

The 2011 BIGGA Delegates pictured with Stephen Bernhard (left) and Bob Buckingham (right)

A trip worth the wait



The BIGGA Delegation to the Golf Industry Show (GIS) & GCSAA in the USA, is an annual trip sponsored by Bernhard and Company Ltd, as part of an exchange programme to forge and maintain professional and friendship links between British and American golf greenkeepers. Delegation member, Jim Brown, reports on an enjoyable week

The 2011 delegation was originally selected to travel to the GIS, in New Orleans, in 2009, however due to a general 'tightening of belts' throughout the UK, the trip to the USA flagship greenkeeping show was postponed for two years.

The announcement to recommence the trip to the USA, starting with a visit in February 2011 to Orlando, Florida, was met with delight by the delegation originally selected.

**Tuesday, January 18
– Harrogate BTME**

Beyond the interviews, the whole experience started properly at the Bernhard Reception which this year was held at the Old Bell Tavern in Harrogate. Delegates

were introduced to each other and were given the opportunity to meet with past delegates, and of course selected members of the GCSAA and our hosts in Florida. It was a great occasion, in an excellent atmosphere and an opportunity to put faces to names. Information packs were distributed and introductions made, anticipation was high.

**Saturday, February 5
– Marriott Cypress Harbour,
Orlando, Florida**

With the flight from London Gatwick behind us, we arrived at the Marriott Cypress Harbour, south of downtown Orlando. A fantastic hotel including self-catering lodges which we shared. Once settled we used the remainder of the evening to get to

know each other and, of course, sample the local brews – A typical American Sports Bar - Orena, was highly recommended by one of the hotel staff and was an excellent choice, soon to become our second home for social downtime.

Sunday February 6

Sunday morning was free time; enabling the more familiar with Orlando to introduce the new visitors among us, to the sights and sounds on what was a quite cool morning. Wandering around with cameras photographing upturned buildings and American menus among other things. It really is an assault on the senses.

In the afternoon we were joined by Andrew Mellon, BIGGA Chairman, and transferred by our hosts, Bernhards, to the parent's

**The 2011
BIGGA Delegates:**

John Kenaghan – Chipping Sodbury Golf Club; Richard Cutler – La Moye Golf Club; Andrew Boyce – Bath Golf Club; Derek Robson – The Dukes, St Andrews; Stephen Chappell – Neath Golf Club; Graham Pickin – Thornhurst Park; Robert Sandilands – Elsham Golf Club; Nick Miles – Market Harborough Golf Club; Chris Haspell – Castle Stuart Golf Links; Jim Brown – De Vere Oulton Hall



house of one of our chaperones. Gina Putnam's parents live in a stunning home within a golf course estate and it was clear as soon as we were all invited in and through the patio doors, overlooking the immaculate golf course, we were in for an excellent evening of Super Bowl and spirited conversation. A fantastic night was had by all and a big thank you to our hosts Mr and Mrs Putnam.

Monday February 7

With the jetlag dealt with and friendships confirmed, we set off early to visit two golf courses. First on the agenda was the Orange County National – Panther Lake, followed by Marriott Grande Pines.

Chris Brocious, the Equipment Manager at Orange County National – Panther Lake, was our guide around this extensive 45 hole golf course and golf facility. With over 1000 acres of land and what appeared to be the largest practice area we have ever seen, Chris took us through the maintenance schedule for the three golf courses, which included the responsibilities he and his fellow 43 staff have to meet to maintain this extremely busy golf facility. With over 90,000 rounds of golf throughout the year, they are kept busy delivering a very well presented golf course 365 days of the year.

Onto Marriott Grande Pines in the afternoon and more significantly, the golf

course situated around our accommodation, where we were introduced to Superintendent, Chris Flynn CGCS. Chris led us through his immaculate maintenance facility and with a refreshing honesty, answered all our many questions including nutrient programmes, irrigation techniques and his environmental aspirations. Grande Pines dating back to the 1960s, was re-constructed in 2002 and is currently maintained by a modest team of 18 staff – with over 42,000 rounds per year, the 7012 yard golf course is maintained within a \$1.2m budget.

While out on the golf course Chris explained the processes of over seeding during cool temperatures and the transition between Bermuda and Perennial Rye and including some of the many challenges Superintendents face every year in a changing climate.

With the tour of Grande Pines complete we took the short journey to the Faldo Golf Institute, which is also managed by Chris. A staggering 'practice facility' with a 'family fun' 9 hole golf course – all managed with 10 staff and with a budget of \$750,000.

On our return to Cypress Harbour, we readied for the evening and joined the John Deere Golf VIP Event. All ten delegates joined well over 1,000 international guests at The Cuba Libre, at Pointe Orlando, for drinks and an excellent opportunity to meet with



MAIN ABOVE and BELOW: Orange County Panther Lake
INSET ABOVE: On the 17th hole at Grande Pines with Chris Flynn





Field trip seminar at Shingle Creek



The quite magnificent Ritz-Carlton

friends and colleagues from across the world – a thoroughly enjoyable evening which was completed with a few games of pool, table tennis and an opportunity to show the locals how to play their own game of Cornhole – (You'll have to Google it).

Tuesday 8 February – Field Trip

Tuesday we were off on our first field trip seminar. We joined a group of over 200 Superintendents, Golf Course Managers and Greenkeepers from across the globe.

The trip took in four golf courses among which were: Shingle Creek, Bay Hill Golf Club & Lodge (Hosts of the Arnold Palmer Invitational), Marriott Grande Pines and The Faldo Institute for a closer look and the quite magnificent Ritz-Carlton Golf Club.

It was widely agreed that the Greg Norman designed Ritz-Carlton was by far the most impressive golf course we have seen to date. Staggering attention to detail and perfectly presented, the quite modest team of 26 deliver an unrivalled level of quality. All the four golf courses we visited operated on well over \$1 million budgets, with recently constructed (2003) Ritz-Carlton an enviable \$1.4 operational spend.

Deputy Superintendent, Josh Kelly, led us through the entire operation, again answering all questions with patience and clarity. All three

Superintendents and, of course, Deputy Superintendent, Josh, were excellent ambassadors for American golf greenkeeping, speaking with confidence and with a very high knowledge of their respective golf resorts and profession.

Early evening we made our way to the Convention Centre to attend the opening ceremony of the GCSAA Show. During the proceedings, we were introduced to the many different officers which make up the management of the GCSAA including, the new President, Jim Fitzroy CGCS. Jim talked about his aspirations for the GCSAA for 2011 and beyond and along with new CEO, Rhett Evans, delivered various awards to golf course Superintendents from across the US and to our delight, a very proud David Cole, of Loch Lomond Golf Club, for and in recognition of his commitment to environmental stewardship – congratulations to all but more especially to David.

Wednesday – Thursday 9 & 10 February – Showtime

9am, the Golf Industry Show, Orlando, Florida, officially opened its doors.

Dressed in full BIGGA regalia, the 2011 BIGGA delegates walked into the Orange County Convention Centre.

It is a huge building, which was now home to everything golf greenkeeping.

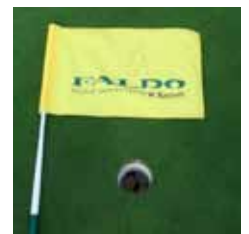
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All the main players were represented and of course many we had never heard of.

Without a BIGGA stand at this year's show, we used the time wisely to talk to the many companies and vendors, collecting information, product brochures, exchanging business cards and of course, discussing the business of golf course management.

ABOVE: Getting a closer look at the Faldo Institute with Chris Flynn





There are obvious basic fundamentals between both countries and how we deal with the everyday challenges on the golf courses, however, the demand for perfection on the US resort golf courses and almost at any cost, can often create problems of its own – from this has developed an industry of fixers and problem solvers. It cannot, however, be argued that the Superintendents on high end resort golf courses, deliver anything other than exceptional standards and under incredible pressure.

What came as a very pleasant surprise was the amount of people

who travel from the UK to visit the show. As we wandered around the various hallways and booths, it was great to meet up with familiar faces, have a coffee and share experiences.

With 3.30pm approaching, all the delegates made their way back from the various conversations and meetings, to meet at the Bernhard & Co stand for the customary photo call and then on to meet Golf Course Superintendent of The Old Collier Golf Club, Tim Hiers.

Tim led the effort to achieve the designation of the first Audubon International Gold Signature Cooperative Sanctuary and more recently became recipient of the 2009 GCSAA Excellence in Government Relations Award. Joined by Stephen Bernhard, we joined Tim in a conference room within the convention centre whereupon we listened carefully as Tim spoke.

Throughout the hour we heard about Tim's experiences and opinions on everything from member communication, maintenance facilities and budgetary control including resource management. Unfortunately the opportunities

for questions were limited however, the few considered questions put to Tim he took the time to answer based on his considerable experience.

At 5.30pm on Wednesday afternoon we all made our way to Tommy Bahama's, for the Bernhard reception. This event was very well attended by many of Bernhard & Co's past US delegates, friends and associates. Once again, this was an excellent opportunity to meet with many experienced colleagues from around the world and very well organised by our friends from Bernhard & Company. With a Who's Who of British and American greenkeeping in attendance, opportunities were plenty to discuss the differences between the two countries and the way we manage our golf courses and resources.

While many Superintendents were familiar with our efficient golf greenkeeping operations, there were those who weren't – many staggered by the available resources, available manpower and results we, the British greenkeepers, achieve year in year out. With Bernhard & Co

Turf disease protection that

after cut... after cut... after cut... after cut... after cut...



facilitating the introductions, again many friendships were made which will be maintained for longer than the week spent in Orlando.

Friday 11 February – All day seminar

Transferred by Kim and Gina, from Bernhards, we once again attended the Orange County Convention Centre, this time to attend a seminar titled: The Science of Physical Properties in the Real World – Beyond the Textbooks.

It was clear from the prior early night, that all delegates were well prepared for this opportunity to gain a further understanding into the management and the philosophy of our American cousins and how they meet the needs of the golf courses they manage. Our lecturer, Mr. David L. Doherty, of The International Sports Turf Research Centre, introduced himself as an individual who concentrated on rootzones and growing mediums, the aeration practices employed to maintain healthy turf & drainage challenges. David delivered a very comprehensive talk which

identified many best practices based on his experiences and his significant career in managing the physical properties of growing mediums. Using anecdotal evidence, slides and video, he offered sound practical advice on how to deliver consistent surfaces on any golf course. All delegates were given a comprehensive pack with all the information within the seminar and with that, returned to the hotel to prepare for our last night in Orlando.

Friday evening we all attended the Jacobsen International Reception at the Universal theme park. Again in attendance were many British greenkeepers and associates of our industry. A fantastic evening was had by all and with us all meeting later for one last night at 'our' local bar, we enjoyed a couple of beers and chatted about the whole experience in Orlando at the Golf Industry Show. With Saturday being a free day before flying home, the discussions, laughter and drinks carried on well into the night.

The 2011 BIGGA Delegation brought the number of British delegates who have travelled to

The Golf Industry Show to 90 delegates, and with 20 delegates travelling from the US to BTME, Bernhard & Co need to be thanked for their unwavering support and service to greenkeeping and golf course management.

With the backing of Stephen Bernhard, the incredible hard work displayed by Kim Furnell & Gina Putnam, all delegates who have been fortunate enough to attend the trips to the industry shows, have benefited hugely.

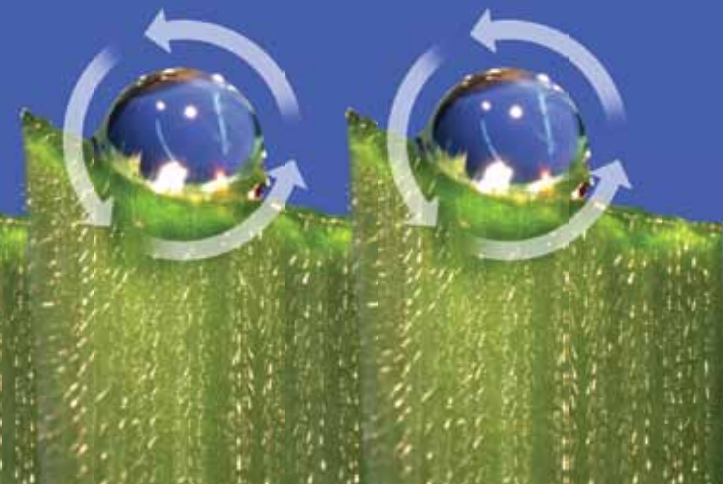
The whole process for the 2011 BIGGA Delegation has been educational, warm felt and appreciated and brought together ten like-minded individuals who are better people and golf greenkeepers for the whole experience.

On our return and since we attended The Golf Industry Show, emails have been exchanged between delegates themselves, with our US contemporaries and some of the many people we met along the way – all which proves, the BIGGA British Delegation really works and for which, Bernhard & Co should be suitably thanked and rewarded for their self-less efforts.



ABOVE: At the show with Kim and Gina from Bernhards, and some of the delegates

stays cut...
after cut... after cut...



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