

Master Greenkeeper Anthony Davies MG, Course Manager at Prestbury Golf Club, was one of the BIGGA delegation chosen to attend the CGSA Conference and Show in Vancouver

BIGGA shakes Vancouver



Above: Recently voted the world's number one city, and you can see why

Far right: Raymond Day carries the flag for Britain

The visit to Vancouver, Canada for ten BIGGA Greenkeepers started last September. The trip was open to all BIGGA Greenkeepers whose only qualification was to own a BIGGA Blazer. The ten candidates were chosen after a rigorous interview conducted by the well known supplier of grinding machines, Bernhard & Co, who were the main Sponsor together with Officials from Headquarters. After a few short months the week to attend the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association's Convention had arrived.

All the party arrived at Heathrow Airport eager to board the Boeing 747 and head off to Canada. After

what seemed an endless wait, the big plane flapped its wings and we were off. Off to share and exchange views with our counterparts in Canada. The nine and a quarter hour flight wasn't too arduous the worst part was being subjected to 'Charlie's Angels' on the in-flight movie channel. As soon as we landed in Vancouver we were met by a guide who took us to our hotel and there to greet us were Sam and Peter from Bernhard & Co. Sam, who was a brick during the week, bought the team a very welcome drink and briefed us on the week ahead - and what a week was in store for us.

The next morning we boarded a coach and travelled a short distance to North View Golf & Country Club.

The 36-hole complex, was designed by Arnold Palmer and is described as a public course but with prestigious private club standards. The courses are laid out on 400 acres of land and cater for 65,000 annual rounds of golf. Both courses were in great condition for the time of year and it is no wonder that the USPGA have a Tour event there. The \$80 dollar a round courses are owned by two sawmill owners who leave the day-to-day running of North View to Dave Fair, the Superintendent.

Dave, whose working compound resembles that of Manchester Airport, has a large open service yard where stone and its like are deposited and swooped up by mechanical



loaders. The machine store, or should I say the 'hanger', was well stocked with various machinery. A total of 53 staff are employed to look after the two courses with every nine holes having their own team of Greenkeepers for that section who compete against the other members of staff who are then rewarded for the best nine holes at the end of each month. The list of machinery is endless so I will not bother to bore you with such details but just picture this:- seven Cushman's, eight Jacobsen Greens King, four Toro Reel Masters and three full time Mechanics working from a 60' x 40' repair shop. I didn't just envy Dave Fair, I wanted his job!

Over the next few days the BIGGA team attended the well organised educational seminars.

Their system is not too dissimilar to that of Harrogate but one thing was noticeable that the seminars were well attended by like-minded Greenkeepers whose intention was to exchange ideas and to listen and learn from their peers who offered advice willingly and freely - I told you it was like Harrogate! As soon as the seminars ended the Trade Show opened. The neatly arranged rows of machinery were gleaming in their entirety trying to entice the onlookers to at least talk about their golf course requirements.

The BIGGA team were welcomed

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BIGGA shakes Vancouver

Right: Clive and wife Sue pictured with world famous pop star - but who is it? (Answer at bottom of page)

on all stands and we engaged in verbal chit-chat and made many new acquaintances and desirable future contacts.

On the morning of our departure home, while working on a few notes in my hotel room and chatting with my room mate, Jimmy Richardson, on various pertinent subjects, he leapt from his armchair and, in his sometimes understandable accent, pointed out that he could feel tremors vibrating within. I jibed him and said that he had too late a visit in Gas Town the previous night - Gas Town being the local place to unwind.

Alas, however, he was right. On looking out of the bedroom window I noticed that the water in the swimming pool below resembled that of boiling water bubbling away in a pan. It was then that our hotel and other hotels within the vicinity started to move. The large pane glass window in our room started to creak and the sound of distant thunder rang in our ears. The vibration and swaying seemed endless but in fact only lasted some five to ten seconds. We switched the TV on and instantly the news headlines reported that Seattle and Vancouver had just experienced an earthquake and for all persons to stay calm. I can report that Jimmy and I were very calm for within seconds we were looking for ways out of the hotel. Just then a voice came over the tannoy reporting that we had in fact gone through an earthquake and for us to remain calm and stay in our rooms until further notice.

That really put Jimmy and I at ease.



Knowing that we had 24 floors above our bedroom we donned our coats and got outside. The local news reported that the earthquake had measured 6.4 on the Richter Scale - the highest yet in Vancouver. I didn't realise that ten Greenkeepers from the UK could make such an impact!

So what have I learned from this trip? I have realised that Greenkeepers who have never met before can become friends, exchange opinions and work together to break down barriers between local and international Greenkeepers.

What has BIGGA achieved from this trip? BIGGA was exposed on the international stage and was also successful in breaking down barriers and ten proud BIGGA Members assisted with the performance.

What did Bernhard & Co achieve from this trip? I cannot answer this question, the Company would have to answer this in their own words but

I go as far as to say that they sponsored the trip to allow the selected men the chance to travel to Canada, mingle with other Greenkeepers giving them the opportunity to listen and learn and to present their views on modern Greenkeeping in the UK today.

The highlights of the trip for me were to meet nine other like-minded Greenkeepers from home being introduced to the British Consulate General, making many new friends and surviving an earthquake.

On a final note I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my Section and in particular to Bert Cross for putting my name forward for the trip and to BIGGA for selecting me to represent the Association for which I was honoured to do so and a big thank you to Bernhard & Co for their generous sponsorship.

Lastly my thanks to Jimmy Richardson my room mate.

Below: Sam McLean of Bernhards pictured with the famous ten

