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## Living life to the full

Scott MacCallum catches up with Gordon Child, the latest recipient of BIGGA's Lifetime Achievement Award.

### A smile is never far from the lips of BIGGA's latest Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

Gordon Child has lived life to the full and in modern sporting parlance, not left anything out on the park. His greenkeeping career was carried out at some of the finest golf clubs in the country and he watched some of the finest players in the world playing courses he'd prepared. His BIGGA career saw him become the only Chairman to date to serve for two years and spend 10 years as Regional Administrator for the South West and South Wales, while his own golfing ability has got enough for him to play in two Open Championships and now he has been very busy in every time he goes out.

"I've been very lucky in life," said Gordon, as we sat in the upstairs living room overlooking some amazing Devon countryside.

"I'm greatly honoured to get this award and to be thought of in the same company as those who have already received it is quite humbling. I thought when I was asked to become Captain of Chaston Golf Club in 2009 that it had completed the circle for me but here comes another great honour."

Gordon joins Sir Michael Bonallack CBE, Walter Woods BEM, Jack & Mike MBE, George Brown and Cecil George as recipients of BIGGA's top accolade.

Anyone who knows anything about Gordon's background would have no doubt that BIGGA's Lifetime Achievement Award could have been introduced specifically for him and that he ends up in the Association's most exclusive club

is a fitting tribute to a man who has achieved so much. Gordon was the son, and grandson, of greenkeepers so a career on the golf course may well have been preordained, but from starting work as a school leaver at Dore and Topley, in Sheffield, he made the most of his opportunities.

"It was while I was there that I enjoyed one of the pieces of luck which I've enjoyed all my life. I started work in 1947 and at the time there were only two colleges in the UK which did turf culture and one of them was Leeds College of Art and Technology while the other was in Scotland. The college was in easy reach of my home so for three years I was able to study three nights a week and one half day for which the club gave me time off. It provided me with the foundation for my whole career."

It also saw the beginnings of a friendship which was to last for over half a century.

"It was while at college that I met Jim Arthur who was working for the STRI at the time and who was one of the lecturers brought in by the college," said Gordon.

Friendship with the legendary agronomist lasted until Jim's death at the age of 84, in 2004, and eventually saw the pair of them bring just the miles from each other in Devon - Gordon in Chaston and Jim in Huddersfield, Salford.

Following his time at Dore and Topley Gordon joined the Army and the Liverpool Regiment where he served in Korea along with another well known BIGGA figure, the late Bert Cross, and when he got



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back Jim grandmother told him that he was to take up a job at Royal Birkdale.

"I was told I was going, I wasn't asked. Going to an Open venue was his idea, but being being that I'd worked on a parkland and that I should learn how to work on a links course."

An career advice given it couldn't have been much better as having Royal Birkdale on his CV was the passport to what was to come.

"I was at Royal Birkdale for quite a while, never more than an Assistant, but I built up my knowledge base."

Gordon left Birkdale to become Head Greenkeeper at Blackburn Golf Club but before long moved south to St George's Hill, in Weybridge.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

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