



Welcome

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF "BEST PRACTICE"

February saw the birth of a venture which may prove to be one of the most important and useful the game of golf has seen in some time.

The launch of the R&A's Best Practice Guidelines - Website www.bestcourseforgolf.org - gives all those golf clubs, which are looking to do the right thing but are unsure of the direction in which to go, a real steer.

It will also give Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers, struggling to pull their clubs in the right direction, a useful ally and pointer when it comes to tackling those in the club who feel they know best.

Many people within the game had felt that the R&A needed to provide a lead in such matters and it was R&A Chief Executive, Peter Dawson, who three years ago grabbed the nettle, formed the Golf Course Committee and challenged its members to come up with a method of helping clubs to go about things in the correct manner, not just in Britain, but in large chunks of the world as well.

"Best Practice" is defined as "Management of golf courses in an environmentally and economically sustainable way".

As you will have seen from last month's magazine what has been produced is a user-friendly website which gives assistance in five areas of real importance to golf clubs - management, greenkeeping, environment, planning and development and advice and research.

Of course, you can have the most useful tool in the world but if people don't take advantage of it the benefits are rendered null and void so it is pleasing to hear from Steve Isaac, Assistant Director of Golf Course Management at the R&A, that the first month on-line has been very successful.

A total of 337 clubs have registered from 40 countries with 62% of them coming from Great Britain and Ireland. Of these, 18 clubs have actually started the process laid down by the site, in showing the commitment to bring Best Practice to their clubs.

In addition 15 national Golf Unions and Federations have signed up. Also encouraging is the fact that 3,442 visitors have taken a look at the site and there were over 150,000 hits in the first month.

"Our Committee is delighted with the response in the site's first month on line but would encourage more clubs and Federations to register," said Steve.

I would endorse that. It costs nothing to take a look and I'm sure that if you were to register and get involved in the site, three things can happen, all good:

1. If you are struggling with a particular problem the site should be able to help you towards a solution.
2. The R&A name carries a lot of kudos and clout and it might be the catalyst needed to move the course in the direction you wish.
3. It might just rubber stamp the fact that you are on the right lines. Having that in your back pocket when you next attended a Green Committee would be a nice little piece of insurance.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

THANK YOU FROM THE THOMAS'

My family and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all friends and colleagues who gave us such incredible support during Neil's illness and ultimately his death.

Many thanks to all who attended the funeral which was a truly memorable occasion and a wonderful tribute to Neil.

I would also like to thank everyone for the many cards, messages, letters and donations which were very much appreciated.

We received over 300 cards, and donations to St. Michael's Hospice have amounted to over £1,500.

As many of you will be aware, Neil received the most wonderful care for the six weeks that he was a patient at the hospice so I know this money will be put to good use. Many thanks to you all once again.

Elaine, Scott, Grant, Adam, Natalie and family.

BIGGA'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED



John Pemberton has been appointed BIGGA's new Executive Director in succession to Neil Thomas, who died in February.

John, who had been Acting Executive Director during Neil's

illness, was offered the position by the Board of Management after the March Board meeting.

"John has done a superb job for the Association during a very difficult time," said BIGGA National Chairman, Andy Campbell.

"John enjoys the full support of the Board of Management and I know that with his

experience, drive and enthusiasm the BIGGA membership can be sure that the Association is in safe hands. BIGGA is very lucky to possess high quality staff and you can be sure that John will get the most from them and move the Association forward."

John joined BIGGA in 1993 as Finance and Administration Manager and was promoted to Deputy Executive Director last year.

"I am delighted to have been given the Board's endorsement and am sure that with the team we have at BIGGA we will continue to move the Association on from strength to strength," said John.

A profile of BIGGA's new Executive Director will appear in the May issue of Greenkeeper International.

THE RUNNING MAN

Pennard Golf Club Course Manager, Peter Lacey, is in full training at the moment for the gruelling 26.2 miles of the London Marathon.

Peter has already lined up £700 worth of sponsorship and if that is not sufficient encouragement for him to complete the race he has vowed to tail Nell McAndrew for the length of the race.

"I want to break four hours and with a real effort, and in Nell's slipstream, I'd love to complete it in three and a half hours," said Peter, who has already worn out three pairs of trainers in gearing up for the race.

"I'm currently training for at least four and mostly five or even six nights per week and alternating running with cycling in the gym.

"On each run I cover between eight and 12 miles, mostly off road, while I do a big run of between 16 and 20 miles on a Sunday. With a little luck and a load of cod-liver oil and glucosamine sulphate pills I'll stay injury free in the run up.

The race is at the end of this month and anyone who wishes to sponsor Peter, who is running in aid of the British Heart Foundation, can contact him on 01792 233923.



SCOTTISH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The BIGGA Scottish Region Greenkeeping Conference was once again held at the Business Learning Centre, Lauder College, Dunfermline in early March.

With 168 delegates in attendance this was the second year in a row there have been more than 160 people attending, including a cross section of the fine turf industry, greens convenors and members.

Scottish Region Education Convenor, Robert Hogarth, Course Manager, Cardrona Hotel and Golf Course, chaired the morning session.

He opened the Conference by introducing the

gave a talk entitled "So you think it's easy selling machinery to golf courses". He covered aspects of selling machines and also the benefits of top dressing.

Finally, to end the morning session, Rex Kimberley, from Terralift Earthsafe Turf Nutrition spoke of his early work in research programmes on ruminant digestion on soil fertility and expanded to speak about liquid products that proved very capable for sports turf grasses and soils.

After lunch the session was chaired by Scottish Chairman, Iain Barr, Course Manager at Largs Golf Club.

His first task was to present the 'Harry Diamond Quaich', which is given annually to the Student Greenkeeper of the Year. The 2003 winner was Paul Todd, of Lanark Golf Club.

The first speaker in the afternoon was to have been Neil Baldwin, of AmegA Science, but unfortunately he was taken ill that morning and was unable to present his talk.

At short notice both Duncan McGilvray and Richard Minton stepped in and presented a short 10-minute talk to the Conference. The Association is extremely grateful to both these gentlemen

for helping out at such short notice.

Following them was David McLay Kidd of DMK Golf Design who extended his talk and spoke about his progression from early education at College through to Golf Course Architect.

David's talk highlighted the many and varied projects he had been involved in from Nepal, USA and the UK. He displayed a great passion

for his work and this was evident in his designs and attention to detail.

Finally Ian MacMillan, Course Manager, Murrayshall Hotel and GC gave a talk entitled 'Simply Divine'. No doubt delegates were all wondering what Ian would conjure up and they were certainly not disappointed.

From his black bin bag he produced his tools for the talk. Twigs, crystals, maps and a divining-rod. He spoke about his search for water and how he had used his newly acquired skills in tracing water at his club. Useful for drainage and tracing bursts etc. The talk, delivered in Ian's own inimitable style, finished off the Conference on a high note.

The Board would like to extend their thanks to Andy Campbell, National Chairman from Carden Park and Scott MacCallum, the Magazine Editor, for taking the time to travel up for the day.

Thanks also go to the Patrons of BIGGA Scottish Region for their continued support. The patronage enables the Region to provide a first class venue at the Business Learning Centre in Lauder College, which in turn helps to attract speakers from throughout the country to Dunfermline every year.

Finally the board of BIGGA Scottish Region would like to place on record their thanks to the delegates for their support and attendance at the Conference. The Region is now in the process of organising next year's Conference and is looking forward to welcoming everyone back in 2005.

Peter J. Boyd

Scottish Regional Administrator



▲ Paul Todd receives the Harry Diamond Quaich from Iain Barr

first speaker, Duncan McGilvray, Course Manager, Potter Bars Golf Club, who spoke on 'Our Profession' and the need for leadership and control of courses. It proved a most informative and interesting talk.

Next to speak was Richard Minton, from Complete Weed Control. He opened delegates eyes to the necessity of safe and controlled Pesticide application. After a break David Briggs

Royal Inverdivot GC...

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



ACCOLADE FOR JAMES

Greenkeeper James Plant (23) is De Vere Dunston Hall's Employee of the Year 2003. Staff are nominated for the accolade by their colleagues with final judging by the joint staff consultative committee.

James received his award, £300 of De Vere vouchers plus a clock for winning his departmental nomination, at a ceremony at Dunston Hall, compered by former Norwich City goalkeeper, Bryan Gunn.

"I was shocked and overwhelmed by the award. It was really unexpected. I love coming to work and hope to eventually become a Head Greenkeeper with the De Vere group," said James

CLOSURE ON A DEVASTATING INCIDENT

June 17, 1998, is a date which will forever be imprinted on Gary Potter's brain.

That was the day when his life changed completely. It was the date when the roof of the maintenance facility of Skipton Golf Club collapsed on top of him, smashed his back and left him counting his lucky stars that he is still around to tell the tale.

Last November, five and a half years after the accident, compensation won by BIGGA-appointed lawyers, was finally agreed ensuring that while Gary is still in permanent pain, the Potter family are now financially secure.

Gary was the Course Manager at Skipton and was driving a compact tractor into a shed which was no longer quite big enough for all the machinery required to be locked away.

Gary did as was always done and drove in slowly requiring to touch the back wall to ensure no space went to waste. On this occasion though he was just about to dismount the tractor when he heard a noise, looked up and saw bricks and a concrete lintel falling towards him.

Instinctively he pulled back hoping the roll bar would come to his rescue and his actions did help. The lintel just missed his head, flicking off his baseball cap, but unfortunately it bounced back towards him landing on his lap, pinning him while the rest of the rubble came tumbling down on top of him.

Remarkably, despite the searing pain, Gary was able to reach for his breast pocket and his mobile phone and call the emergency services himself.

He then called the pro shop and got hold of the club handyman, Jack Parker, a useful weightlifter,

who came to his rescue. Jack was able to lift the lintel from Gary's lap, a task which subsequently required three men.

"I think adrenaline helped Jack and ever since I've called him my saviour," said Gary, whose attitude to an accident which might destroy lesser men, couldn't be more positive.

He was taken to hospital where tests confirmed that he'd shattered his 12th vertebrae and crushed the muscle on his right leg.

But they said they could rebuild him and a fortnight later he was learning how to walk again, a task made more difficult with two seven and a half inch titanium rods holding his back together, a role they will fulfil for the rest of his life.

He was unable to work for two-and-a-half years relying for much of the time on his BIGGA Personal Accident Insurance and state benefits, while the lawyer, Bristol-based Lyon Davidson, appointed by the BIGGA Legal Helpline fought his case for compensation.

"The late Doug Bell, the Northern Regional Administrator, was wonderful, he brought flowers for my wife and told me to fill out the forms necessary to pursue my case whenever I felt fit enough to do so.

"My lawyer, Kevin Morgan, was also superb. I only met him once in person, most of the time it was over the phone and by e-mail but he couldn't have been more thorough."

It is customary in the case of major accidents for at least a three year sabbatical before a pay out with most being settled in five to seven years and in Gary's case the five and a half years was about par for the course.

Unfortunately, as the driver of the tractor Gary was held to be one third responsible for the accident and as a result lost one third of the compensation pay out, but the £200,000 he received has enabled him to pay off his mortgage and plan for the future with some optimism.

"I can't believe it when I hear people complain that BIGGA does nothing for them. I'm a prime case of what BIGGA can do for you.

"Had I pursued the case myself I would have lost around £25,000 of my compensation in legal fees but it cost me nothing, while whenever I was in contact with people from BIGGA they couldn't be any more helpful," said Gary, who is now an Associate Member.

"You never know when something similar might happen to you and while BIGGA offers so much to its members, if there was nothing else but the Personal Accident Insurance, it would still be worth every greenkeeper in the country becoming a member."

Unable to carry on working as a greenkeeper, Gary initially worked part-time for Myerscough College as an assessor but for the last three and a half years he has been a Technical Advisor for Vitax.

"I love my job but I really do miss greenkeeping. It was in my blood but I'm delighted that, although in constant pain, I can walk, drive and carry on my life."



TOP JOB FOR EUAN



▲ Euan Grant

St Andrews Links Trust has appointed Euan Grant as Head Greenkeeper in charge of the Old Course, following the recently-announced departure of Eddie Adams to become a Greenkeeping

Consultant with the PGA European Tour.

Since joining the Links in June 2002, Euan Grant has been Head Greenkeeper in charge of the New Course. He previously worked as Head Greenkeeper at Marriott Forest of Arden Golf and Country Club where he was involved in course set up for two English Opens.

He also worked on the construction and subsequent management of two 18-hole courses in Surrey. Highly qualified, Euan won the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award in 1994.

In his two years at the Links he has made a number of improvements to the New Course including the creation of new championship tees to

bring the course to 6,769 yards.

"Euan has impressed us with his management skills and dedication," said Gordon Moir, Links Superintendent at the Links Trust.

"We have every confidence that under his management the Old Course will continue to go from strength to strength and to be presented in the traditional way."

Eddie, 35, had worked for St Andrews Links Trust for 19 years.

He became Head Greenkeeper of the Old Course in 1993 at the age of 24, making him the youngest person to hold that position in the course's 600 year history.

He had overseen course preparations for two Open Championships, 10 Dunhill Championships and 10 Links Trophy events, making more changes and adding more new tees to the course than any of his predecessors with the exception of Old Tom Morris, Custodian of Links for 40 years.

"Naturally the Old Course is very dear to me but I am looking forward to a brand new challenge," said Eddie, who will continue to be based in his home town of St Andrews.

"The focus will be course preparation for tournaments and I will be using all the knowledge and skills which I have developed at the Home of

Golf."

His new position as the only full-time Greenkeeping Consultant employed by The European Tour will involve him in liaison with courses which are staging Tour events.

"The Tour's greenkeeping support team is a vital service to many of our venues and I am delighted that we have

secured someone of Eddie's knowledge and experience to complement our existing staff," said David Garland, Director of Tour Operations for the PGA European Tour.

Gordon Moir added, "It is generally recognised that the condition of the Old Course has improved year after year and this is thanks to the efforts of Eddie and his team. However, I am delighted that he has been offered this great opportunity to work on the Tour and wish him every success."



▲ Eddie Adams