

Welcome



Surviving the Downturn

As our Chairman, Kenny Mackay, states in his column this month, you are all going to have to become good accountants. His comments come as the world faces up to a recession the likes of which we haven't seen since the early '90s. Whether it will be as bad as then - a time when negative equity entered the language of all too many, including my good self - remains to be seen, but as Kenny says it's going to require some sound financial decision-making to ensure you can maintain your courses to the best level your budgetary levels allow.

This month there are two articles which touch on the subject. Robert Clive, of 360 Golf, gives some thoughts and advice on the credit crunch, while Peter Jones, starts a series examining how a new course can be developed in such a climate and looks at the decision which will have to be made to ensure sustainability from a commercial perspective.

I believe the next 18 months or so will be very much a time for batoning down the hatches but it will also be a time for trying to manage the expectation levels of members. By definition less money coming into a golf club means decisions will have to be made on how best to use that money. Robert Clive is adamant that compromising on the quality of the golf course is not the way forward - reputations are hard to earn and easy to lose - and cutting back on budgets and manpower is a quick way to see a course deteriorate. However, it may be the case that projects might have to be shelved until sunnier times return.

We can always hope that the doom mongers around have got it wrong and the fact that employment is strong, and interest rates relatively low might mean any slump is minor compared to previous downturns. However, there is nothing better to remove the gloom than to lose yourself in a competitive fourball on a Saturday morning. So, you never know, golf might be fine.

The news of Bert Cross' death took the wind from my sails. I'd known Bert from very early in my BIGGA career and he was present at just about every major BIGGA event. He was a mini bus driver for the Irish teams which played in the Hayter Challenges - he had some tales to tell after those experiences. He was the Official Starter at the National Championship; a key member of the BIGGA Open Support Team; a regular at Harrogate Week; a National Board member for many years and Section Secretary for the North West Section. Always, always, he had a smile on his face and was happy to help in whatever way he could.

He was one of those guys whose first name was all it took to identify him and it would be fair to say that, to many, there was only one Bert in BIGGA.

I shall miss him as will his legion of friends and colleagues.

GOLF IN HISTORIC PARKS & LANDSCAPES



Many colleagues in golf, historic environment, landscape and nature conservation professions helped English Heritage develop its guidance on golf in historic parks and landscapes. English Heritage has now published a new leaflet.

The leaflet sets out English Heritage's position and criteria for assessment development proposals. Further guidance to support this leaflet and the leaflet itself is available at two websites: www.english-heritage.org.uk/parksandgardens and www.helm.org.uk

ROYAL MID-SURREY GREENKEEPER IS NATIONAL KARATE CHAMPION



17-year old Harry Cannon, Assistant Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club in Richmond, has recently won a Gold Medal at The English Karate Federation National Championships in Sheffield. This follows up Harry's recent success at The World Championships in Istanbul back in September where he represented England and lost in the quarter finals to the eventual winner. Karate is not yet an Olympic sport and consequently there is not much investment available for it. Harry's expenses for his trip to Turkey were kindly sponsored by R&K Kensett Ltd and Steve Jones Consultancy.

Harry has been training for 11 years and achieved his black belt four years ago. With an increasing tournament and demonstrations schedule he is about to go for his 2nd dan black belt.

Harry joined Royal Mid-Surrey as a seasonal greenkeeper in July 2007 coming straight from high school. He was employed full-time as an assistant greenkeeper three months later in September. Karate has instilled a composed discipline in Harry and a ruthless determination which is now being reflected in his professional life.

Harry talks excitedly about his greenkeeping and turfgrass science career and enthuses that, "I hope to launch a major assault on the turfgrass industry over the next three to five years and am happy that Royal Mid-Surrey gives me the most dynamic platform of some world renown from which to build a successful and fulfilling career."

Doug Tate, The Inner Course Head Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey offers an insight into the unique skills Harry brings to the RM-S course management team.

"Harry's 'no-fear' attitude and intense application to his work ensure that he is well equipped to achieve his short and medium-term career ambitions. And he is useful if ever any sales reps call by without an appointment."

GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR RETURNS FROM STUDIES



Toro's Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2007 has recently returned from an eight-week educational trip to the USA.

Avon Bridges, 27, won the trip after beating off stiff competition in his regional heat and then from seven fellow greenkeepers in the national finals held at BIGGA House in Aldwark, near York in autumn of last year to take the prestigious title.

Having completed a six-week residential turf management course at the University of Massachusetts, Avon is now back at work as head greenkeeper of Luton Hoo Golf Club in Bedfordshire, where he is putting his newly acquired knowledge to good use.

He says of his prize placement: "My trip was pretty intense to say the least! I've attended 40 hours of lectures every week for six weeks. The whole thing's been really hard work, but worth it. It's been fantastic to meet greenkeepers from different parts of the world and to get an insight into different styles of greenkeeping."

In particular, Avon says that the course has reinforced the practical learning he gained while at Oaklands College, which put him forward for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year competition. As he explains: "There's a far more academic approach to learning about greenkeeping in the States, so I've learned a lot more about the science behind my existing knowledge. I know a great deal more about soil types and fertilisers."

Avon's trip also included visits to The Toro Company's headquarters in Minneapolis, the Toro Irrigation Division and the GCSAA golf industry show in Orlando. "I'd like to thank everyone from The Toro Company for making me feel so welcome," he adds.

Avon Bridges (below right) and fellow students study a soil sample as part of their residential turf management course at the University of Massachusetts. (Image courtesy of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.)



DEVON & CORNWALL SPRING WORKSHOP

A great attendance of over 60 guests, predominantly greenkeepers, attended the spring workshop based on grasses including breeding, selection, nutrient and water requirements.

The day was designed to help people consider such topics when opting towards a sustainable approach and cover a range of advice that hopefully encouraged individuals to make their own minds up about such sustainable options.

Steve Denton, Grass Seed Development Manager for Rigby Taylor, delivered presentations on a vast array of uses and areas that various grasses can be utilised, characteristics of the four main species to consider when selecting, what future developments he predicts and also why seed prices are higher this year than they have been for a while.

Steve brought Bernhard Bayle who was the Research Director for Top Green in Les Alleuds and is now a consultant for Top Green who work in partnership with Rigby Taylor. Bernhard did a sterling job explaining the many breeding processes which certainly made one concentrate with his French accent.

Geoff Yelland from Omega Sciences spoke about the effects of amino and humic acids and wetting agents modes of actions and how they work.

Steve Gingell who is the Southern Area Manager Agronomist for the STRI rounded the day off with a very interesting presentation on managing water application and future considerations when sourcing.

Graeme Gallimore who coordinated the day said "Everybody appeared to enjoy the day and the feedback was positive highlighting some topics for future workshops".

The Section would like to thank: the guest speakers immensely; sponsors for the day who included Rigby Taylor, Inturf, Top green and Sports Metals; Fingle Glen Golf Club for there hospitality and BIGGA HQ for some assistance with subsidiary.

NEW STAFF



Sustainable LED lighting provider, Greenled, has appointed new staff to help in its mission to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs. Stuart Clowes takes up the position of sales executive and Will Morgan joins as Greenled's general business manager. Both will work from Greenled's offices in Tetbury, Gloucestershire.

Stuart Clowes brings a wealth of experience in high-level sales of visuals and lighting to his new position. Stuart's nationwide role will include business development of Greenled's target markets, giving tutorials on the benefits of sustainable lighting, as well as assisting in the company's recruitment and marketing processes.

HORTICULTURE STUDENTS COMPLETE FINAL PROJECT

Third year students studying the BTEC National Diploma in Horticulture at Writtle College have successfully completed the design and build of three new gardens on College grounds. Designs for the gardens begun back in September 2007, the construction project lasted two weeks and was completed mid March.

The students, who carried out the build as an assessed unit within their course, had to design a garden to a client brief, draw up the specifications and detail drawings, quantify the materials required and then build the 6x6 metre garden in ten days.

The Gardens will be used as outdoor classrooms, showing design principles, use of materials, construction issues and horticultural maintenance tasks.

KEY SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGE

Crown Golf has announced an important change to its senior management team.

Founding Director, John Weir has stepped back into the role of Chief Operating Officer for the Binfield, Berks-based company - which has 33 golf venues in the UK and more than 50 courses.

He takes over from CEO Peter Manby, who left the company at the end of February to pursue an opportunity in the hotel sector.

Said John: "Peter has had a positive effect upon the company during his time with us and we wish him well in his return to hotel management."

Crown Golf has stepped up the development of its extensive property portfolio and as a result is looking for a new CEO in the UK to optimise both ongoing operations and the property portfolio.

HEAD OF GOLF APPOINTED

Formby Hall Golf Resort & Spa in Merseyside, which is set to become home to the country's first PGA National Residential Golf Academy in May, has appointed Matthew Allen-Chillman as head of golf.

Matthew, a PGA professional, joins the resort from Aston Wood Golf Club and will be responsible for nurturing existing relations, driving golf tourism and making the game accessible to a wider audience, as well as developing and promoting talent via the resort's PGA golf academy.

NORTHWICK PARK OPENED BY FOOTBALL LEGEND

Playgolf Northwick Park opened recently as London's premier 9-hole golf course - after unveiling the latest hole on its unique layout, which features replicas of some of the most famous holes in golf.

Former England and Tottenham Hotspur football legend Les Ferdinand officially opened the full 9-hole course in April, in his role as a Playgolf Ambassador.

The 'Majors Course' at the Harrow complex will also be set up permanently for PowerPlay Golf - the new way to play golf featuring two flags on every green.

Northwick Park general manager, Jimmy Wallace, said: "We are delighted with the latest phase of the course development, which now makes us London's premier 9-hole golf course."

BIGGA GOLF DAY

Following the success of last year's BIGGA Golf Day £3,923.00 was donated to The Rainbow Trust Children's Charity. The event is to be held again this year on June 30 at Aldwark Manor with profits going to the Child Heart Surgery Fund in Leeds.

The day will be very informal, giving BIGGA the opportunity to promote a strong relationship between greenkeeper and trade members, while at the same time enabling everyone to enjoy a competitive, yet friendly, game of golf.

The programme for the day will follow the successful format of previous years:

- Bacon sandwich, tea or coffee on arrival
- Tee times from 10.00am to 2.00pm
- Teams of 4 entered in competition over 18 holes, best 2 count on each hole
- Ploughman's Lunch
- Halfway House refreshments
- Buffet Meal
- Team prizes and longest drive individual prize

The entry fee per team is £250 + VAT. If you would like to participate please contact Sandra Raper on: 01347 833800 or: sandra@bigga.co.uk

MAPPING SOME OF WORLD'S BEST COURSES

SkyCaddie GPS, the official rangefinder of the PGA, has completed mapping some of the world's most famous golf courses – including 2010 Ryder Cup course Celtic Manor and 2011 Open Championship venue Royal St Georges.

With more than 2,100 courses now mapped in Europe and having become the PGA's official distance measuring device, SkyCaddie starts the summer seeking to strengthen its position as the world's leading GPS rangefinder.

In recent weeks the company's 'course enablers' - the team of professional mappers who walk every inch of a course to create a bespoke SkyCaddie GPS footprint - has also mapped The Duke's, Duchess's and Marquess's courses at Woburn; the Old Course and Cashen Course at Ballyunion; and the flagship Majlis Course and Nick Faldo-designed Wadi Course at The Emirates Golf Club, Dubai.

And The Belfry, Wentworth and all 12 courses at Turkey holiday hotspot Belek – including the Montgomerie Course at Papillon Golf Club - have also been painstakingly measured.

SkyCaddie has now mapped 80% of the UK's courses, with the aim of reaching 90% by the end of May.

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM EXPRESS STUDY



Having recently purchased a set of Express Dual and Anglemaster 3000's for their Turfgrass Education Centre, Myerscough College has been working with Bernhard and Company for training and education programmes for their students.

“Like our relationship with Ransomes Jacobsen and Kubota, Bernhard and Company fit nicely into our portfolio of what we are trying to achieve in sportsturf education and training,” said Stewart Brown, Sportsturf Team Leader.

Prior to their partnership with Bernhard and Company, Stewart and his team had not had equipment that met 21st century requirements and were therefore limited in their resources and ability to teach their students about mower blade sharpening and the agronomic benefits to turf.

Myerscough have big plans to make the most out of their newest investment. Along with using the grinders for student training and education, Myerscough are looking to develop short bespoke courses for greenkeepers and groundspersons.



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BIGGA SCOTTISH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Once again we made our way to the newly named Business Learning Centre, Carnegie College for our annual Conference in March where we welcomed 140 delegates.

In charge of proceedings for the morning session was Iain MacLeod, our Education Convenor and Course Manager at Tain Golf Club. Iain had the task of introducing our speakers, Gordon Holms, Director of Indigrow Ltd, Jonathan Smith, Chief Executive, Golf Environment Europe and to finish off the morning session, Gerry Byrne from the K Club in Ireland.

After lunch the annual presentation was made to the Student of The Year. This year we had two winners, Neil Plenderleith, Gleneagles Hotel and Jamie Duncan, Brodick Golf Club, Isle of Arran. The presentation was made by the Chairman of the Scottish Region, Stuart Greenwood, Course Superintendent, North Berwick West Links. Neil was in attendance, but unfortunately Jamie was unable to attend.

The afternoon session was chaired by Stuart Greenwood who introduced Allan Patterson, Head Greenkeeper at the Castle Course, St. Andrews Links, Ron Alexander of Ron Alexander Associates in America and Archie Stewart of Land Maps.

All speakers on the day were most interesting and entertaining. The Board very much appreciated the time and effort they made to contribute so much to the success of the conference. The Board also wish to thank the delegates for their attendance and participation.

The Conference for 2009 will be at the same venue on Tuesday, March 3.

PATRONS: Richard Aitken (Seedsmen) Ltd, Alpha Plus (Scotland), Bayer, Daval Industrial Products, The Double A Trading Company, Fairways Group Ltd, Hamilton Bros (Eng) Ltd, Golf Finance Ltd, Greentech (Sportsturf) Ltd, Henderson Grass Machinery, Indigrow Ltd, McNab Sport Ltd, Meiklem Drainage & Groundworks, William Monks & Partners, Nairn Brown (Glasgow) Ltd, Parsaver Ltd, Rigby Taylor Ltd, SGM (UK) Ltd, 3PointPower/SISIS, Strachan Construction, Stewart Plant Sales, Scotts Company, Souters Sports Ltd, Sports Turf Services, Tower Sport Europe, Turf Irrigation Services, Terra Firma (Scotland) Ltd, Thomas Sheriff & Coy Ltd, Thorntrees Amenity and Vitax.

SCOTTISH NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

The 2008 Scottish National Tournament will be held at Irvine Golf Club, Irvine, Ayrshire on Monday 23 June 2008 by kind permission of the Captain and Committee. The cost of the event will be £21, which includes coffee/tea, filled roll, evening meal and prizes. (Apprentice fee will be £12). Entry forms will be available at all Section Spring outings and from the Regional Administrator.

All entries with remittance to; Regional Administrator, Peter J. Boyd, 10 Meadowburn Avenue, Newton Mearns, Glasgow G77 6TA by Thursday 12 June, 2008. Please make cheques payable to BIGGA Scottish Region. The draw will be posted on the BIGGA website.

BERT CROSS 1934-2008



BIGGA has lost one of its most longstanding and best known members. Bert Cross died suddenly in hospital in early April leaving a void which will be difficult to fill in his native Liverpool and north west as well as the Association as a whole.

North West Section Secretary for 30 years, Bert has also served as Northern Regional Chairman and was on the National Board of Management until as recently as last year. But his influence on the Association stretched much further than that. He was a key figure in the organisation of the Mere, later to become the North West, Seminar, while those members who have worked on the BIGGA

Open Support Team and played in the National Championship will be more than familiar with Bert's contribution, in the Cabin at The Open, and on the 1st tee as Starter at the National Championship.

There can scarcely have been a BIGGA event of any consequence at which Bert was not a key figure, often doing the essential behind the scenes roles which are often difficult to fill. For example he would often talk of the mixture of frustration and humour involved in collecting the Irish representatives of the Hayter Challenge from the ferry and getting them to and from the hotel. According to his wife, Marie, his association and work with BIGGA was something of which he was immensely proud.

Bert was born in Liverpool in 1934 and joined the Liverpool City Council Parks and Gardens' Department at the age of 15. Aged 18 he joined the Kings Regiment as part of his National Service and served in Korea where, by coincidence, he first met BIGGA Past Chairman, Gordon Child. He returned to the Park and Gardens Department two years later and worked in the greenhouses where he specialised in growing Orchids and Biomeleads which he showed, and won awards with, across the country including Chelsea Flower Show.

Always a keen and able golfer he applied for and got the job of Head Greenkeeper at Allerton Golf Club in 1978 and he worked there for seven years before being promoted to Courses Manager of Liverpool City Council's three municipal courses – Allerton, Kirkby and Bowring Park. He carried out that role until 1990 when he was again promoted, this time to Contracts Manager for the Council, a job he did until he took early retirement at the age of 59 three years later.

Not one for a pipe and slippers retirement, Bert and Marie throw themselves into another project – making at least 10 trips, each between a fortnight and a month, to Zambia to work at the Kasisi Orphanage, taking with them clothes and medical supplies.

Bert and Marie were adored by the 270 orphans, all with either AIDS or HIV, and Marie is going to complete the next scheduled trip, in June, where she will spread some of Bert's ashes at the orphanage.

Bert is survived by Marie, and sons, Peter, Head Greenkeeper at Blundells Hill GC, and Anthony, daughter-in-law, Yumi, and grandson, Koji.

Donations can be made to the Kasisi Orphanage.