



Welcome

MEMORIES OF NEIL THOMAS

Everyone who knew Neil Thomas well will have a memory of him that in the years to come, whenever his name is brought up in conversation, they will be able to recall, and then smile.

Having been with Neil at virtually every one of BIGGA's major events over the last nine years – ironically poor health didn't prevent either of us from attending any of these until Neil's devastating illness – I have been fortunate enough to have quite a few of these memories.

There were the Harrogate weeks which Neil always used to relish, despite the fact that the pressure on the week to succeed was immense; there were also Saltexes; National Championships; Open Championship weeks and any number of other occasions which we attended on behalf of the Association – he to do the formal bit and me to record them for the magazine.

After a long day it would be back to the hotel for a wash, a change and then out for a meal. It was often then that you saw Neil at his most relaxed, enjoying a glass of wine and entering into whatever conversation happened to be amusing the table at the time. He had an insatiable thirst for gossip but, such was his knowledge of what was going on in the industry, he was able to pour cold water on many of the tales which, let's be fair, do tend to grow particularly tall in this industry.

You see he had a vast network of "informants" who kept him up to date with movements and events within the industry. It wasn't the first time I'd shoot off to his office with news, hot off the press, only to learn that he'd heard it some time before.

But back to the memories. There was the trip to Finland, back in the mid-90s where Neil and I were introduced to the invigorating delights of the Finnish sauna, completed with a plunge into a freezing cold lake; the series of Hayter competitions, including the Hayter International Cup match in Atlanta, an experience no-one privileged enough to attend will ever forget and, of course, the opening of BIGGA HOUSE, by HRH the Duke of York, in October 1998.

Neil often used to talk about how he started off in a single room in the STRI building, at Bingley, with just himself and a secretary. To have seen the Association grow to the extent that we had our own purpose built office building, opened by a member of the Royal Family, showed just how far the Association had come. I know it made Neil extremely proud.

We also shared an interest in rugby and we would often sit in his office and bemoan the current form of our two national sides. The fact that Wales cuffed Scotland in the Millennium Stadium just before he died would certainly not have been lost on him. I know he was the first person I thought of when the final whistle went.

There you are. One of those memories popping up already.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

NEW AWARDS

The IOG is launching new Senior Awards this month which will provide important career advancement opportunities for greenkeepers as well as sports and amenity turf managers.

The IOG has been granted Delegated Authority by City and Guilds to award Licentiate and Graduate awards in Sports Turf Management.

The Licentiate Award (comparable to NVQ Level Four) is suitable for team supervisors and first line managers who have already achieved a NVQ Level Three equivalent qualification and have at least five years experience in the industry. Assessment is by means of a review of a detailed portfolio of career extension evidence.

The Graduateship Award (comparable to Honours Degree or NVQ Level Five) is aimed at more senior managers. The IOG offers two routes of entry for this award – the Project Route which requires a 10,000 word work-based thesis, and a direct route for those who have already achieved a Level Four equivalent qualification and who can provide a comprehensive statement of management achievement together with supporting evidence. Both routes require attendance at an interview board. Award holders are entitled to use the appropriate letters LCGI or UCGI after their name.

A HISTORIC REUNION

At The BTME Clubhouse exhibition in January this year, I had the pleasure of re-uniting an ex-greenkeeper with the 1964 18-inch Auto Certes greens mower he used on a daily basis at Cotswold Hills Golf Club during the 1970s. It had his name

"Rob" on the fuel tank. Robin Greaves, went on to become Head Greenkeeper at Bristol and Clifton and then Course Manager at Thornbury Golf Centre, Avon, before becoming a salesman for Countrywide, sports turf division.

It is an honour to be associated with the history of these machines. Think of all those man-hours and expertise that Rob's

mower witnessed over its 40 years of frontline service cutting greens on a daily basis for at least 20 years and then as a back-up unit for 20 years. All those special days for club events.

Peter Hampton



SISIS ADD TO TEAM



▲ Ian Campbell

Sisis has made three new appointments to its sales team.

After 22 years with Sisis, firstly in development and then as part of the demonstration team, Ian Campbell has now been appointed Territory Manager for Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffs and North Wales. He has a huge amount of experience of Sisis products and looks forward to meeting customers old and new.

Allan Gray is the new Territory Manager for N.E England and Cumbria. His experience in the industry will be of great value to Sisis customers,

many of whom will know him from his time as a Director of Yorkshire Mowers, and more recently as Area Manager for IBEA.

John Milner has been appointed as Demonstrator for S.E. England, working from the Sisis Depot at Merrist Wood College, supporting the S.E Sales team. Jon has experience of the hire trade and has four year's experience as a cricket groundsman at Championship Division 1 level.



▲ Allan Gray



▲ John Milner

SPEEDCUT JOIN UP

Speedcut Contractors Limited based in Oxfordshire, have been elected associate members of the BAGCC, following a recent invitation to join the Association.

"Having admired the professionalism and

quality of workmanship set by the Association and its members for many years, we are delighted that we now have the opportunity to contribute in a positive way from the confines of this prestigious organisation," said Kevin Smith, Contracts Manager.