

# Welcome



## The Future is Bright

Here we are in 2008. Can you believe it? It doesn't seem so long ago that the Millennium seemed a few years off and now we're nearly through the first decade of the current century.

So what does the New Year have in store for us? Well, for a start it's a Leap Year so we'll have to work an extra day for no extra cash! That's the downside, the upside of a Leap Year, for sports' lovers, is that it's an Olympic year and we've got the Beijing Games in the summer to look forward to. I'm sure they will be spectacular, but with China having been preparing athletes for these Olympics for years behind closed doors, and craving success we may find a lot of events being won by sportsmen and women who are currently unknown to the western world. That won't detract from the performances, but it might just make them slightly less interesting for the average television viewer in the UK.

Just after the Olympics, another of the world's top sporting events, the Ryder Cup, will take place at the Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky, and I think we can expect a more closely fought contest than the last couple of meetings when Europe has romped away. A far cry from the old days before GB&I brought in the might of Continental Europe when it was a cake walk for the US every time. With The Open being held at Royal Birkdale golf is sure to have a high profile this year.

I once heard the late athletics' commentator, Ron Pickering, speak at a golf dinner and he said that he always considered athletics to be the greatest sport in the world, but that golf was the greatest game. Quite a nice way of looking at it and it does mean we're in for quite a sporting year.

Back at BIGGA, preparations for Harrogate Week are all but complete and you can be sure that any time spent in Harrogate will be time very well spent indeed. The education programme is second to none and the opportunities to network, strike deals and socialise are quite simply unmatched.

It will be my 13th Harrogate and I've looked forward to each one more than the one before and I'm proud to be involved in the development of an event that any Association in any industry would be delighted to produce.

If I might finish on the merger talks with the IOG. I firmly believe that the aim of forming a new super organisation out of BIGGA and the IOG was something well worth investigating. Indeed, not carrying out the work, as I've said before, could have been seen as a dereliction of duty on the part of both Boards of Management. The fact that agreement could not be reached does not make the exercise any less valuable.

Both organisations will now move forward independently and you can be sure that the future of BIGGA will be bright and exciting in 2008 and beyond.

## IRRIGATION WORKSHOP

Over 30 Midland Section members attended a pretty intensive and wide ranging Irrigation Workshop at The Belfry in late October. The weather could not have been better and the sun shone down which seems quite ironic when discussing the subject of irrigation during 2007. One might wonder what on earth greenkeepers were doing looking at sprinklers or evaluation irrigation requirements when we have just had one of the wettest summers on record. The truth is that irrigation systems still need to be maintained so it is ready when you need it. So any chance to broaden understanding and get practical advice from industry experts was lapped up during this heavily oversubscribed course.

Btliia Secretary, Martyn Jones assembled a superb array of lecturers and the delegates were split into small groups for a 'round robin' of workshops of which the five subjects were: Tony Ware (Tonick Watering Ltd) Electrical faultfinding and repairs; Nigel Wyatt (MJ Abbott Ltd) Pipework malfunction and repairs; Adrian Handbury (Evenproducts Ltd) Sprinkler and solenoid valve maintenance and repairs; Jeff Mountford (Grundfos Ltd) Pumps and pump house maintenance; Martyn Jones (BTLIA) Determining irrigation requirements.

The workshops were designed to cover a range of advice and skills which certainly wetted the appetite of the delegates for further education. The co-ordinator for the event, Paul Woodham said "following some excellent feedback, we recognise that we were only just scratching the surface of irrigation training. We hope to set-up some further courses which will look at some of the finer detail involved with irrigation. The facilities and warm welcome from Kenny McKay and his team at The Belfry have been second to none and the Midland Section have once again benefited from subsidised training offered by BIGGA".

The event was attended by Sami Collins, from BIGGA HQ, in her debut at a section training event. Not only did Sami administer the event but she was also responsible for some great photographs, all 122 of them so there should be no shortage for the calendar next year!

*Paul Woodham, Midland Section*



## COLLEGE SET TO TEE OFF

NVQ level 2 and 3 sports turf students have been busy constructing a three grass surface golf green on campus at Writtle College. The project was co-ordinated by course lecturer, Nigel Beckford, who designed the project to enable students to gain valuable experience in organising and managing a large construction project. The exercise has also proved invaluable to the facilitation of the course, offering students a unique sports turf project to work on.

The students are currently employed on golf courses and sports grounds in and around the Essex County. NVQ Level 3 student, Greg Knight (a finalist at this year's Toro Student of the Year competition), has been involved in the project since the planning and preparation stages in March 2007. Greg commented "The skills gained from my course have been invaluable, I would like to now use the experience gained to progress into a new role as deputy green keeper at the golf course where I work."



The project team

"What I have enjoyed most about the project is seeing the golf green all coming together after all the preparations and hard work put into it."

The golf green project has been funded by the CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence) initiative at the College in collaboration with local industry suppliers. 'Baileys of Norfolk' sponsored the sand, 'British Sugar' the topsoil and 'Barenbrug' sponsored the grass seed and Toro fitted an irrigation system. The sponsorship and involvement from local suppliers has been both encouraging and promising for the College, who intend to use the new golf green facility for future students to compare and contrast the effects of respective maintenance regimes and environment on the selected grass species.

## NATIONAL GREENKEEPERS' AWARD

Q-Plus, an organisation founded by the National Association of Greenkeepers of Spain, has awarded La Manga Club the first certificate in Spain for the quality of its three, 18-hole championship courses.

There are 514 golf courses in Spain and La Manga Club is the first golf club in the country to receive this award.



It was presented by Murcia's Regional Minister for Tourism, José Pablo Ruiz Abellán, and it analyses the infrastructure of the golf courses' environment, certifying that La Manga Club adheres to stringent quality and environmental standards, as well as general good practices.

Chris Davies, Director of Golf at La Manga Club, said "We are honoured to have been presented with this award which recognises the year-round hard work and professionalism of our Course Superintendent, Cosme Bergareche, and his greenkeeping team."

"We have maintained extremely high standards for many years now and that's why our courses, and this resort in general, are renowned the world over. We constantly endeavour to provide our golfers with the best conditions possible".

## INCREASED FUNDING SECURES FUTURE

Shropshire Horticultural Society has significantly increased the Percy Thrower Trust Fund to secure the long-term future of The Young Horticulturist of the Year Competition.

The Institute of Horticulture are also delighted to launch the new logo for the competition. Derived from the Institute of Horticulture's own three leaf symbol, the logo will help promote the competition in colleges, workplaces and the press.

'The competition is the IoH's best way of encouraging young people to pursue careers in horticulture' said Susan Nicholas, national organiser of the competition since 2001. 'It deserves its own identity. We want to catch the eye of everyone who's under 30 and involved in any sector of our industry.'

'The competition tests a wide range of horticultural knowledge, but Rocky Coles, our youngest winner, was just 19 when he won in 2002. He had the trip of a lifetime to study nursery stock production in New Zealand, thanks to the Percy Thrower Travel Bursary. At the other end of the age scale, Mel Clench made it just in time at 29.'

The Bursary is worth £2,000 for the winner and funds a study tour to wherever they would like to go. Jimmy O'Connor, who won the 2007 competition at Glasnevin Botanical Gardens in Dublin earlier this year, is planning to study the flora of Greenland, before global warming alters it forever!

## AMERICANS TO ATTEND HARROGATE WEEK

Bernhard and Company will be sending 10 Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) Class A members to BIGGA's Harrogate Week 2008.

Members who were interested had to go to the Bernhard and Company website and fill-out an application form. The response was tremendous and with applicants being of such a high standard, it was a very tough decision for the company.



The GCSAA members who will be traveling to Harrogate week in 2008 are: Sean Sullivan, CGCS at The Briarwood in Billings, Montana; Rafael Barajas, CGCS at Hacienda Golf Club in La Habra, California; Russell Vandehey, CGCS at the Oregon Golf Club in West Linn, Oregon; Michael Stachowicz, superintendent at Dedham Country and Polo Club in Dedham, Massachusetts; Stephen Cohoon, CGCS at Heritage Hunt Golf and Country Club in Gainesville, Virginia; Tim Paulson, superintendent at Spanish Hills Country Club in Camarillo, California; Glen Misiaszek, CGCS at Cohasset Golf Club in Cohasset, Massachusetts; Eric Foerster, CGCS at The Ironbridge Golf Club in Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Christopher Gray Sr., superintendent at Marvel Golf Club in Benton, Kentucky; Clay Putnam, CGCS, director of operations at Serviscape LLC in Michigan City, Indiana.

Similar to the trip Bernhard and Company sponsor for BIGGA members to travel to the Golf Industry Show in the US, GCSAA members will attend the BTME's conference and exhibition, participate in education seminars, network with greenkeepers, and visit several golf courses during their visit to the UK.

## HIGHLY REGARDED PROFESSIONAL APPOINTED

Steve Evans, Course Manager at Yelverton Golf Club is to join the Duchy College in the position of full time Greenkeeper Tutor and Assessor. Steve has been green keeping for over 28 years and has served on the BIGGA Section and Regional Committees in South Wales, and in Devon and Cornwall throughout this period. He has been Chairman of both organisations.



Left to right: Brian Summers, Steve Evans, Bill Pile, Terry Farkins & James Collings

Steve says, "I am looking forward to my new role within the industry, where I can pass on some of my experience to the students in the workplace."

Steve replaces Bill Pile, a life member of BIGGA and someone who, along with Ron Skinner, Programme Manager and Chris Shepherd, Training Agency Operations Manager, was instrumental in setting up the unique green keeping training programmes at Duchy College with many local and national industries part of the programme.

The course has many experienced tutors and assessors that work throughout the south west. Brian Summers, Course Manager at Carlyon Bay Golf Club, brings over 40 years greenkeeping experience with him and was one of the founder members of the Devon and Cornwall Section of BIGGA. Terry Farkins, Course Manager at Dartmouth Golf Club, is also a part time tutor, assessor and Internal Verifier at the college. Add to that list, Jonathan Bullen of Staddon Heights Golf Club, Graeme Gallimore of Launceston Golf Club, James Collins formerly of Falmouth Golf Club and Billy Mitchell of Perranporth Golf Club and indeed many more Course Managers in Devon and Cornwall. It certainly stands the college on a very firm platform for the future.

Duchy College gained Greenkeeper Training Committee (GTC) approved status last year, due to the tremendous amount of hard work by all members of staff. The college also enjoys the full support of the Devon and Cornwall Section of BIGGA.

## SCOTTISH REGION CONFERENCE

The 2008 BIGGA Scottish Region Conference will take place at the Business Learning Centre, Carnegie College, (formerly Lauder College), Dunfermline on Tuesday, March 4, 2008.

This year's speakers include Gerry Byrne, Resort Superintendent, The K Club, Ireland, Jonathan Smith, Chief Executive, Golf Environment Europe and Archie Stewart, Landmaps Ltd. Other speakers include, from America Ron Alexander, Ron Alexander Associates, Allan Patterson, Head Greenkeeper, The Castle Course, St. Andrews Links Trust and finally Gordon Holms, CSC Amenity. Tickets cost £34, which includes Tea/Coffee on arrival, coffee/pastry at the mid morning break and buffet lunch.

Full details and booking forms will be posted to all members in Scotland and further forms can be obtained by contacting Peter J.Boyd, Regional Administrator on Tel 0141 616 3440 or [pj.boyd@btinternet.com](mailto:pj.boyd@btinternet.com)





## SECTION SECRETARIES

BIGGA's Section Secretaries converged on BIGGA HOUSE at the beginning of December learn more about the working of Headquarters and have the opportunity of sharing experiences with each other.

Everyone met at Aldwark Manor Hotel for dinner on the Sunday evening before the formal proceedings began at 8.30am sharp the next morning.

The day was chaired by National Chairman, Billy McMillan, and began with John Pemberton giving an overview of the Association's work and current priorities.



Picture shows all the delegates with the BIGGA HQ Staff

John was followed by Head of Learning and Development Sami Collins and GTC Executive Director, David Golding, who underlined what learning and development was available and the funding support which could be tapped into. David spoke on the role of the GTC and answered questions from the floor. Sami stressed the fact that any assistance a Section required in setting up a training course would be forthcoming and, if requested in advance, a subsidy could be provided to off-set the cost.

Following a break Communication's Manager, Scott MacCallum, gave an insight into the various forms of communication available to, and used by, the Association and explained some of the initiatives to expect on the BIGGA Website in future months.

Scott was followed by a talk from Paul Angier, of legal firm, Irwin Mitchell, who provide BIGGA's Legal Helpline and legal support; Frank O'Malley, of Arc Legal Protection, and Andrew Lawrence, of Heath Lambert.

Together they highlighted some of the issues that were currently fielding and stressed that the service was for all potential legal support from complaints about holiday problems; faulty cooks as well as employment problems and they reminded everyone that the service was for BIGGA members and their families and not just the individual member.

After lunch, where the rest of the Headquarters staff had a chance to meet the Secretaries, Head of Membership Services, Vanessa Depe, outlined the many member benefits and services that were available and Sales Manager, Rosie Hancher, explained the working of the Sales Office within BIGGA HQ.

BIGGA Accountant, Stephen Coates, then provided a brief talk on how to go about budgeting for and organising a Section Training Event. The day concluded with a Question and Answer Session conducted by Billy.



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## MERGER TALKS EXAMINED

The news that the Board of the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) had decided to terminate merger talks came as a sorry blow to the Board of BIGGA.

Talks, while slow, had seemed to be leading towards a compromise solution and the timetable to produce a report by the end of January 2008 appeared achievable. From the start the representatives of both BIGGA and the IOG agreed upon the principle of a combined business which lead to the signing of a 'Heads of Agreement' document that clearly laid out the purpose of the merger talks. Both sides recognised that the most difficult task facing them would be to produce a report to members that would secure their support, always assuming that the result of the talks indicated that a merger was to be recommended.

An in-depth analysis of existing memberships benefits, membership categories and subscription rates was undertaken by the staff of BIGGA and the IOG and it was noted that while both parties offered an excellent range of benefits there was, however, a large disparity between the categories and subscription levels. A formula was agreed that simplified the categories while retaining the professional standards needed to qualify for Full Membership and an alternative subscription structure seemed to provide an acceptable solution. Additional tangible benefits seemed to be difficult to pinpoint however the commercial advantages of a merger helped focus everyone's mind. In the final analysis it seems that the Board of the IOG does not feel that there are enough significant additional membership benefits to warrant continuation of the talks. That is, and always has been, the prerogative of either party. Meetings were always conducted in an orderly, friendly manner under the competent chairmanship of David Teasdale and the time given by representatives is appreciated by the BIGGA Board. And so where does BIGGA go from here?

Firstly I would emphasise that there has been no fall out between BIGGA and the IOG, if anything there is now a better understanding of each other's business and the common ground that exists. Secondly, the BIGGA Board has established a working party to review its original intention to develop the Association by widening the scope of membership to enable groundsmen to become members in their own right. Groundsmen can currently join BIGGA as Associate members however this gives them only limited benefits of membership. Another objective of the working party will be to consider converting the Association into a limited company, which had been identified sometime ago as beneficial, but was placed on hold pending the outcome of the merger talks. This will include converting the Rules of the Association into a Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Company under company law and also consideration of a business name and possibly a change of name for Greenkeeper International. As with any recommendations that would have arisen out of the talks with the IOG, any major changes will need to be approved by the membership. It is hoped that following full consultation with members that a proposal can be made to an EGM later in the year.

*John Pemberton*  
BIGGA Chief Executive

## NINE-HOLE COURSE HELPING TO INSPIRE

A Par 3 golf facility created using Huxley all-weather surfaces is helping inspire and produce a new generation of golfers in north Wales.

Laid out within Coed Helen Recreation Park, Caernarfon, the open access community short course is part of a grassroots golf project developed by Gwynedd Council using money from the Ryder Cup Wales Legacy Fund.



1st green at Coed Helen Recreation Park

Provided by the Welsh Assembly Government and administered on behalf of Ryder Cup Wales by The Sports Council for Wales, the Legacy Fund represents a £2 million investment in grassroots golf resulting from a commitment given as part of Wales' successful bid to host the 2010 Ryder Cup. The funding is intended to help local authorities, schools and golf clubs throughout Wales develop new low-cost open access facilities, seen as being essential in encouraging the take-up of golf by young people and others new to the game.

In addition to the Huxley short course at Coed Helen, the funding received by Gwynedd Council has assisted in the development of community golf facilities at four primary schools in the county.

## STUDENTS ENJOY A WELL EARNED BREAK FROM THE CLASSROOM



BIGGA Midland Section supported Warwickshire College recently by arranging two field trips for their level 3 students. The venues were Gay Hill Golf Club and The Belfry. It gave the students a chance to talk to managers on a range of topics and see how management practices need to be suited to the demands of two entirely different operations.

The students met with Course Manager Paul Woodham during the visit to Gay Hill GC and with Kenny Mackay's two Head Greenkeepers for the The Belfry, Eric Olsen and Neil Smith.