

A masterful performance



The two latest members of one of golf's most exclusive clubs were unveiled at Harrogate this year.

The honour of being one of BIGGA's Master Greenkeepers was until this year held by only 20 greenkeepers but this year Seve Schmitz and Steve Jones swell that number to 22.

The Award of Master Greenkeeper, run by the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA), shows that the recipient has reached the highest standards of excellence within the profession and is based on experience, ability and education.

To achieve Master Greenkeeper Status a greenkeeper must first have achieved a minimum of 200 credits based on experience, qualification, additional vocational training and attendance at seminars. He then must have his golf course assessed by someone of Master Greenkeeper status and finally undertake a case study and examination.

Seve Schmitz is Course Manager at the Golf Club Schloss (Castle) Myllefeldofk, Korschenbroich in Germany. He started his career in greenkeeping in 1970 as an assistant greenkeeper at St Ives Golf Club before moving to Cradoc Golf Club as Head Greenkeeper in 1979. He then spent seven years at Ellesborough Golf Club before moving to his current club in 1988. He is the second Master Greenkeeper currently working in Germany.

Coincidentally Steve Jones, a graduate of Rutgers University in the USA, started his greenkeeping career in Germany before moving to the Oxfordshire in 1992 and then to the London Club in 1994. Currently a consultant, Steve is working with golf clubs both in Britain and in continental Europe.

Steve becomes the 17th Master Greenkeeper in Europe, joining five from the US in the elite band.



One welcome visitor to the show on Thursday was last year's Ryder Cup Captain, Mark James, who visited the Rigby Taylor stand with his Golf Design and Management Partner, Andrew Mair, and Brian Robinson of Grass Science. Mark, who lives just a short distance from Harrogate took time to walk round the rest of the show.



Swiss award

Steven Tierney, a British greenkeeper based in Switzerland, has won a prestigious Environmental Steward Award with the GCSAA - the first time a European based greenkeeper has won such an award.

Ironically Steven, who is Course Manager at Golf Park Nuolen, Wangen, one of Switzerland's 70 golf courses, only entered the competition after he discovered that the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition was only open to British golf clubs. "My golf course is only four years old but as Switzerland is not in the EC our own regulations are extremely tight. For example every six weeks our water is tested by the Government and they have the power to close us down if we are not up to scratch," he explained. Steven travels to New Orleans later this month to receive his award.

Sharpes + Mommersteeg = Advanta

Amenity grass seed breeder Advanta Seeds UK, took the chance to announce that they had completed a year of corporate restructuring, combining the operations of the two well-known seed suppliers, Mommersteeg and Sharpes International, under the one new company name. Sharpes was previously owned by Booker Seeds, while Mommersteeg International was a part of the Dutch based Royal Van de Have group. The latter merged with Zeneca in January 1998 to form Advanta Seeds.

For the past two years, Mommersteeg and Sharpes have been operating autonomously under the Advanta banner, but since 1 Jan 2000, the two separate companies ceased to exist. Advanta is the fifth largest seed business in the world - breeding and marketing the full range of amenity and agricultural crops, through 35 operating companies in 20 countries.

Announcing The Lawn Company

Turf Professionals who have dreamed of owning their own business had a look into the future with the launch of The Lawn Company at BTME. The new enterprise, conceived as a van based franchise aims to bring a professional approach to domestic lawn maintenance.

The brain child of Mike Seaton, who has 20 year's experience caring for amenity turf first as a Groundsman and latterly as founder and Managing Director of Weed Free, The Lawn Company will control weeds and moss, aerate, seed, feed, scarify and top dress, in an integrated programme which will leave the home owner nothing to do but cut the grass. "Since I started Weed Free, the domestic market has changed beyond all recognition," said Mike.

"The demand for stylish, labour saving areas which are both aesthetically pleasing and able to double as an outside room has been created by a flush of TV programmes and a growing number of gardening magazines. Amid the mountain of paving, decking and gravel, the lack of advice and specialist lawn care services is noticeable by its absence. The Lawn Company is perfectly equipped and positioned to fulfil this need," said Mike "As every turf manager knows, grass care is a science, not something that is practised on a weekly basis when the lawn receives its trim. Although the concept of hiring professional grass experts for domestic use is relatively new to the UK, the idea has already taken root across the Atlantic."

"We are way behind America, where one out of five households hire lawn and landscape services, spending 14 billion dollars per annum."

Mike believes that The Lawn Company offers commercial opportunities, especially for people already operating within the amenity turf industry. A comprehensive training course, on going support package including an interactive link connecting all Franchisees directly to Head Office, and The Lawn Company Operations Manual - a translation of 20 years turf care experience into accessible advice and straightforward know-how are ready to arm all those interested in making lawns their business.

BTME DIARY OF THE WEEK – NEIL THOMAS

Saturday January 15

An early start this year meeting with Bill and Monica Montague at Aldwark Manor. They've just flown in from the USA and it's a real pleasure to show them around BIGGA HOUSE. Bill is one of BIGGA's greatest supporters and flies the flag for us in his homeland where he is a regular on the BIGGA stand at the GCSAA Show.

Sunday January 16

I reflect that I am driving to Harrogate for BTME number 12. Where have the years gone? It takes me all of 15 minutes and its proximity to home is one sure reason for the BTME remaining in Harrogate. There are many more compelling ones. This year the weatherman is making all the right noises and I reach the Majestic well set for the week ahead. Many of the regulars are already in residence and Ken, Sami and Sarah have registration well under control. Dinner is taken in a pleasant, informal atmosphere and many depart for the pleasures of Harrogate's nightlife. Meanwhile in the Majestic's bar old friends are meeting once again and catching up on news during the past year.

Monday January 17

The Conference and workshops are off to a smooth start. The Conference is chaired once again by Dr Mike Canaway and we are all keen to assess the success of the new formula this year whereby it is divided into four main intensive sessions. Early feedback is positive and each session maintains a full complement of delegates - a good sign indeed. The Conference Dinner is full of mirth with quick fire Irish comedian Dusty Young a big hit to the extent that greenkeepers are queuing to buy his tapes when he finally sits down.

The Monday night comedy spot seems well established. We are delighted to welcome Andrew Sunaway, Peter Bell and David Withers from Textron to the Dinner and the company's support of the Learning Experience programme, now in its fifth year, is instrumental to the success of the BTME week. Their backing of greenkeeper education stretches back over many, many years and we have much to thank the company for as a Golden Key supporter in terms of the educational and training provisions available to BIGGA members as we enter the new century.

A moderately late night as the week stretches ahead and stamina is all important.

Tuesday January 18

Delegates are up early and reasonably fit for another day of Conference and workshops. Meanwhile the pace is quickening down at the exhibition halls. This year we are in Hall Q for the first time and with the expansion of the show we anticipate logistical problems. Jenny is doing well however and there are no major issues to concentrate the mind. Why do the great majority of companies decide to arrive at around the same time when there is a two day spread? I don't expect that will change!

In the afternoon there is a short Board of Management meeting with Gordon completing his two year stint and Elliott Small being elected as Chairman with Clive Osgood from Walton Heath as his Vice Chairman. The exhibitors' reception is being held down by Hall Q and everything seems in place. For me the day ends at the seventh Hayter Dinner in the George Hotel. This seems part of the BTME tradition now with Barbara Garton

as the gracious hostess and Kim Macfie, as always, humorously in charge of the evening. Back in the Majestic the Past Chairmen are in evidence by their red blazers and much food for thought emerges from their annual dinner.

Wednesday January 19

One of Gordon's last duties is to cut the ribbon at 9am at the entrance to Hall A. Meanwhile the new entrance at Hall Q opens and we can't be in two places at once. How many will realise there is a new entrance? Our fears prove groundless as there is a good early response helped by the proximity of the Moat House Hotel. The halls are very busy and numbers seem evenly distributed through halls A, B, C and Q. Make a note for next year to tighten control as a considerable number of people are gaining unauthorised access through both a walkway entrance and from the underground car park. The new Press Centre and Exhibitors' Lounge are widely welcomed.

A large audience gathers for the Keynote Speaker session. I have the privilege, a real privilege, of spending some time



New degree from BIGGA

The British Institute of Golf Course Architects used the show to announce the formation of a degree course in golf course architecture to be established at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, in conjunction with the University and its specialist college, Edinburgh College of Art, as well as Merrist Wood and Elmwood Colleges. The course, which will take the form of a nine month diploma in golf course architecture, which will lead to a full time residential three month Masters' Programme and will parallel, in its first stage, the present part time and distance learning diploma operated by the Institute at Merrist Wood College. The two year diploma course will be expanded to take in a two-centre field study programme, which will be conducted not only in Surrey, where the Institute is based, but also in Fife, so that diploma students can experience, at first hand and in practical terms the historic links courses of that part of Great Britain. In February 2000, there will be a total of 31 students at Merrist Wood, from 14 different countries.

Blizzard hits Harrogate

Allen Blizzard couldn't believe his luck when he visited the BIGGA Career's Clinic, run by Brin Bendon and Frank Newberry, during BTME 2000. Having gone in for advice on the presentation of his CV Allen left with a conditional place at Ohio State University. In the ultimate case of being in the right place at the right time Allen, whose ambition had always been to attend that particular university, found himself chatting to Master Greenkeeper Bill Montague who had popped in to see how a CV differed from the American Resume. Bill, who is from Ohio, revealed that he lectured at the University and tracked down Michael O'Neil, who was also attending the show and whose job it is to clear all European applications for Ohio State. Michael checked out Allen's CV and told him that if he passed his Cannington College course a place was his! As he is progressing well at Cannington and passing all his exams to date he is as good as there. Now that's service! The Careers' Clinic was a great success with Brin and Frank handling 120 cases over the course of the two days.

Everyone's a winner



The prize winners in the BIGGA Charity Raffle to raise money for the Imperial Cancer Research Campaign were

A Holiday Break at Carden Park G&CC - Neil McIntyre
Epani Software - David Marnoch
Education Pack 2001 - Philip Bennett
Majestic Holiday weekend - Iain Macleod
St George Hotel Break - Roger Eade
Vauxhall Car Hire - Dougal Duguid
Crown Hotel Weekend - Andy Smith
2000 Open Tickets - Richard Barker
Two Banquet Tickets for BTME 2001 - Andy Campbell
Tzoid Driver - S. Yates
Snooker Cue - Ernie Walker
Champagne - Terry Hamel and Steve Hasell.

The winner of the £600 Holiday voucher for introducing new members to the Association was Mark Smith, Head Greenkeeper at Drayton Park Golf Club.



BTME - BEING THERE MEANS EVERYTHING

talking with Simon Weston. A fellow Welshman, we talk of rugby and many other things Welsh. He is an impressive man in so many ways. His talk receives rapt attention from a large audience and not a few tears along the way. It ends with a standing ovation. Simon surely sets a supreme example of how to cope with adversity and to get the very best out of life. Quickly to the Majestic to set up the presentations at the Chairman's Luncheon to our Golden and Silver Key company supporters. A special pleasure to welcome our new President, Sir Michael Bonallack, who seems to thoroughly enjoy his visit. Back to the halls for a busy afternoon and then to the AGM. Wonder of wonders, Cecil does not ask a question - quite worrying really! The Chairman thanks Gordon for all his work for the Association in the past two years and for a job well done. He welcomes Clive as Vice Chairman and says farewell to Pat Murphy, George Barr and Robin Greaves who are standing down. Ian Semple and Paul Jenkins are welcomed to the Board. There is no peace for the wicked and I am

quickly off to Rolawn's 25th Anniversary Dinner in the company of Terry Ryan and fellow guests. This proves a pleasant, relaxing evening in the middle of the week.

Thursday January 20

The numbers are excellent pouring into the halls and another busy day is in prospect. The seminars are in full flow and a buoyant atmosphere prevails. The Chairman and I attend a Press Conference and I am soon on my way to the FEGGA AGM where it is all change. Claus Detlef Ratjen from Germany is now Chairman with Joe Bedford of the GCSA as Vice Chairman. Board members are Jean-Michel Hérisse from France, Pirjo Hotti from Finland, who maintains the ladies' input, and Hans-Peter Thaler from Italy. Dean Cleaver takes over as FEGGA administrator. The afternoon sees me linking up with Sami as our major social event, the BTME banquet, draws nearer. This year it's the Bootleg Beatles to entertain and the set up of the banqueting hall is tremendous with a 'balloon' expert having been engaged and with pictures

of the original Beatles adorning the walls. The sense of the 60s prevails and a great night is in prospect. At 6.30pm I make a brief visit to the Chairman's reception for VIP guests and then to the banquet. Guests are arriving in hordes and some of their 'gear' is drawing attention. Upstairs the bar area is a hive of activity and noise. The announcement of dinner is ignored not once but many times with claims that the announcements were not heard above the din. Dining eventually commences some 20 minutes late. However, we start catching up and at 10.10pm I am able to introduce the Chairman to say a few words and then the moment has come and the Bootleg Beatles take to the stage. Simultaneously our intrepid members take to the dance floor. I am told that the Bootleg Beatles voted it their best corporate show in 20 years. As they finally take their leave, the Funtime Music disc takes over with hits from the 60s and 70s all the way through to 1am before the dancers depart for further revelry at the Majestic bar. Indeed a night to remember.

Friday January 21

It's Friday morning and you know the feeling well. The pace in the halls is sedate yet this is a good day to visit for those who want easy access to the stands and to get their business done. They won't get trampled in the rush but at least they will be able to talk with those whom they are seeking. The seminars end on a strong note with Dr Joe Vargas. The Chairman makes a grand draw with proceeds going to the Imperial Cancer Fund. Farewells on all sides for another year. I thank my exhausted staff who have done a fantastic job. The years roll on but BTME remains very special. It is unsurpassed as a gathering for greenkeepers from all over the world. It is now a truly international show anticipated eagerly by companies and members alike. There is a unique atmosphere and already we look forward to 2001. I would urge members to be strong in their determination to be there for they will most certainly be better for the experience and feel very much a part of the great community of greenkeepers.