by greenkeepers across the land. The featured blog this month is Bob Meadie’s at Crail Golfing Society in Fife, Scotland.

Course Manager Bob has used the blog for three years, and it features regular updates, pictures of Bob and his team working on what is one of the oldest clubs in the world.

Encouragingly, it also features on the main website meaning members and visitors alike are able to discover exactly what the team are up to – and why they’re doing it.

Bob said: “I started it mainly to make our BIGGA section website more relevant and up to date. Barely a day goes by without a member mentioning to me that they’ve been looking at it, and a lot of the complaints we used to get have stopped because people know what’s happening. It helps them understand what we are trying to achieve on a regular basis by keeping them informed on what’s going on – everything from basic cutting and aeration to winter projects.

“Visitors to the blog also find it informative because we have particular issues at Crail, such as high tides damaging the course in spring and autumn depending on wind direction. It also helps them understand what we are trying to achieve on a regular basis by keeping them informed on what’s going on – everything from basic cutting and aeration to winter projects.

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Marathon Man plans to skin competition

On April 14 Greg Skinner, Head Greenkeeper at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, is running the Brighton Marathon.

He’s running in aid of Leukemia & Lymphoma Research in memory of a good friend named Paul Glimson who passed away in February 2012 aged 56.

Greg would welcome any donations to this extremely worthwhile cause as large or small – to donate and for further information please visit www.justgiving.com/Greg-Skinner1

Contact details

Worster, BIGGA’s 2010 Chairman, has completed a four-year term of office on the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to assist the BIGGA Board and has excellent credentials and experience to address the challenges faced by the many other Greenkeeper Associations across the continent and realise that they are so similar to those that we face in the UK.

Economic pressure, lack of awareness and appreciation of the profession, legislative/regulatory issues and environmental challenges were the repeated themes, clearly all Associations need to stand together to help the whole profession overcome them.

During the conference Paul worried about the need for American education, I believe that time has now passed and we’re on an equal footing with them.

One thing he said which stuck in my mind was “I wish I could bottle all this up and dish it out to all the young greenkeepers in the UK”.

Another highlight was the BIGGA Reception we held during the recent Annual Conference in the picturesque and bustling city of San Diego. It was successful and another success was the USA’s recent hosting of the BIGGA Annual Conference in San Diego.

I’m well aware that it’s been far from an ideal start to 2013 for us, there’s been a lot of planning and preparation to get our new website up and running. However, spring is finally just around the corner so let’s hope it improves, there’s more snow and we get the dry spell we so badly need.

A frantic and fruitful February

It’s been a whirlwind few weeks for me – as soon as I returned from BTME I was making preparations to attend the Golf Industry Show in San Diego.

As well as the exhibition itself, which impressed me greatly with its size, scale and the range of exhibitors on display, I dipped into a few of the educational seminars.

If there was a time when we were playing catch up with American education, I believe that time has passed and we’re now on an equal footing with them.

Education is taken extremely seriously on both sides of the Atlantic – it’s great to see, and it’s about time.

The International Briefing I attended during the Show was invaluable, particularly as I’m now lucky enough to look at it from a Chairman’s perspective.

I quickly got the impression that we’re not alone with our problems in the UK – various Associations from all corners of the world share similar challenges regarding to the economy and also retaining and increasing membership.

We made plans to host an international gathering during BTME 2014, which is a really exciting opportunity.

I also attended meetings with the American and Australian Associations and also with GEO over environmental issues – in particular we focused on our sustainability projects and also with GEO over environmental issues – in particular we focused on our sustainability projects.

We will hopefully see real long-term progress as a result of these meetings.

I also spent a lot of time with the BIGGA Delegation sponsored by Bernhard and Company, and they were equally enthusiastic about the week.

They represented a really good cross-section of our membership with a diverse mix of Course Managers, Deputies and Assistants and I know they got a lot from the week.

There was a particularly good mix of ages and characters and I know this experience will stand them in good stead as they progress in their careers.

The delegation were taken round the fabulous Torrey Pines and La Costa courses and said it was unbelievable – another world.

One major difference was, of course, the weather – their winter is similar to our summer! I was also fortunate enough to see these courses and they were truly stunning.

If there was a time when we were playing catch-up with American education, I believe that time has now passed and we’re on an equal footing with them.