



Welcome

THE BEST WAY FORWARD

We're in difficult times at the moment. War is filling our television screens and at home the economy is being forecast as being just on the wrong side of a recession. The impact is being felt at golf clubs up and down the country and several of our finest Course Managers have been called into the office and been told they are to be made redundant with, in some cases, their role to be carried out by a combination of the Chair of Green and the remaining green staff.

The short, medium and long term implications on the condition of these golf courses will be open to debate, while hopefully those excellent Course Managers will not be out of work too long and will soon be back putting their vast experience, knowledge and expertise to good use at an appreciative golf club.

What it has done is produce calls among some quarters for a trade union to look after the best interests of those working in the greenkeeping profession and provide the muscle required to ensure greenkeepers don't lose jobs needlessly.

As you might expect, we at BIGGA, believe that the brand of support with which we provide our members, is the best way of maximising career development and protection.

In addition to the array of training and educational opportunities available, the Association's Legal Helpline and legal representation has kept many greenkeepers in jobs and secured thousands of pounds in damages for those who have been victims of golf clubs which have broken employment law.

As you will see elsewhere in this issue the Association is also currently setting up a Directory of experienced greenkeepers to offer support to colleagues who are coming under pressure at their clubs. Acting as mentors and possibly mediators on greenkeeping and agronomic matters these people will undoubtedly do a lot of behind-the-scenes work and many greenkeepers will remain in post who might otherwise have joined the ranks of the unemployed.

We at BIGGA feel that this is the best way to support our members, together with the close relationships the Association has developed with other golfing bodies including the R&A, the Golf Unions and the Secretaries' and Golf Club Owners' Associations.

One of the difficulties a Union would find in operating within the golf industry is that each golf club is an entity in its own right and negotiating employment rights and pay deals with approximately 2,700 different employers would be difficult. To make an impact, a Union's ultimate sanction of strike action would involve galvanising the support of many greenkeepers who are happy with their lot at golf clubs who look after their staff.

In difficult financial times clubs, like any other business, look to make cuts and the people with the higher salaries in an organisation are usually at greatest risk.

If this is done illegally BIGGA will provide the legal help necessary but if a club has gone through the correct procedures it may be unfair but not illegal and there is little the Association, or a Union, could do to change that.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

SETTING UP A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR MEMBERS

The Association is currently establishing a Directory of Members who are willing to support fellow greenkeepers when the need arises with advice and guidance from a greenkeeping perspective. This might be when a greenkeeper is experiencing employment difficulties with his club and such advice will be of assistance to back up support received from the Legal Helpline Service. Alternatively, it might be a specific problem on his golf course when a second opinion would be helpful. Members need support for many

reasons and the setting up of this Directory will further assist BIGGA in promoting the welfare of its members.

Those putting their names forward for the Directory can be assured that referral for assistance will be on a geographical basis thereby minimising the time and travel involved for those giving of their services.

If you feel that you can support your fellow greenkeepers in this way, please contact Neil Thomas at BIGGA HOUSE.

TREKKING UP KILIMANJARO

James McCormack, Head Greenkeeper at Kirriemuir GC, will be trekking up Kilimanjaro early next year to raise money for the Anthony Nolan Trust, a registered charity which helps provide bone marrow for patients suffering from leukaemia and other bone marrow diseases. The trust receives no help from the government and relies solely on fundraising.

The trek itself will last for six days, three and a half days to the top of Uhuru peak, a total of 5895m and two and half days of descent.

"This is the first time I have attempted anything like this. I'm not a hill walker but I do plenty of walking at work," he said.

"Climbing Kilimanjaro is described as the experience of a lifetime and it certainly will be that for me," added James.

James is trying to raise around £4,000 and

anyone who would like to sponsor or make a donation should send it to James at Kirriemuir GC, Northmuir, Kirriemuir, DD8 4LN and cheques should be made payable to The Anthony Nolan trust.



NEW FACE AT ROMILEY GOLF CLUB

Damon Beverley has been appointed as new Head Greenkeeper of Romiley Golf.

Damon (2nd from right) heads a young, highly qualified and enthusiastic greenkeeping team at Romiley.

He started his career at Holdsworth Golf Club followed by two years service at Stamford Golf Club. He joined the greenkeeping staff at Romiley in 1998 and is delighted to be currently involved in new tee construction at the 7th and 9th holes. The new drainage system, costing over £100,000, has provided Romiley members with excellent all year round golf conditions and is constantly being improved and upgraded.

Michael Moore [1st left] has been appointed as First Assistant and Chris Harrison, Chairman of Greens Committee,

commenting on the appointments of Damon and Michael said that they were well deserved and the Romiley greenkeeping team were fully committed to improving the quality and presentation of the course for members and visitors to the club.



BIGGA GOLF DAY

Anyone who wishes to enter a team in the annual BIGGA Golf Day, which this year is being held on Monday, June 23, should contact Sarah Sowerby at BIGGA HOUSE Tel: 01347 833800 by May 1. As ever the event is being held at Aldwark Manor and the cost of £200 + Vat includes pre golf bacon roll, ploughman's lunch, refreshments at the halfway house, a barbecue and prizes.

The picture on page 14 of last month's issue was actually of the 11th hole on Parasampia G&CC, Newbury, and not The Berkshire. The image had been included on the disc of what had been assumed to be all Berkshire Golf Club images. Apologies to both golf clubs and to any reader who may have been confused.

Email press releases and new product updates to; scott@bigga.co.uk

SCOTTISH EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The BIGGA Scottish Region Greenkeeping Conference was once again held at the Business Learning Centre, Lauder College, Dunfermline, at the beginning of March. This year we attracted over 160 delegates that included greens convenors, greenkeepers and representatives of the industry to the College for our Conference.

Scotland's Education Convenor, Robert Hogarth, Course Manager, Cardrona Hotel & Golf Course chaired the morning session and he opened the Conference by introducing Tim Earley, Managing Director, Waste2Water Europe Ltd. Tim led the way with an excellent talk on why we need a properly constructed wash-off area and gave us several examples of the benefit of such a system.

Next we had Mark Gordon, of Eamonn Wall & Co, on selecting the correct wood for your course. Mark delivered a most informative and interesting talk.

After the break we had the present Deputy Chairman of the Association and Golf Course & Estate Manager from De Vere Carden Park Hotel, Andy Campbell. Andy



The conference speakers

spoke at length about the managing of an estate that covers 750 acres, containing two golf courses, tennis courts, Off Road driving and a vineyard.

To round of the morning session we had Justin Smith, Managing Director of Turftrax Ground Management, who stood in at short notice for Richard Earl. Justin spoke about Turftrax's unique scanning technology, he spoke at length about the benefits of this system in relation to preparing and maintaining high quality surfaces.

After lunch, Ian Henderson, Managing Director of Golf Finance explained to us the various methods of funding available to golf clubs. This included the purchase of machinery and how to support this venture. With several of the clubs represented by committee members, including green convenors and I am sure that this talk would be of interest to them.

Representing the Home of Golf we had Gordon Moir, Links Superintendent, St Andrews Links Trust. Gordon gave us an insight into the structure and running of the St Andrews Links. From the office staff through to the greenkeeping staff they all have a role to play in ensuring the smooth running of the six courses. He provided us with details of the rounds played and the cost to the visitors and local club members. Definitely

the place to play your golf.

Finally we had Steve Isaac, Senior Turf Agronomist, STRI who spoke at length about his recent trip to New Zealand. The title of which was 'Turf Culture in New Zealand, Half A World Away, But So Close To Home'. This was a most interesting talk and with some interesting slides of the golf courses in New Zealand finished of the Conference in fine style.

The Scottish Region of BIGGA are once again indebted to the speakers for sparing the time and effort to attend our Conference and once again provide us with informative and topical talks relating to the Fine Turf Industry.

To the Patrons of the Region our thanks for your continued support. Your patronage enables us to provide a first class venue at the Business Learning Centre in Lauder College, which in turn helps us to attract speakers from throughout the country to Dunfermline every year.

Finally, this year's winner of the Harry Diamond Memorial Quaich, which is presented to the Student of the Year, was Graham Winter of Kingsbarns Golf Links. Graham received his award from Archie Dunn, Chairman, BIGGA Scottish Region.

Peter J.Boyd, Regional Administrator



Chairman Archie Dunn presents Graham Winter with the Harry Diamond Memorial Quaich

HUNTER GRINDERS

Two new members of the Hunter Grinders team joined Managing Director Keith Cann-Evans at an exhibition in Oslo to support the newly appointed Norwegian dealer; Reinhardt Maskin AS. Tony Snaith has joined the company as Sales Manager, with responsibility for UK and European Sales Development.

Tony is very well known in the turf care industry with a proven track record spanning over 30 years. Ian Robson is Sales and Service Engineer.

Ian has extensive experience in mechanical and electrical engineering and will be responsible for

demonstrations and installations as well as supporting Tony on sales.

"Both men will bring valuable experience and knowledge to an already successful team. The appointment of Reinhardt's as our dealer in Norway is the first in a planned campaign to distribute Hunter Grinders equipment throughout Europe and the USA. With the new office facilities and extended manufacturing space we intend to drive forward the expansion of Hunter Grinders Ltd by introducing new products to the UK and overseas markets in 2003," said Keith.

ACTIVITY DAY WINNER

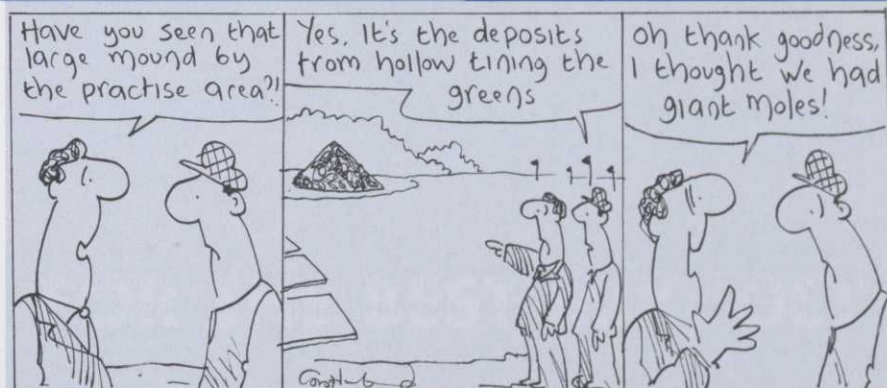


When your membership is due for renewal you receive a newsletter which contains details of how to win an activity day of your choice. Activities are held all over the country so there should be a centre near you. A winner is selected every three months so it does not matter what time of year you renew your membership.

The first activity day winner is Paul Terry of Sheerness Golf Club who has a choice of at least 20 activities to choose from ranging from Ferrari driving to powerboating. Congratulations Paul!

Royal Inverdivot GC...

Strip Cartoonist of the Year www.tonyhusband.co.uk



WALTON HEATH STILL WONDERFUL IN THE WET!

All but two fourballs teed off in the dry at the South East Regions Annual Gentlemen's Evening Golf Tournament. Some actually finished in the dry. But everyone got wet at some stage of the day!

Weather that had been so kind over recent years hit back a bit this year by giving superb spring days leading up to the Friday, started off the day in the same manner and then turned to a freezing wind and heavy rain.

Just over half of the 108 that teed off actually finished but those who did put themselves in with a chance to win some wonderful prizes. Exhibiting this year at Harrogate in the Clubhouse Show were Tutbury Crystal, from Burton-on-Trent. Their huge range of high quality crystal made the organiser's task of purchasing suitable prizes very easy this year.

Although the weather took its toll of the golfers it could not affect the wonderful hospitality of the Walton Heath Clubhouse. There followed a superb meal and a very entertaining after dinner speech from Dr. Jim Greig OBE.

After the speeches the prizes were presented by the Captain of Walton Heath in this their Centenary Year Patrick Frankin-Adams. South East Chairman George Barr then presented a clock set in crystal to Dennis Smith to mark his forthcoming retirement. Dennis has been 'Starter' at this event for almost 20 years and it won't seem the same without his cheerful face greeting golfers on the 1st tee.

The main prizewinners were: 0 - 9. Robert George, Coombe Hill; 10 - 17. George Brown, Deansgate Ridge; 18 - 24. Martin Smith, Regiment Way; Guests. Kevin Stillwell, Hankley Common.

The hardest people of the day who braved the elements had to be the Starters Dennis Smith, Rigby Taylor, and Joe Crawley, Vitax. Richard Haynes, Gem Professional, who got soaked and frozen to death keeping play moving on the blind drive on the 2nd and the Chefs from Sherriff, Johnny Beck and Neil Pullen.

The Region's thanks are due to the Sponsors of this day for their wonderful support: Avoncrop Amenity Services, Bioseed Ltd, BSP Landscapes, CMW Ltd, Complete Weed Control, Ernest Doe and Sons, GEM Professional Ltd, Grass Roots Trading Co, Kestrel Golf and Sports, Machines Direct Ltd, T. Parker and Sons (2003), Rigby Taylor Ltd, Rolawn (Turf Growers) Ltd, The Scotts Co, John Shaw Machinery Ltd, Sheerwater Leisure Ltd, Sherriff Amenity Services Ltd, Sisis Equipment Ltd, Tacit Golf Equipment Ltd, TurfCare Solutions Ltd and Vitax Ltd.

Derek Farrington
Regional Administrator



With his much reduced girth other people (including Chefs Johnny Beck and Neil Pullen from Sherriffs) can now find room to shelter with David Murdoch MG in the half

IS THIS THE SILLY SEASON?

Neil Thomas comments as the show goes on...

A question for greenkeepers and the trade. Was BTME/ClubHouse 2003 a good experience for you and of subsequent benefit to your club or company? Our experience at BIGGA



HOUSE clearly indicates that an overwhelming majority of those in Harrogate this January would reply (and indeed are replying) in the affirmative to that question. We've written to all companies, visited stands during the show, elicited views from the Steering Committee and carried out a comprehensive review. We can say, with conviction, that the vibes are very positive, perhaps more so than at any previous exhibition in Harrogate.

Every event of this size will present problems and where issues have been raised, these have been dealt with on an individual basis and points noted for improvement in 2004. Yes, there will be some adjustments next year which are currently under consideration by BIGGA's Board of Management and being discussed with the Steering Committee. These will be announced in the May issue of Greenkeeper International magazine.

So is that it? Well unfortunately no if you've been reading the industry press. 'Damn with faint praise' is the phrase which comes to mind. Coverage tends to start with dark suspicions of the visitor figures. Surely there is some conspiracy here they ask? Record figures again this year, how can it be? Let's answer that one. BIGGA engages an independent company for its registration procedures before and during the exhibitions. They're not BIGGA's figures as such and, believe it or not, there are ethics involved here as far as we are concerned even if that is not the norm elsewhere. BIGGA is not in the game of manipulating figures. Indeed one journal actually does suggest that more may have made their way in through a loophole which we will seek to close next year. So yes, we are proud of the attendances and surely that is exceedingly good news for the trade and the profession especially when we are being told that more 'buyers' were in evidence this year.

Reading through one trade publication left one quite perplexed. It questioned the point of shows in general and then having argued one way and the other appeared to conclude that anyway there are too many shows. This, of course, is a well worn argument and 'showitis' appears to be a recurring annual 'complaint' which merits discussion. Outbursts of this 'complaint' normally occur twice a year in late September and late January and coincide with the SALTEX and BTME/ClubHouse. While the vast majority see 'health' benefits for their companies and clubs in participating in these shows, those with 'showitis' are bent on eradication as the solution to their 'complaint'. Drastic perhaps and time for a shot of reality. This would suggest that there are two main aspects to any show, the company displaying its goods and the customer in attendance to consider his purchasing options or indeed to actually place his orders. Yes there will be others present with peripheral interests but the core of any show is the company/customer relationship. We read much with regard to company costs in relation to these shows and these we know are considerable. But

we hear little of the customer, in our case the greenkeeper. Whatever happened to 'the customer is king?'. He has decisions to make, a budget to spend and, at the end of the day, his decisions have a direct affect on the profitability of a company. Many of our members oversee large budgets for their clubs and it is in Harrogate that many of these budgets are allocated or actually spent. In essence both parties need each other and in the ability to bring them together through a vibrant and successful show lies our success.

A company may well consider it a more viable option to meet many of its customers over three days under one roof in Harrogate rather than have people on the road accomplishing this over a much longer period. That is not for BIGGA to decide. The important point is that companies exhibit at Harrogate, or at any other show, after a considered judgement that it is in their best interests. BIGGA has no inalienable right to believe that companies will continue exhibiting there year on year if that is not indeed the case. So we appreciate their custom, work through a Steering Committee and make every attempt to meet the particular needs of individual companies who are incurring substantial costs. Neither do we forget the customer in providing a show and educational programme which will make him want to return in future years. Finally we look ahead, witness the advent of the ClubHouse exhibition. We will aim for it to grow and prove a long term success. In turn this will benefit the whole event and those who partake in it, be it company or customer. BIGGA is under no illusion in that we must continue to produce each year successful exhibitions for both the companies and their customers. We stand or fall on that and if we fail BTME and ClubHouse will disappear, which in the current argument would indeed mean two less shows. 'Hallelujah' will be the reaction of a vocal minority. The evidence would suggest that this would not be in the best interests of the industry or the profession. Rest assured BIGGA has no intention of letting this happen. We have been in Harrogate since 1989 and intend for the exhibitions both to continue and grow in the future. In the great British tradition, we can assume that some will continue to try and knock us down. So be it.

The machinations of the industry press are, therefore, becoming somewhat tedious. The irony is, of course, that these same publications are beneficiaries of the BTME/ClubHouse. They are there in force, talking to their own customers, securing advertising for their publications and generally enjoying a successful week. Good for them and we are much pleased in that regard.

Jumping on bandwagons or being negative thereafter presumably makes for good copy, though one particular journal appears to have gone quite downmarket on this occasion. In an attempt to titillate its readers it shows far more interest in 'exhibitors' at an alternative venue in Harrogate as its photographs only too clearly demonstrate.

How the industry press choose to cover BTME/ClubHouse or the show scene in general is their own business but patrons of the BTME/ClubHouse will surely see such copy for what it is worth - the generation of publicity for the publications in question and with little other merit. It certainly won't distract BIGGA from staging a successful event in Harrogate next January and setting out to attract still more exhibitors and visitors. We believe that the demand for BTME/ClubHouse will continue and we will be here to meet it whilst fulfilling and hopefully exceeding expectations for both companies and their customers.