

Feature listing from September '98

September '98: Nine holers – Tolladine and Fingle Glen, Turf, Steve Clement profile, Drainage, World Scientific Congress report

October '98: Saltex Review, BIGGA Retrospective, Stirling GC, Toro Awards Preview, Tree grants

November '98: Royal Opening, Ramside Hall GC, Gang Mowers, Hayter International report, Irrigation Systems

December '98: Toro Awards, Environment Awards, The Appliance of Science, Engines, Architects, BTME Preview

January '99: Pesticide Usage, Life in Colorado, Lyschott Heath GC, Worm Research, Stylo Matchmaker profile, Temporary Greens

February '99: Westerham GC; R&A questionnaire results; Finland; grass cutting; BTME99 Review; Bernhard and Co

March '99: Loch Lomond, Worm update, GrassRoots, Softspikes, Maintenance facilities, Environment review, Architecture

April '99: Carden Park, Telecommunications, Water Management, Rolawn, Seeds

May '99: Security, Bude and North Cornwall GC, Spraying Regulations, Jim Arthur, The Acid Theory, Amenity Technology profile

June '99: Thorpeness GC, Millennium Bug Busting, Irrigation, Scotts profile, Company adaptability

July '99: Carnoustie, Golf Course Furniture, Spike Research, Toro profile, BIGGA Silent Auction

August '99: Viscount Whitelaw tribute; Open review; Merrist Wood; Saltex preview; Turf; Trees; Grass Cutting; BIGGA Golf Day review; Redexim profile

September '99: Slaley Hall; Tyres; Spotlight on Thatch; Elmwood College Awards; National Championship preview

October '99: The Manor House, Castle Combe; Aeration; Saltex review; Mycorrhizas; Toro Award preview

November '99: Sir Michael Bonallack interview; The Pines GC; Oil; Bunkers; National Championship review

December '99: Agronomy; Security; Environment Competition Winner; Toro Award Winners

January 2000: Greens Construction; Awkward Jobs; Sandy McDivot; Agronomy; Toro Award review

February 2000: BTME2000 review; Committed to Green interview; Hookery Park GC; Engines; Chairman's profile; Environmental Management

March 2000: Cleobury Mortimer GC; Course Furniture; R&A Conference Report; Cutting heights; Avoncrop profile; Valderrama report; Westurf preview

April 2000: Fortrose & Rosemarkie GC; Utility Vehicles; Irrigation; Seed breeding; Gem Professional profile.

May 2000: Ross-on-Wye GC; Top Dressing; Course Mapping; Compact Tractors

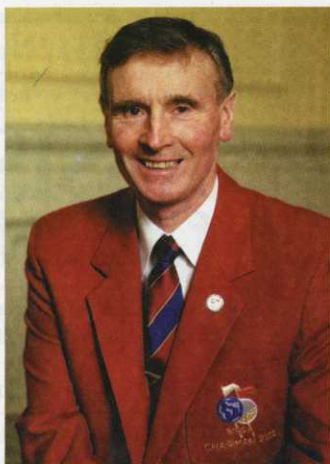
June 2000: National Championship preview; Spraying; World Education Conference review; Environmental Management; Mowers

July 2000: Open Championship Preview; Dougal Duguid Court Case Report; Pest Control; Aventus profile; Course Conditioning

August 2000: Open Championship review; Water Features; Saltex preview; Charcoal; Malone GC; Royal County Down; Grand Tour Scholarship



A memorable month



The view from the 12th tee on the new Lynedoch course at Murrayshall, in Perthshire is magnificent and I was fortunate to be able to savour it on the opening day of this beautiful new course. Designed by Hamilton Stutt and moulded into great condition by Ian MacMillan MG and his staff, this is a thinking course, no place for the slogger here and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone.

My thanks to Mr A.C. Van Gils, the owner and a marvellous host, for my invitation to what was an excellent day. To Ian MacMillan, my thanks for your company and for all the interesting information on the course. I must say that the greens were in tremendous shape considering they are under a year old.

On Sunday July 16, I attended the Opening Ceremony of the World Junior Championships held at Craig GC in NE Fife. That was something to see as Sir Michael Bonallack opened the Championship with 75 youngsters from 75 different countries all lined up to listen to his welcoming words. There was a flag raising ceremony and instead of 75 different flags which could have been problematic, one flag had been made up with the flags of the 75 countries on it, what a souvenir that would be. What was just as impressive as that was when I returned on the Tuesday for the final day's play and prize giving ceremony. The play of these young people over a very tough course was of a very high standard as was their sportsmanship and the friendliness between themselves and also their hosts. I was privileged to be able to present the BIGGA trophy to Steven Jeppesen, from Sweden, and a name I will watch out for in the future.

From there to The Open for what was another great week in all ways. Scott covered most of the news in his report last month. Suffice for me to say a big thank you to all the Support Team for another job well done with their usual good humour and hard work. Did I say hard work, had it easy this year lads eh! Lowest total of bunkers ever, no wonder you had so much energy at night! It was almost a moist eyed (yes even among these hardened greenkeepers) farewell supper on the Sunday night when I was delighted to make a small presentation to Cecil George and Jimmy Neilson as this was their last Open as official BIGGA starters. They have officiated at every Open since we started in 1984 and it won't be quite the same without them but I hope they will grace us with their presence in the future.

Among the highlights for me during the week was attending the Golf Writers' Dinner with Scott on Tuesday night and seeing at first hand some of the people who, for me, brighten up any golf tournament. No, I'm not talking about Olazabal, Garcia, Torrance, Horton, Faldo, Jacklin and other pros who were there. For me it's reading the reports of Norman Mair, Michael McDonnell, Jock MacVicar and many others who start my day off.

On the Friday night I was invited along with Neil, to the Captain of the R&A's suite which overlooks the 18th fairway and green and a pleasant evening was capped as we watched Tiger Woods playing the last hole from one of the best viewing points in St Andrews.

On August 1, I had the honour of accepting a Gold Award at the Annual Green Apples Awards ceremony held in the luxurious surroundings of the Cafe Royale, in Regent Street, London. This award is in recognition of the contribution the BIGGA Environment Competition makes towards improving the environment in the UK.

During my travels this year I have had the opportunity to talk with many greenkeepers from all over the country and from all types of golf club, big and small. It is apparent that, in a large number of cases, the working conditions have improved tremendously with better wages and working environment, with many new facilities being built and provision of good clothing and footwear, not just wellies and rubber waterproofs.

Many of these improvements can be

put down to the better standard of educated greenkeeper who is able to argue his case for all these improvements than in years gone by.

However, there are still many poorly paid, poorly equipped greenkeeping staff working in badly lit, cold, damp maintenance facilities. Certain areas of the country fare worse than others, especially on the wages front. Cornwall & Devon, parts of Northern England, parts of Scotland and Wales are examples but it's probably fair to say that every area of Britain has its good and bad clubs.

In some of these cases it's annoying to hear that the club could find £30 to £35,000 for a dedicated fairway mower but could not give their staff a decent pay rise. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against fairway mowers, they make a wonderful job, the quality of cut is excellent and the fairways look lovely. Mind you, it makes no difference to 90% of the club members in the execution of the shot.

What I am against is that the look of fairways should be considered before the welfare of the greenkeeping staff. It is time that many of these clubs took a long hard look at themselves and asked the question: "How can we possibly ask our green staff to work in those conditions for that wage and would we do it?" It would be nice to hear of one club that said for £30,000 we could give each of our staff more money and help upgrade their facilities and conditions.

I am not for a minute saying clubs should not buy fairway mowers, I will be buying one myself next year, but they should be bought when the time is right for a particular club, after all the main priorities have been taken care of, not because club B along the road has one and their fairways are terrific. Certainly not before the green staff are well paid and have been provided with good facilities and conditions. A well paid, well equipped staff will always give greater return.

There is a time in the life of every problem when it is big enough to see yet small enough to solve