

# Environment winners score double success in major competitions

Having been announced winner of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and Rhône Poulenc Amenity, last month Hankley Common Golf Club received its award at a function hosted by the Surrey Club this month.

The occasion was a personal triumph for Course Manager, Ian McMillan, for whom it was the conclusion of an amazing double, having been named winner of the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping only a short time earlier – see Pages 38-42.

The day was an opportunity for Hankley to be presented with its magnificent piece of glassware and show what it had done to achieve the award. Among the guests were representatives for three of the four Regional winners – Linlithgow GC, Temple GC, Burnham and Berrow GC. The only absentee being Royal Birkdale, who sent their apologies.

Unfortunately the weather was not kind and the planned course walk had to be abandoned but the excellent clubhouse facilities were ideal for the presentations and question and answer session which replaced the walk.

Club Captain, Mike Hunt, welcomed the assembled gathering and expressed his pride in what the golf club had achieved in Hankley Common's centenary year. He was followed by BIGGA's National Chairman, Pat Murphy, who said how delighted the Association was with the response to the competition and the enthusiasm of all

Disciples of Hankley Common may have been wracking their brains working out which hole provided the cover shot for last month's magazine. The fact is that it is the 18th... but in reverse. Unfortunately during the printing process the excellent Bob Taylor slide was flipped over and slipped through the various checks and balances which are in place. We would like to apologise to Course Manager, Ian McMillan, and the members and officials of Hankley Common Golf Club for any embarrassment caused by the error.



Top: Members of Hankley Common with Ian McMillan, winners of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, held in association with Amazone Ground Care and Rhône Poulenc Amenity. Above, four of the winners with the sponsors

those who had taken part.

The two main judges, Bob Taylor from the STRI and Dr Keith Duff, Chief Scientist for English Nature, then gave talks on the rich seams of flora and fauna they had discovered on Britain's golf courses as well as the quality of conservation work which was being carried out.

Dr Duff explained that he was an extremely rare species – a nature conservationist who was also a golfer.

"Golf clubs should be applauded for doing so much on their courses. It is great for golf and great for the environment as well. I also applaud what BIGGA has done with this competition.

Following the judges Rod Baker, of Amazone Ground Care, whose had originally launched the competition in 1995 talked of his delight at how it had progressed over three years.

"If I had thought when I dreamt up this competition that by 1997 English Nature would be on board I would have been thrilled to bits... and I'm thrilled to bits," he said.

"I know Ian McMillan was dis-

appointed at being runner-up in the first year but they have come back and won this year and the club deserves it.

"We are committed to supporting this competition in '98 and committed to helping BIGGA in any way we can to make it grow."

Jonathan Hill, of Rhône Poulenc Amenity, said that he hoped the competition would continue to grow.

He then explained the rationale about a chemical company being involved in the competition.

"Careful use of our products goes hand in hand with conservation and protecting the environment. Pesticides can be plant medicine," he said.

Ian McMillan then gave a slide presentation showing the work that had been done at Hankley since his arrival and illustrated the extent of loss of heathland in the Surrey area.

Ian was presented with the crystal bowl and a cheque for £5000 to assist the club in its environmental endeavours.

## FLYING DIVOTS

■ A new Internet site catering for everyone in the fine turf industry has been launched by Golfex.

The site has four main sections. 1. A Virtual Exhibition in which suppliers of products, services and educational courses have stands, each with a profile page, a page setting out products, services etc and an enquiry page for visitors to the site to send mail. 2. A Virtual Conference Hall in which it is possible to hold the on-line equivalent of a full-scale conference with papers, speakers, delegates. 3. A Library which will become a prime source of information for professionals and students. 4. A Catch-all area called the clubhouse which contains various rooms and notice boards.

Golfex will be on stand G18 at BTME to demonstrate the site and further information can be obtained from Charles Ollerenshaw. Tel: 01565 633667 e-mail: golfex@golfex.com

■ All STRI Training Courses are now BASIS approved and qualify for Continuing Professional Development Points (CPD) under the BASIS Professional Register. Fifteen points are available for both STRI five day residential courses – The General Turf Culture Course and the Turf Culture Course for Golf.

■ Ross Wilson, formerly Deputy at Newbury & Crookham Golf Club, has taken over as Course Manager at Donnington Grove Golf Club. He replaces Master Greenkeeper, David Winterton, who has moved to Maidenhead Golf Club.

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# Jacobsen's parent company set to buy Ransomes

Two of the biggest names in fine turf machinery will come under the same ownership if a recommendation to shareholders by the board of Ransomes plc to accept a bid of £137.1 million for the company from American giant Textron is accepted.

Textron already owns Jacobsen.

The sale, which is expected to be ratified by shareholders, comes at the end of an extended period of speculation regarding the Ransomes, Cushman, Ryan, during which time the rumour mill had linked them to a number of other companies.

Ransomes' Chief Executive Peter Wilson said that he didn't expect the sale to be completed until the end of the year at the earliest.

On the future of Ransomes he said it was early days but it was his understanding that the com-

pany would continue to operate alongside Jacobsen.

"Textron has stated that we shall become a part of a \$800 million group with others including Jacobsen and E-Z-GO," he explained, from Ransomes' Ipswich base.

On the matter of another well known British company being sold abroad he was a realist.

"There is more to a company than who is the owner and whether it is British or American but it is important to have the security of having someone who is a UK based supplier of the product.

"Up against huge companies which are well financed and extremely diverse it was thought better for Ransomes to join with a

bigger player rather than risk the economic vagaries of going it alone. We have to consider the shareholders and our employees," he explained

Mary Lovejoy, Textron's Vice President of Communications and Investor Relations, based in Providence, Rhode Island, said the acquisition of Ransomes would be a great addition to the Textron group of companies, which already includes Cessna aircraft and Bell helicopter companies as well as E-Z-GO, Iseki and Jacobsen.

"We feel that there are a great many products within the ranges of Jacobsen and Ransomes which are complementary. Ransomes offers a great deal in the commercial market, not just the fine turf

market, which will strengthen our position.

"The fact that Ransomes offers a manufacturing base which we do not currently have in the UK will give us much greater flexibility and we will be looking at the options that brings us. Importing product is extremely expensive," she explained.

She added that brand name was important to Textron and that the Ransomes name, which has a strong reputation and links with some prestigious venues including Gleneagles, St Andrews and Pebble Beach.

"Obviously as the deal has not been completed it is too early to speculate on how Ransomes' name would be incorporated into any new company title."

One of the great figures of British greenkeeping retires at the end of the year.

Bill Lawson, Course Manager at Heswall GC since 1965, and a former Chairman of EIGGA, Vice Chairman of BIGGA and latterly a Trustee of the Association, has been instrumental in the rise of greenkeeping to the stage that it is the respected profession it is today.

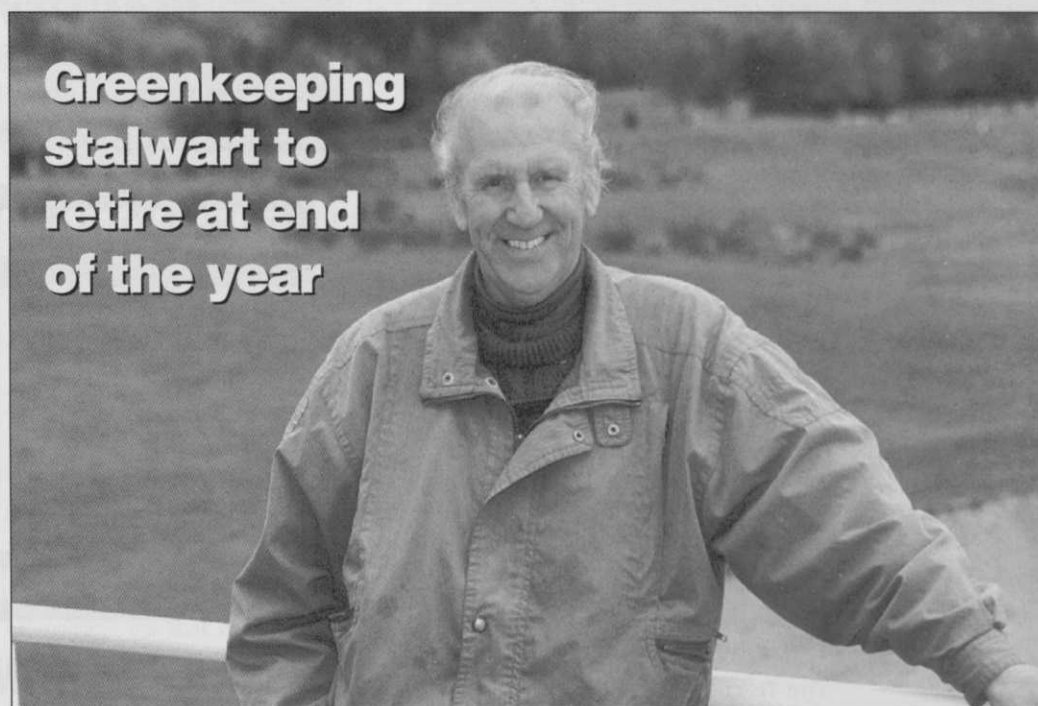
In the '70s and early '80s Bill was at the heart of discussions between Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers on how greenkeeper education should progress.

"The sound nature of those discussions backed by forward thinking golf clubs like Heswall have proved to be right," said Bill, who worked closely with Reaseheath College.

Bill is quick to pay tribute to his own golf club which has had only one Chairman of Green in the last 18 years: "It has been a privilege to work with Dr Frank Harkin who has been so forward thinking in working along with me in setting up the working and training programmes at Heswall. The emphasis is on working on five year programmes with Head Greenkeepers or Course Managers and Chairman of Green who will be there throughout."

A measure of that is the number of people who have moved on to top jobs from Heswall.

Among them, Raymond Hunt, from Forest of Arden; Marc Lewis, PGA European Tour; Kevin Roe, Pannal; Paul Pearce, Stockport; Norman Pearce, Lobenfeld Heidelberg; Ian Farrall, Caldly; Nick



## Greenkeeping stalwart to retire at end of the year

Bower Hoylake; Neil Toner, Wirral Ladies, Reg Sommers, Head Groundsman at Liverpool FC and Guy Cannings, the new Course Manager at Heswall.

Bill sees a need for the educational standards to continue to improve. "The pressures are far higher today that you could ever have imagined 30 years ago. Then if you had a dozen cars in the car park it was a busy day. Now you can have 150 people playing by 10.30 in mid November.

"These pressures are here to stay and will only increase as golf continues to grow in popularity. This makes our work as profes-


sional greenkeepers more important than ever and makes BIGGA even more central to the future of every young greenkeeper."

He has enjoyed his time at a genuinely friendly golf club which offers up superb views into North Wales and out into the Irish Sea. He can look back at his work on the course which has included a general tightening up of fairways, the construction of new bunkers and a tree planting project which has involved the addition of 2,800 new trees.

Bill will spend more of his new found spare time on the riverbank indulging his passion for fishing.

■ Picture by Ian Birch.

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# Ritefeed Classic is born

The future of BIGGA's premier team golf event has been secured for at least the next three years with the signing of a generous new sponsorship agreement with Ritefeed.

The Ritefeed Classic will begin next year with members attempting to qualify for Regional finals via Section events with the grand final being played at a prestigious venue next September.

The Classic, which has been a popular competition under the guise of the Hayter Challenge for the last five years, has always been a superb opportunity for greenkeepers from up and down the country to meet, mingle and compete. Now thanks to a significant investment by Ritefeed over the next three years it is sure to enhance its reputation as an event not to be missed.

"We are delighted that the future of this hugely popular golf event has been secured and look



Doing the deal: BIGGA's Neil Thomas, left and Ritefeed's John Walker

forward to working closely with Ritefeed to ensure that it continues to offer wonderful opportunities for BIGGA members to meet each other and play on some

excellent golf courses," said BIGGA's Executive Director, Neil Thomas.

"I would like to play tribute to Hayter, who sponsored this event

for the last five years, and who have ensured that Ritefeed take over an extremely fine event," he added.

Under the direction of John Walker and Richard Lawrence Ritefeed became a Golden Key supporter of the Association earlier this year and with this latest sponsorship agreement they have reinforced their commitment to the Association and greenkeepers.

"The Ritefeed Classic complements our marketing strategy perfectly and illustrates how much importance we place on our relationship with greenkeepers. We look forward to strengthening that relationship through the Classic and meeting many more BIGGA members up and down the length and breadth of the country," said John Walker, Chairman of Ritefeed.

News on venues for the regional and the national finals will be released shortly.

## Best not to judge a course by its title

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND INTERVIEWING COURSE AT MANOR HOUSE HOTEL, MORETONHAMPTON NOV 3/4 1997

When I was asked to attend and introduce this course my initial thoughts were "that sounds a bit of a dry subject".

I could not have been more wrong! Frank Newberry is a very charismatic speaker who involves the delegates all the way through. I have done a lot of interviewing in my varied career and I did not think I was too bad at it! After attending Frank's course, however, I realise that there is a lot more to this than I have ever dreamed. It was a real education to sit with Frank and plan the interviewing strategy so that the whole interview was geared

to selecting the right candidate for the position offered. He demonstrated ways of exposing candidates weaknesses as well as highlighting their talents and really demonstrated that putting some thought and forward planning into preparing an interview really could produce constructive results.

It can cost hundreds of pounds to place advertisements in magazines and if these advertisements are not properly worded then many hours can be wasted in sifting through unsuitable applicants' replies and then subsequently even more hours and money wasted in unproductive interviewing when a proper selection formula has not been worked out

It was also great to watch the dele-

gates' confidence blossom over the two days. At the end of the course who had began as rather shy and diffident young men had become confident and personable and I felt were completely capable of very competently conducting a selection interview and of hiring the most suitable candidate.

These delegates, apart from benefiting from their fresh knowledge and increased confidence stayed, FULL BOARD, in a lovely top class Manor House hotel in a glorious setting.

Two days, one night's board, breakfast, a la carte dinner, 2 lunches in the dining room, morning coffee and afternoon tea with biscuits, unlimited soft drinks plus 2 full days tutoring - wow! - it must have cost a

fortune you must be thinking - won't send my staff on that! - Quite right too!

Because of the wonderful support of BIGGA's gold and silver key sponsors this experience cost the delegates exactly £75.

Why weren't more of you there?

Take my advice, when you see the courses advertised, if you are not sure of the content because the title sounds uninteresting, phone up HQ and ask them for more details and if any of the courses are presented by Mr Newberry, get on them as soon as you can. If you want to climb the ladder in your career, you cannot afford to miss this kind of opportunity.

■ Paula Humphries Regional Administrator (S. West & S. Wales Region)

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## Alick moves to lead team at Hotchkin

Alick Mackay has been appointed Head Greenkeeper on the Hotchkin Course at The National Golf Centre at Woodhall Spa. He arrives in Lincolnshire from Machrihanish Golf Club having previously worked at Skibo Castle, Boat of Garten, Worthing and Royal Dornoch.

He will head at team of seven on the Hotchkin Course with another seven, under Head Greenkeeper, David Horsey, working on the new Bracken course.

"We are all excited by the potential of The National Golf Centre with one course already world renowned and the other, due to open next year, that will not be long in making its mark on the British golf scene," said Course Manager, Peter Wisbey.

"We are all pleased that such a well respected greenkeeper has joined our team," he added.

# Don't be snookered by your bunkers

"We have had problems with our bunkers in the past," says David Gower, Course Manager at the Oxfordshire Golf Club, "But the problems are all behind us. The Programme which we are well on the way to completing will ensure that there are no further problems."

David Gower has only been in charge of this prestigious course since June 1 this year, having been the deputy for the previous five years. He puts the bunker problem; which elicited some unfavourable comments from a certain senior member of the European Tour during the Benson & Hedges Trophy, which has been played in May at the Oxfordshire for the past three years, down to the fact that the sub soil is a soft clay. We simply could not get a firm base and the sand we were using did not hold enough moisture. It quickly became mixed with the sub soil and we had the double problem of the ball plug-

ging and a very insecure foothold."

A programme was started to empty the problem bunkers and provide a firm base by putting down a two to four inch layer of broken stone and laying upturned turf on top of the stone before refilling with sand. "I wanted a sand which would hold some moisture and would be firm underfoot and in which the ball would not plug. The grain structure of a good bunker sand must be sharp and it must contain a good proportion of medium size grains. I was given a sample of HMC's ProSport Bunker Sand from the Leighton Buzzard quarry. We did a trial on a range bunker to compare it with what we were using and it was just what I had been looking for. It performed better than anything I had seen previously and that it was also very similar in colour."

There are 137 bunkers on the Oxfordshire course, some of them very big indeed. One is called

'Hell's Half Acre' and another is over 11/2 acres in area and has seven grass islands. "Bunkers should be designed to penalise the player not the greenkeeper." Says David: "None of ours have steep walls and that helps to make them maintainable. Having the right sand is very important. If it doesn't hold some moisture, irrigating can be a major problem."

The Oxfordshire will host the Benson & Hedges in May 1998 and the year after. "Hopefully, there will be no complaints about the course, especially the bunkers," says David Gower, "We have already renovated over half of the bunkers, and that includes all those which had to be due out to put in a firm base. There are about 45 still to be sorted out and they will be done over the winter. It will take about another 300 tonnes of ProSport bunker sand from Leighton Buzzard and that should complete the programme."

## High on a hill

Midland Regional Administrator, Peter Larter's, walking trip in Austria nearly turned into a Busman's Holiday when he found himself on a golf course.

I've just had a holiday with friends at Ischgl in the Austrian Alps and, after three hard days mountain walking, we decided to have an easy day in the car. We had just survived some 25 hairpin bends descending from the Silvretta Lake, close to the Swiss border, when to our surprise just around the last bend we came upon Hochmontafon Golf Club on the outskirts of the small town of Partenen.

We just had to stop because the location was quite spectacular. We were given a warm welcome by the club management, and learned that the club was owned by four local men and was just coming to the end of its second season. The 9 hole fairly short (3 par fours and 6 par threes) but tricky course is at 1115 metres, and is surrounded by mountains reaching 2400 metres above sea level. The land for the course, became available when the previous owner, a farmer, passed away leaving the land intestate. The local mayor was sympathetic to the idea of a golf course and the project was launched.

We were shown around the course

by a proud Herbert Berger, one of the co-owners, and experienced some breathtaking outlooks when standing on the tees. Major hazards, apart from some outstanding rock formations, are cows who roam freely. Although the greens were small they were in very good condition, considering they spend five months under deep snow each year; the course is part of a downhill ski piste during the Winter! The land was natural terrain for a golf course and there were many interesting and challenging uphill, sidehill and downhill lies, the course would be a tough challenge to all standards of golfer, particularly challenging on the lungs! There are 120 members of the Golf Club, and the course is open to all who want to play.

The fairways are natural grass from when the area was farmland but the greens were laid with turf and withstand some very hard conditions. The tees, however, are constructed with astroturf, but future grass tees are planned. The day we visited it rained for the first time in six weeks, but they have plenty of water which is applied to the greens manually.

Our only regret was that we didn't have time to play, but a warm welcome and a schnapps would be waiting in the friendly clubhouse for any golfer who just happens to be passing!



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