

The countdown has begun to the final of the ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year

To be the BEST

In casting my thoughts back over the past three years of writing about ICI Professional Products – of the individual personalities who essentially are the company – and of their association with BIGGA, it occurs to me that a huge debt of gratitude remains outstanding to this most supportive of BIGGA's sponsors. It's the sort of debt that cannot easily, if ever, be repaid, though in truth the team at ICI Professional Products would, I fancy, never look on their commitment in such calculating fashion.

I'm prepared to bet that they gain their greatest satisfaction in seeing the fruits of their fabulous promotions: the National Golf Tournament, involvement in education programmes, and this, the incredible ICI Premier Greenkeeper of the Year award, as reward enough when witnessing the great fillip they have given to previous winning greenkeepers, for to win this coveted award is almost assuredly a huge step forward career-wise, whilst for finalists also it is a decided 'feather in the cap.'

Winning has changed several careers for the better, and without again naming names, their successes actually reflect success for BIGGA also, for the kudos gained has a delightful habit of rubbing off on almost every thinking greenkeeper, giving them enormous pride in their profession.

There can be only one winner in December, a proud fellow who will strut forward to receive the ultimate accolade from ICI Professional Products – and the admiration of his peers. That stated, give a silent cheer or three for ICI Professional Products, including Roger Mossop, Dave Siddon, touring 'pro', Richard Minton, and all the guys who call on you year round. They, above all, have your greenkeeping interests at heart.

DAVID WHITE



**Professional
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TERRY HUNTLEY



Terry Huntley, course manager at Ashford Manor Golf Club in Middlesex, is well versed in the preparation of arena's for top sporting occasions, having worked on turfgrass surfaces that have graced two Tournament Players Championships, a Ladies British Open Championship, and no less than six PGA Tour School events.

In order to appreciate Terry's greenkeeping pedigree, I must begin by speaking of young Terry's first bleeding as a trainee in 1973. This was at Fulwell, Bill Cox's old stamping ground, where Terry spent the seemingly obligatory 'two years before the mast,' before grabbing the chance to join the newly opened Foxhills Country Club as an assistant greenkeeper.

Around this time Terry gained his NTC in Sportsturf Management from the IoG. Promotion followed fairly quickly, and at the tender age of 21 Terry was made a deputy course manager, responsible for two 18 hole courses and a dozen staff. This, as one may imagine, helped him immensely in building up essential management skills, and it was at Foxhills that the aforementioned championship skills and experiences were honed to a fine level.

In 1985 Terry took the post of head greenkeeper at Laleham Golf Club in Surrey, enjoying three happy years there before moving to his current position.

Terry, 36 this month, is married to Christine and they have a son, Christopher. Terry holds his current job in high esteem and is proud to be what he describes as a high-profile member of the BIGGA Surrey section.

LAUGHLAN MILLAR



Down in the West Country, the Millar name is synonymous with greenkeeping of an extremely high order, with 31 year old Laughlan the third generation of a family well versed in the art of turfgrass management. Laughlan's grandfather was of the old breed, a greenkeeper cum professional in Scotland, where they've always known a 'thing or two' about 'gowf' and about growing grass and tending to the finer points of razor keen putting surfaces.

Laughlan's father also has always been a greenkeeper, without question one of the West's finest, and to this day he masterminds the majestic linksland of Burnham and Berrow. It may be written with some certainty that Laughlan himself was practically weaned on Dunlop 65's, his first real 'toy' no doubt a cut down jigger!

Laughlan is 31, married to Diane, and is the head greenkeeper at Dawlish Warren, Devon, a post he's held for nearly five years. Previously at Hartsbourne Country Club as an assistant course manager, earlier still as an assistant to Laughlan senior at Burnham and Berrow for seven years,

Laughlan is both a skilled practitioner and a fine theorist.

He's a graduate from Cannington College with City & Guilds to his credit, plus AEI in Biology, Greenkeeping Principles, Practice of Horticulture and Greenkeeping, and Horticultural Machinery – in fact he's a well-rounded character with a pedigree of which he may be proud.

TONY MEARS



Tony's greenkeeping career really started before he left school, for he was a junior member at Darlington Golf Club, forever eager to help the staff whenever the opportunity arose. At weekends, during long summer holidays, he would always jump at the chance.

It naturally followed that on leaving school and being offered an apprenticeship, he was overjoyed and has never regretted biting the bullet on that early boyhood ambition – to be a highly skilled exponent of the turfgrass art.

A brief spell as assistant at Billingham Golf Club was followed by a dream come true, the offer of course management at the Dinsdale Spa Golf Club.

Tony has been manager of Dinsdale Spa for some 13 years now, proud of its one hundred acres of parkland, inspired by its undoubted qualities, and eager no doubt to ensure that come 2010, when the club celebrates its centenary, it'll be seen as a credit to his management and his empathy for the wildlife environment.

Dinsdale has seen many changes under Tony's direction, some of them quite major and including the complete refurbishment of every bunker, the enlargement of many tees, and the construction of two new greens and two large ponds. It is Tony's avowed aim to encourage wildlife on the golf course.

Tony is a graduate of Durham Agricultural College, holding a C&G Distinction in Greenkeeping, and he's always been an upholder of the education process, attending many of the BIGGA workshops and seminars. He presented a fascinating paper at the National Education Conference this year on 'Golf on the Wild Side.'

Married to Jean, with a son, Peter, and daughter, Jessica, Tony's leisure time is well wrapped up with his family, though he still finds time to golf, playing to a nine handicap.

GRAHAM WOOD



If the reader really wants to know how fine a head greenkeeper Graham Wood really is, he need do no more than play a round on the East Links of Dunbar, a dual creation credited first to Old Tom Morris, always to Mother Nature... and, for the past 20 years, especially to Graham Wood!

Graham is 42 years old, married to Helen, and has two teenage offspring (his

son Paul is also a budding greenkeeper, having recently taken an apprenticeship at Winterfield). Furthermore, he's a native of East Lothian – and there is no finer pedigree than that.

Graham began his career at Dunbar, serving a three year apprenticeship under the late Bill Paton, followed by four further years as a journeyman before making a move to nearby Monkton Hall, Musselburgh, as their head greenkeeper. Three years later the lure of Dunbar beckoned again and Graham, forever a master of his craft, landed the plum job of managing Dunbar's fabulous course.

The making of a great greenkeeper comes in many guises, and there's no disguising the fact that being an East Lothian greenkeeper counts for a great deal and Graham is justly proud in pointing to Dunbar (and, let it also be known, down also to his own considerable skills in imparting knowledge) as a breeding ground for future managers. The club encourages and is proud of their record, whilst there's many a young greenkeeper who, having cut their teeth at Dunbar, will give full credit to Graham – an Elmwood College graduate – for setting them on the right road to greenkeeping fame.

GORDON IRVINE MGC



Gordon Irvine, 27, is the youngest yet to achieve MGC status, and the third Scot to be so honoured. Though still the youngster, Gordon has ten solid years of experience behind him, culled mainly on the links of Turnberry.

Joining Turnberry from school, his first assignment was on a Job Creation Scheme, swiftly followed by his being hired as a trainee greenkeeper, a fortunate decision for both parties.

Fortunate again, Gordon was sent to Langside College, where he studied Greenkeeping Management and won the coveted title: 'Young Scottish Greenkeeper of the Year'. It is his proud claim that whilst at Langside he received training from some of the finest course managers in the country, while also working with a team of 'highly skilled greenkeepers'. Seven happy years were spent at Turnberry, preparing the course that plays host to The Open, this acknowledged as a huge bonus in his learning curve.

The time came, however, when Gordon was ready 'to put back into greenkeeping all that I had been trained and educated to achieve.' Gordon landed a job at Surrey's new Mill Ride Golf Club, where in 1989 he came as clerk of works, now its course manager. His fortune continued during construction in being teamed with the triumvirate: architect Donald Steel, agronomist Jim Arthur and constructor Brian Pierson – who encouraged his input and responded favourably to his many ideas. Opening the project well ahead of schedule, the course has deservedly received huge praise.