

Usually the spotlight falls on the Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper at a Club.

Now it is the turn of those whose work often goes unheralded to star.



**Name:** Gordon McKie

**Club:** St Andrews Links

**Position:** Deputy Head Greenkeeper

**Age:** 30

**1. How long have you been a greenkeeper?**

12 years.

**2. What education are you currently undertaking?**

HNC Golf Course Irrigation Systems.

**3. Which one task do you most enjoy doing?**

Building and revetting bunkers

**4. Which one task do you most dislike doing?**

Not many but probably cleaning ditches.

**5. What job other than greenkeeping might you have ended up doing?**

Motor Mechanic

**6. Who has been the biggest influence on your career?**

Iain MacLeod, Head Greenkeeper at Tain Golf Club.

**7. What would you do to improve the life of a greenkeeper?**

Teach golfers how to rake a bunker property.

**8. What are your hobbies?**

Golf, football and music

**9. What do you get out of BIGGA?**

Magazine, BTME.

**10. What do you hope to be doing in 10 years time?**

Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager at a top course

Address your letters to the Editor, Greenkeeper International, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Alne, York YO6 2NF. You can also fax them to 01347 838864, or e-mail them to [general@bigga.co.uk](mailto:general@bigga.co.uk)

## But why should I join BIGGA?

As a BIGGA member who was the beneficiary of two exceptional events in November, I feel duty bound to write to the magazine and share my experiences with all of you who care to read on.

My first sojourn took me to the deep south to participate in the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition in association with Amazone and Rhône Poulenc award ceremony. Our club was chosen as the Scottish regional winner, which was a real surprise to me knowing the quality of the work already carried out at other Scottish clubs such as Loch Lomond. So with this in mind, it was with great pride that I travelled down to the highly impressive Hankley Common to accept our award.

This is the second year in a row that we have won this specific award and I would like to say that the people who I have met at each award ceremony, in conjunction with the award itself, have provided me with a great deal of motivation and inspiration to drive on with our conservation management plan at Linlithgow. I am sure that our club is not the only one which gains so much from this competition and I think Rod Baker can take great personal satisfaction from the way this whole concept has grown, and from the good that it has engendered.

Part two of my week of travelling took me to sunny Marbella (although it was pouring when I arrived and left), to deliver a talk to the inaugural FEGGA conference.

When first asked by FEGGA Chairman, Dean Cleaver, to represent BIGGA by delivering the paper on the environment I was stunned, honoured and delighted (in that order), but I became so concerned with trying to live up to Dean's expectations that I travelled to Spain with very few expectations about what I could learn from the whole experience. This state of affairs did not last too long though because literally from the moment of my arrival, which was fortuitously just in time for dinner, I was put at ease by the assembled company, which by the nature of the event consisted of many of the leading lights of greenkeeping in Europe.

During the two day conference I learned a great many things not only about greenkeeping, but about life in continental Europe in general, which in these days of common Governmental policies may prove to be very important. Consequently I came away from listening to the many varied and stimulating talks given with the impression that we greenkeepers in the UK may have

our problems, but they are in no way comparable to some of the things that our colleagues on the continent have to put up with.

It was struck home to me in Spain that not only do our continental cousins have to put up with difficult climactic conditions, oppressive pesticide legislation and a populace that generally has no time for golf, but they face these difficulties with much smaller Professional Associations than ours. This is a very important point and one that is far too often taken for granted in this country. In BIGGA we British greenkeepers not only have a very well run organisation led by motivated and capable people, but we have a collective voice for the profession that is taken seriously by others in the golf industry and beyond.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I have had an exceptional year, taking part in many wonderful events including the Loch Lomond Invitational, The Open, The National Tournament as well as that fabulous week in November which was all made possible for me only through my involvement in BIGGA. So if anyone has to ask me "Why should I join the BIGGA?" my answer will be ready for them!

**David Roy  
Course Manager  
Linlithgow GC**

### Jim'll fix it...

Having been in greenkeeping for the last 43 years and therefore seen many changes I have reflected on who has been responsible for the major changes in the game.

Firstly, professionals I am sure would agree that Arnold Palmer was the prime mover for making things happen even to the point where more golfers wanted to see and listen to his passion for the game.

From the greenkeeping side I have to say nobody, and I mean nobody, has done more for greenkeepers than Jim Arthur. He started off as a lone voice in the wilderness telling us - not to overwater, that green is not everything, don't try to be like the States etc, etc, etc. How true this has all turned out to be.

He is the man who makes greens committees sit up and take notice with his forthright views. Of course, lots of people do not go along with Jim's views but as we all know the truth can sometimes hurt.

One thing I am convinced of is that greenkeeping would be a lot poorer without Jim Arthur.

Greenkeeping has progressed dramatically over the last ten years or so and, believe me, in no small measure this is due to Jim and people like him who see the future and are not afraid to state their case.

I am not like the fellow who said "I don't mind progress so long as it doesn't mean change" but I think we need to take stock now and again and make sure that every road we take is the right one with no dead ends.

**John Nudds  
Course Manager  
Gerard's Cross GC**

### Toro-mendous

I would like to thank BIGGA and Toro for a very enjoyable time at the finals of the Toro Awards held at Harrogate. Meeting the other finalists and swapping stories of greenkeeping times.

**Tom Murray  
Ratho Park GC**

PS. All the best to Ian McMillan and Steve Nixon who were worthy winners of the awards.

PPS. Harrogate has lots of shops so any greenkeepers taking their wives or girlfriends beware! Don't let them loose it's fatal - hence my empty wallet.

### A northern thank you

The Northern Region has had its ups and downs, its highs and lows but over the course of many years the Region has become a credit to all members who have participated in Regional events and Seminars. Major events such as the Hayter Golf Challenge, which the Northern Region has won on numerous occasions, with all Sections thriving. Since Bob Lupton took over we have had three National Chairmen, George Malcolm, Barry Heaney and our immediate Past Chairman, Pat Murphy. So between the three of them they must have clocked up more miles than Michael Palin!

Bob and Sarah had worked tirelessly for the Region with the introduction of the Patron's Scheme so without the support of the Patrons the Region would not be as prosperous.

I have to thank Bob and Sarah for the support they have shown me

as Regional Chairman, keeping me right and making sure I was informed of meetings and section events so I could attend.

I know I leave the Region in good hands with the Regional Chairman, Bert Cross, and Bob leaves the Region to the new Regional Administrator, Douglas Bell.

I must thank everybody for the support they have given me over the years and I am sure that Bert will receive the same support.

Once again, may I take this opportunity to wish the members and officials all the best for the future.

**Ian Holoran**  
 Past Northern Regional Chairman

## Competition is a winner

In response to the article in Greenkeeper International, page 34, January issue, I thought I would spend a few moments trying to clarify the situation. Unfortunately, or fortunately, depending upon one's viewpoint, I am able to report that I have not had a single response to my comment made in the November issue, other than yours.

It was indeed English Nature who were keen to point out the number of non-golfing sceptics who still perceive golf as being of relatively minor importance in the wider conservation framework. Keith, however, in playing golf and more recently in judging the competition, has a very different viewpoint and is keen to point out that golf is an important land use which can have particular environmental benefits. These points were highlighted at all of the Clubs which he and I visited.

I have always stated that the BIGGA Golf Environmental Competition was to comprise of more than just one winner and several losers. I have indeed worked hard through last year to ensure that this is the case. Sure, the winner gets £5,000 and the regional winners £250 but that's not the end

of it. All those entering received either a letter of support with recommendations relating to their individual way forward or one or two site visits which allowed me to talk at length about their management programme. Seminars and articles have also contributed to elevating the publicity of those Clubs showing a positive commitment to environmental management.

I see the Competition as a step up to the newly formed "Committed to Green" programme being initiated through the European Golf Association Ecology Unit. The scoring of the Competition was indeed based on the main target areas that the technical working panel, including STRI, agreed. These include nature conservation, landscape cultural heritage, turfgrass management, water resource management, waste management, energy efficiency and communication, including public awareness.

A further extremely important benefit of the Competition is to demonstrate that golf courses by acting in a positive environmental manner are aware of their environmental responsibilities and it is hoped that continual recognition will gradually filter through to the wider public and to those that criticise the sport often without appropriate foundation.

Most Greenkeepers that have spoken to me or have heard me talking at seminars will be fully aware that I appreciate their conservation interests. Indeed, a significant part of greenkeeping is related to the pleasure of seeing birds of prey, foxes and other wildlife passing over the course. The focus must now turn to educating the membership and the Committee Managers if greater strides are to be made.

Finally, while every golf course realises they may not win one of the major prizes, I trust that everyone will agree that by entering we are giving greater focus and credibility to the fact that golf courses are not just a selfish use of the landscape.

**R.S Taylor**  
 Ecologist, STRI Ltd

**While on the subject of The Environment Competition, keep your eyes peeled for our new logo (left), which will be used everytime we have news or an update for you, regarding the competition. Entry forms are available from BIGGA, at the usual address.**

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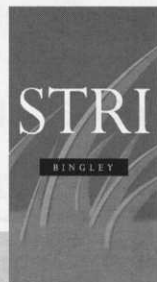
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