Nothing is more powerful than the all-new seven-gang AR722™ contour rotary mower from Jacobsen. With a massive 48.6 kW (65.2 horsepower) Kubota® turbo-charged diesel engine, the AR722T powers its ultra-productive 3.15 metre (124-inch) width-of-cut without slowing down.

The AR722T glides over ground contours and climbs hills with ease – thanks to the exclusive SureTrac™ four-wheel drive traction and weight transfer control. See for yourself why the powerful and productive Jacobsen AR722T contour mower is at the head of its class – call your local Jacobsen dealer today.

Memories are made of this

As my body and voice recover from a truly hectic BTME 2014 I believe we can look back with considerable satisfaction on a job well done.

Many exhibitors are calling BTME 2014 the ‘best ever’ but just as importantly feedback from attendees is hugely positive. Record pre-registration numbers, nearly 9,000 total attendees and a record number of delegates at the Continue to Learn programme show that the Exhibition is still a vital part of the turf industry calendar.

The memories are many but our inaugural BIGGA Welcome Celebration held in the historic Royal Hall is uppermost among them, and I hope this is something we can repeat in future years. The evening began with a bang when Alan Prickett of Ransomes Jacobsen donated a very generous £2,500 to the BIGGA Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund. It concluded with the legendary Peter Alliss regaling the several hundred attendees with his ‘special connection’ with greenkeeping during his epic career. The launch of the Benevolent Fund fulfilled a long ambition for the Association and I am thrilled that we are now in a position to support those members that fall upon hard times.

It was also great to launch our new online member benefit offering – BIGGA Xtra Benefits – which aims to give our members even further value for money from their membership.

The Celebration event was the ideal occasion to pay tribute to the tireless work Tony Smith undertook in his 18 months as Chairman, it has been a privilege to witness his passion for greenkeeping and the Association.

Whilst I know he intends to remain active on the Board I am still delighted to be able to wish him well in his ‘retirement’.

I am thoroughly looking forward to working with the new Chairman Chris Sealey through 2014 as the Association continues in its ambitions to raise the profile and appreciation of greenkeeping.
WELCOME FROM BIGGA

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Sadly the roaring success of BTME did come at a price. A number of companies attempted to hijack the event and profit from the gathering of turf industry professionals without formally exhibiting. I am pleased to say that increasingly the visitor is recognising that such behaviour undermines the event and all it stands for.

My thanks go to the 123 exhibiting companies who committed to be a part of BTME in 2014. Thanks are also due to all those who delivered education during the Continue to Learn programme, including many BIGGA members.

Away from BTME, 2014 has begun with monsoon conditions affecting large parts of the country.

Strong and innovative forward planning has never been more vital, on pages 56-60 read how Philip Taylor at Ashbydene has combined two detailed five year plans to ensure this gem of a course remains one of England’s finest inland courses.

Enjoy the read.

FOR A LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE ON YOUR COURSE, CALL 01473 270000

WILL THE MOWER WITH THE MOST POWER IN ITS CLASS... PLEASE RAISE YOUR ARM

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THE MOWER WITH GI AR722 A4 ad with finance flash.indd   1
Lone working controlling the risk

Firstly let’s be clear about a lone worker. This is a worker who works without the presence of another person, even though others may be close or direct supervision, there can be little doubt that this is a far more acute due to the simple fact that if something goes wrong, the operator is likely to be supervised.

There can be little doubt that there may be a raised awareness where there are more acute dangers or, for potentially dangerous complex tasks (such as mowing steep slopes, or tasks in confined areas), the law does require employers to carry out a risk assessment to workers in the construction industry.

What lessons can we learn? What can be done to reduce the risks where necessary. The answer lies primarily in ‘Toolbox talks’ (more familiar perhaps with less experience (and while potentially dangerous complex tasks), the older, more experienced hands should be initiating controls. The older, more experienced hands should be initiating the conversation and observing the place of work.

In this context it is not a written statement or a list of instructions that everyone involved is kept fully aware of what the raised risks and obligations are. It’s more a systematic, strategic and dynamic process and should be used to assess risk as they carry out tasks.

Emergency procedures are critically important if there is a need arise. Emergency procedures but also the means by which assistance is summoned should the emergency services not be contactable. Supervisors periodically visiting, monitoring arrangements are a vital part of the emergency procedure. The main vehicle for this is the site Safety Policy. The means by which assistance is summoned should the emergency services not be contactable, which must accompany the Health & Safety Policy.

The person placing the call not only has to dial the appropriate number (the phone number of the emergency services). Once an accident has occurred, they automatically become under a statutory duty, avoiding using machinery they will be supervised.

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BIGGA’s new Chairman was typically candid when I asked him if, as a teenage apprentice greenkeeper at a parkland course near Bath in the seventies, he ever envisaged becoming an Association Chairman.

“I never dreamt I would. I was on the South West Section committee, then a vacancy came up on the Regional Board, then I was asked to be Regional Chairman, then a vacancy came up on the National Board when Jeff Mills left as South West & South Wales representative.

“I always thought that would be as far as I would go, just getting on to the National Board and representing the Region was a great honour, and I was happy to be involved with decision making and the future of the Association.

“Then Tony asked me to be Chairman. I don’t like the word gobsmacked, but I can’t think of any other way to put it, and I was also really touched to be asked.

“I never set out with the goal of being Chairman.”

He officially took the reins during BIGGA’s AGM at BTME.

He said: “Undoubtedly the highlight of my career is being asked to be chairman. It’s a fabulous honour and I look forward to representing the Association with distinction.”

BIGGA has given me so many chances to develop myself professionally and personally.

“I wouldn’t otherwise have had these opportunities and I think that’s a very important message for anyone thinking of joining the Association, or any members who have not yet made the most of their membership.

“I’ve volunteered at the 2007 US Open at Oakmont Country Club, the 2004 Ryder Cup at Valdahon, the 2010 Ryder Cup at Celtic Manor and five Open Championships.

“The main thing I’m looking forward to during my time as Chairman is simple – meeting people.

“All the other things you get to do are lovely, but the people are the biggest strength of the Association.

“The support network amongst greenkeepers is superb and there can’t be many industries where relationships are so strong and enduring.”

Chris Sealey became the new Association Chairman at BTME 2014. Steve Castle met Chris to find out about his greenkeeping philosophy, the major construction project he’s overseen at Chippenham Golf Club and his love of Bristol Rovers FC.
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**New BIGGA Chairman**

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in the Association was playing in golf days organised by BIGGA in the eighties. But he then recognised the need to increase his range of skills so he enrolled on the first Management courses which BIGGA ran at Aldwark Manor adjacent to what is now BIGGA House - just as his predecessor Tony Smith did.

He said: “When I became a Course Manager I knew I needed some extra skills in addition to those I’d already gained as a Deputy so I completed four or five of the week-long management courses and that was useful for me.

It was the first real formal education on offer to greenkeepers and I knew I had to take advantage of it.”

He then joined the South West committee around 1995 before becoming Section Chairman.

I travelled south to see for myself the work that Chris and his team have put in at Chippenham - a Wiltshire town which lies between Swindon and Bristol - and discovered a frenzy of activity probably unparalleled in the club’s history.

Firstly, a new clubhouse with much improved facilities and extended offices opened in December 2012.

Next, it was decided that time had caught up with the course. Although various modifications and improvements had been made to the course over the years, it was now too short for the modern day game. It is currently 5,720 yards off the white tees, and after the alterations it will be close to 6,300 off the whites.

Chris explained: “We did a deal with a local farmer to rent land at the back of the course which will house four new holes, and we’re combining four of the existing holes to get the clay push up greens and try to manage them as poa greens; they will always have poa in them so I can throw a spanner in the works.

Chris enjoys excellent rapport with members on any subject.

The weather is still posing problems – Chippenham had 70mm of rainfall in the first six days of 2014 - but Chris is convinced they are on track for the new holes to be in play in early summer.

So what’s his agronomic philosophy?

“Conservative, lean and mean”, he replied. “I don’t overwater or overseed. I do as much aeration and topdressing as I possibly can, but I don’t take it to the degree of starving the green and trying to get it brown.

“We’ve on a clay site, the greens will always have poa in them so I manage them as poa greens, they are a poa/bent mix.

“The clay greens have still got a lot of poa in them at the moment. So the biggest challenge now is to get the clay push up greens and the new sand greens to perform as close to each other as we possibly can.

It was clear from the banter in the car park I saw at Chippenham that Chris enjoys excellent rapport with the members, and one of his initiatives was the Greenkeepers’ Revenge charity day.

In a format which will be recognised by anyone who has played, the team deliberately used a range of tricks to make the course devilishly difficult.

They rolled some of the greens ten times achieving up to 19 on the stimpmeter, cut holes on collars so members had to put off the green and placed two markers behind trees amongst other fiendish plots.

It was all in aid of Help for Heroes and £1,000 was raised, as Chris said: “There were some interesting scores!”

He lives with Pat, his partner of some 20 years. In his spare time he follows the usually grim fortunes of Bristol Rovers F.C. (which he described as his “main handicap”) and he’s also very keen on playing and watching golf.

Another of his passions is cricket, and he’s recently been trying (and failing to) dodge abuse over England’s dismal Ashes showing.

He laughed: “I’m surrounded by Aussies.

“Gary Goodchild at Bowood just sat there grinning through the last Section meeting, and our General Manager at Chippenham Leighton Walker has been giving me plenty of stick too.”

A hugely successful BTME 2014 has certainly got Chris’s period as Association Chairman Off to a flying start. He concluded: “BIGGA is going from strength to strength and this was evident at BTME, I am greatly looking forward to the next 12 months.”

Contact Chris

Chris Sealey can be reached on chris@chippenhamgolf.co.uk or call him on 07817 294632.

He was watered by Nick Bell, Steve Randall, Marissa Cavilla, Chris Staley and the entire team.

Chris is keen to hear from members on any subject.

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The new section of the course under construction last summer

Contact Chris

Chris is keen to hear from members and welcomes queries or suggestions on any aspect of the club either through the course manager, by phone (07817 294632) or email (chippenhamgolfcoursemanager@gmail.com) or visit www.chippenhamgolf.co.uk and contact Chris Sealey at chippenhamgolfcoursemanager@gmail.com or call him 07817 294632. 

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NEW BIGGA CHAIRMAN

Leighton Walker, General Manager at Chippenham, had this to say following Chris’s appointment: “Chippenham Golf Club and its members are extremely proud that Chris Sealey will be the Chairman of BIGGA in 2014. It’s a great honour for Chris and I know the members will be congratulating him. It’s fair reward for the hard work and commitment that Chris has shown to both the Club and the industry as a whole and we’re sure he will make a success of his time in office.”

Team photo credit to More4’s Kyle Knight. See Leighton, Chris Sealey, Chris and Leighton’s website.
BIIGGA is again offering a superb opportunity to increase your experience by volunteering at the BMW PGA Championship at Wentworth in May, assisting Kenny MacKay and the home greenkeeping team between May 20-25.

You can volunteer for one day or for the full period. The schedule will involve bunker raking duties on the last two days, possibly all four days, and early morning duties on the official Practice and Pro-Am Days on May 20 and May 21.

This is a great chance to see at first hand the preparation for the European Tour flagship event on the West Course at Wentworth.

For more information please contact Clive Osgood, South East Regional Administrator cliveosgood@yahoo.co.uk, also on 07941 948410 or 01737 819143.

TRIBUTE TO DOUGIE JOHNSTONE

Tributes are continuing to be paid to Dougie Johnstone, Course Manager at Hinchley Golf Club, who was tragically killed in an accident on his course just after Christmas.

It is believed he was working on his course alone on Friday 27 December clearing storm damage when he was hit by a falling branch.

Chris Kennedy, who retired as Director and Golf Courses Manager at Wentworth in 2011, recalled Dougie in 2008 as assistant greenskeeper and was planning to meet up with him at HTME 2014 along with many other past and present Wentworth team members.

Chris said: “Dougie was a very hard working man, totally committed and keen to learn. He was enthusiastic, asked questions and was also very good with the members. If they stopped him while he was working to discuss the course he was only too happy to explain what was going on.

“He was also a very good golfer and practised regularly. He was a good people person, a great lad and important team member. We were sad to lose his services in 2011 but very happy for him that his career was progressing and he had secured his first Course Manager position at Hinchley.

“On behalf of everyone who knew him at Wentworth, we’d like to say that it was an absolute pleasure working with him. He will be sadly missed and we were all thinking about him and his family a lot during our traditional meeting at HTME.”

Chris added that Dougie’s wife Sue was a key figure in the Variety Club’s Golf Society, and Dougie had played in several tournaments with well-known colleagues.

An inquest has opened into Dougie’s death. Initial investigations revealed he had suffered a large head wound, and was discovered early on the morning of Saturday 28 December close to where he had been working. A full investigation is underway and safety probe has been launched and a full inquest will be held at a later date.

SCOTTISH CONFERENCE

The Scottish Conference will be held on 4 March at the Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

Gordon Moir and Paul Miller will be providing a talk on the “Story of Kingcuproc”, a course in Fife.

Alistair Ecclis will then pose a question for delegates to ponder “to oversow or not to oversow”.

We are delighted that Cameron McMillan will be coming up for the day to dislodge the mystery surrounding Queenwood Golf Club in Surrey.

During lunch, Stuart Green from BIIGGA’s L&D Team will be available to discuss CPD and to provide a presentation to members extolling the virtue of full participation in the scheme.

After lunch our chairman Andy O’Hara will provide his address that this year’s theme is “Chairman’s view”.

Chris Stealey, National Chairman, providing his thoughts.

Mark Hunt will then take us through a number of factors that are affecting course maintenance with a distinctive look at changes to our climate, something that may affect your course!

Finally, we have Steve Chappell from Glen Eagles providing us with a background on the preparation of The Ryder Cup 2014.

The CPD credits are available to anyone attending the conference further details are available from the BIIGGA website, including the booking form.

Alternatively email John Young john@bigga.co.uk