

GI

GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL

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Four seasons in one day



**How Jim Brown and Paul McClearn
cope with two metres of rain annually
at The Carrick on Loch Lomond**

Inside...

THOMAS'S TRAVELS

**TORO Student Greenkeeper of the Year,
Thomas Flavelle, on his trip to the States**

Featured Inside...

ROYAL ASHDOWN FOREST

**Laurence Pithie
meets Chris Mitchell**

ALSO INSIDE... VACUUM SWEEPER COLLECTORS : OPM



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The Carrick at Loch Lomond, Course Manager Jim Brown (left) with Head Greenkeeper Paul McClearn (right)

Firstly I'd like to thank all those BIGGA members who took the time to respond to the Greenkeeper International reader survey recently. This magazine is an important activity for the Association on many levels but its primary purpose is to be a true benefit of BIGGA membership.

It was heartening to read a great deal of positive feedback in the survey but of more importance were the many excellent suggestions for ways to improve the quality and relevance of the magazine's content. All these suggestions are being taken on board and some changes will start to filter into the publication from next month onwards.

April signifies the traditional start to the golfing season as the familiar verdant hues of Augusta National are beamed into our living rooms. This brings increased golfer interest alongside sometimes wildly ambitious course presentation expectations (see The Back Nine article on page 66).

With winter still hanging over large parts of the UK as I write, these expectations will need to be managed even more carefully than normal. It is encouraging to see just how many greenkeepers are now being proactive on this front through the use of blogs, Facebook and Twitter as well as old-fashioned methods such as newsletters and member gatherings. The industry needs events like The Masters at this time of year; they get golfers excited about playing the game after such a long winter. The challenge is to ensure they appreciate that Augusta-like perfection is largely unachievable in the UK climate with regular budgets.

To illustrate this point in this month's magazine we hear how Jim Brown and Paul McClearn (see page 20) have set about dealing with the effects of over two metres of annual rainfall on their beautiful site by the banks of Loch Lomond! Major drainage, turf health and bunker reconstruction work have been

implemented ensuring this busy facility is providing a more satisfactory golf experience. We also visit Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club (see page 26) in the South East of England where Chris Mitchell is the third generation of his family to have the custodianship of this beautiful course at which the governing Conservators ensure that the land is managed in a very natural way.

Only a few short weeks after BTME 2013 concluded and already the signs for 2014 are extremely promising. Following the very successful exhibition in January, sales for next year have been extraordinary with many of this year's exhibitors increasing their stand space - making it tough to fit in those companies who want to be part of 2014 but weren't present this year.

The sales team have done a great job in trying to accommodate everyone's needs and it looks at this early stage as though we may have all the available halls completely full within the next few weeks. The success of the last two BTMEs in particular has shown how important the exhibition and the associated education programme are for the industry. We are now working hard on the content for the Turf Managers' Conference and Workshop/Seminar Programmes, watch this space for details over the next few months.



Enjoy the read.
Jim Croxton, Chief Executive

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Thomas's travels

TORO Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Thomas Flavelle tells us about a life-changing eight weeks in the States, his reward for scooping the coveted prize last September

I felt very nervous as I sat on the plane about to fly out to the States. On arrival I found myself waiting at a very cold bus stop, which a large pickup truck pulled out of the hotel car park and the driver leaned out and offered me a lift - a big thank you to Mike Prescott from turfcontractorsportspage for that.

At first it did seem to be back in a classroom, taking notes and crossing bar charts at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMASS). The college day consisted of two-hour lessons from 9am-12pm with subjects including Entomology, Pathology, Turf Management and Soil Science. I enjoyed learning to some very interesting guest speakers such as Bill Speers, Superintendent at the Boston Country Club which held the 1999 Ryder Cup.

I expected the American way of doing things would be totally different to ours, and in ways they are, maybe less environmentally friendly, but the biggest hurdle was learning the different grass species for the cool season grasses. The lessons were very informative covering topics new to me. Networking with the other students on the course was priceless - I discussed the different techniques they use as well as how their courses are run.

As a part of my prize I was lucky enough to attend the GCRAA golf show in San Diego. I would be travelling there with Dave Casteney - the American Tour winner. Unfortunately our flight to Chicago was delayed, and with only 40 minutes between flights I could see it was going to be tight. Fluffy headed in the wrong direction through the huge airport, but after a rabbit chase with an official we turned around and ran back the way we came, just making the flight and collapsing back in our seats.

San Diego was like landing in a different country - it was warm and sunny with palm trees. That evening I attended the opening ceremony, with some very interesting speakers. After that I joined our tutor, Jonathan Knowles for some dinner and explored a few bars around the Gaslamp Quarter. The show itself was very interesting, with lots of products that are easily used in the UK, including big fans to improve air circulation. It was great to catch up with people I already knew but I also met many new people. I also managed to make time for a tour of the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier which was very interesting.

I know the trip home was also going to be eventful when I discovered Steve Nemo was forecast to dump three feet of snow on the road coast. Even though my flight from Philadelphia to Hartford was cancelled, I decided to take the flight to Philadelphia. On arrival I was informed that there would be no flights for two days which created a weekend in Philadelphia for me, and what a beautiful city it is. I then headed to Washington.

We began by visiting some of the local bars and restaurants and had some great nights out at baseball and hockey games. I was lucky enough to watch UMASS beat the number one ranked Boston College 5-1. It was a great atmosphere.

Unfortunately my trip to Boston got cancelled due to the snow, but the final leg of my trip went ahead - a visit to the Toro factories in Minneapolis.

This was an amazing tour full of information about Toro as an employer as well as the production they produce. Standing at the start of the production line was very cool, as you looked down the line a shell turned into a mower. I was so awed that the end of the trip was now, I would like to thank Toro, Terry and BRIGGS for organising this award, as it gives an amazing opportunity for visiting greenkeepers to progress their knowledge and careers. I had a fantastic time in America, making some lifelong friendships along the way, and these people made the trip so much fun.

It truly was a once in a lifetime experience, and I wish I could start it over again. I would strongly recommend to any enthusiastic greenkeeper who wants to stand out from the crowd and study at a highly recommended University while having the time of their life to consider the Toro award. I will never forget the experience that I had at UMASS and the people I met there.



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20 Four seasons in one day at The Carrick on Loch Lomond



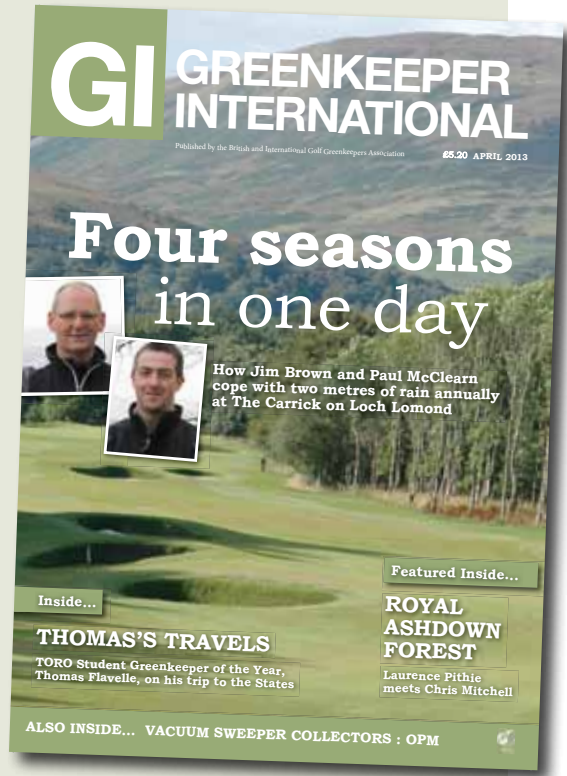
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The official monthly magazine of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association Limited



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

On the road with BIGGA

My hectic schedule has shown no signs of letting up over the last few weeks. I returned from the FEGGA Conference in Zurich and immediately headed straight to the Scottish Region board meeting.

Not only was this very well attended - it was also very constructive. This was followed up by one of the Regional Roadshows which Jim Croxton, Tracey Maddison and I have been involved in these last few weeks.

The roadshows are titled 'Working together for the future success of BIGGA' and the aim is to engage at a local level with Section and Region Committees to ensure that the Association's plans and ambitions are more widely known and supported.

We believe it's vital that we all work together to increase the profile and appreciation of the profession of greenkeeping.

The Scottish Roadshow was a very constructive exercise - as it also was in the Northern and South West and South Wales Regions - as it provided all parties with food for thought along with a clear understanding of how we can move forward.

It was then time for the Scottish Regional Conference in Dunfermline - and what a Conference it was. The programme was superb with some exceptional speakers and most importantly, over two hundred delegates in attendance.

Representatives from some of the finest golf courses in the world passed on their expertise, knowledge and opinions and I know feedback on their presentations was excellent, and this is no surprise now I've had the pleasure of enjoying them in full flow. I'd like to wish Grant Frogley at Roxburghe Hotel & Golf Course, Chris Haspell at Castle Stuart Links and last but not least John Bambury at Trump International Links the best of luck in their quest to continue to improve these fabulous courses.



Scottish Regional Conference in Dunfermline

The fourth roadshow was held in the Midlands Region with the final roadshow in the South East. In particular, the Midlands roadshow was an interesting day where it seemed my passion for the Association, and in particular my attempts to encourage members to play a part in its success, may have come across a little strongly. I make no apology for this and the chance to discuss it openly was very productive. I am passionate about the part members play in helping us promote BIGGA, after all, this is the key reason behind the roadshows. We need to shout about the role that BIGGA plays and the value of being a member.

Some members know some of these benefits very well as they're currently celebrating being selected to work on the Support Teams for the BMW PGA Championship in May or The Open Championship in July.

Their work really is vital - to find out more about this and how the teams were selected turn to page 32. Many congratulations to those who have been selected and to those who haven't, don't be too

Over two hundred delegates were in attendance at the Scottish Regional Conference

disappointed - come back and try again next year.

Additionally, twenty other mainly young members have won a fantastic opportunity to be part of the Future Turf Managers Initiative made possible by Jacobsen. I am very much looking forward to meeting them all in Ipswich this month and witnessing the fantastic educational and mentoring opportunities on offer.

I was delighted to finally see some dry spring weather at the start of last month although sadly winter soon returned and much of the country has been badly affected by snow and strong winds. I know of one club in the South East who abandoned a tournament because the balls were being blown off the tees! Hopefully the weather will relent so we can get out and do some cutting on the courses, which is something we're hoping to focus on at Teesside.

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FUTURE TURF MANAGERS - DELEGATES ANNOUNCED

The successful applicants for the inaugural Jacobsen Future Turf Managers' Initiative have been announced by BIGGA.

Twenty greenkeepers from across the UK are now looking forward to an intensive two days of seminars and workshops covering a range of subjects designed to equip them for success in their future careers. These include in-depth courses on communications, budgeting, organisational politics, CV writing and interview techniques plus breakout sessions looking at other key subjects.

BIGGA and Jacobsen faced a tough decision selecting 20 names from all the candidates who completed an application form designed to find out more about them and their aspirations. They are



now preparing to head to Jacobsen's Ipswich headquarters for two days in April for the sessions which complement BIGGA's Assistants Development Programme that Jacobsen kindly agrees to sponsor.

One of the successful candidates was James Bledge (shown inset), Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club in Kent.

He said: "I was delighted when I found out I'd got a place. I always try and further my education as much as possible, whether that be at BTME or at other BIGGA events, and these sessions cover exactly the sort of areas I'm looking to increase my knowledge in.

"I've got a plan to hopefully make the next step in my career in two or three years, and modules such as budgeting and CV writing will really help me so I'm looking forward to it."

Lorna Sheldon (below right) and David Bancroft-Turner – who gave hugely successful presentations at the Turf

Managers' Conference at BTME – will be again passing on their extensive knowledge of professional communication techniques and dealing with golf club politics respectively.

Delegates will also be given budget guidance by Lee Strutt MG - Course Manager at gWest – plus advice on further educational opportunities within BIGGA.

BIGGA's Learning & Development Executive (Technical) Stuart Green added: "There has been an excellent response to the initiative, with 45 applications received. This made the process of selection all the more difficult as we felt that all the applicants would have benefited. However, this is not the end of the journey for the successful applicants but the beginning of the next phase in their future turf manager careers."

Many thanks to all who applied, and look out for coverage of the event in next month's Greenkeeper International. For the full list of successful candidates please turn to page 14.



NEIL BAKER APPOINTED COURSE MANAGER AT LITTLE ASTON

Neil Baker has been appointed the new Course Manager at Little Aston Golf Club in Staffordshire.

He's been Course Manager at Tandridge Golf Club in Surrey for the last seven years and takes up his new post after

working to bring Tandridge back to its original Harry Colt design roots.

He said: "My new position fulfils a career goal, and my main aim now is to help the club further enhance a very special golfing environment.

With its history and private feel I couldn't turn down the chance to join this esteemed venue."

A spokesman for the Club said: "We were very impressed with the professionalism of all the Course Managers we

interviewed, however Neil was the clear choice.

"We are sure he will lead the greenkeeping team so that we continue to have an outstanding golf course enjoyed by members and visitors alike."

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES AT WOODSIDE



David Jones has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Woodside Golf Club in Cheshire – after a

chance encounter in the Club's Pro Shop.

Three handicapper David, who previously worked at Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club, turned up at nearby Woodside for a round, and ended up chatting to some of the family who own the course.

He then found out they were on the lookout for an Assistant Course Manager so he sent in an application. David takes up the story:

"I was keen to make the next step up in my career and make my own mark somewhere. I was chatting to them and thought I'd send in my CV for the Assistant's role, but unbeknown to me the Head Greenkeeper had actually left so they interviewed me for that position.

"I was really pleased when they offered me my first Head Greenkeeper role here and it just goes to show where a conversation can lead you."

The pay and play in Cranage offers a 5900 yard par 69 course, as well as a short par three course and driving range, and employs just two other greenkeepers as well as David.

He added: "I've been so busy I haven't had a lunch break all my first week! There's a lot to do, mainly presentation issues, and the par three course has been neglected so that needs an overhaul.

"There are only three of us, we've obviously got limited kit and a limited budget but I'm determined to really make an impression here."

Everyone at BIGGA wishes David all the best in his new role.

FULL HOUSE AT BIGGA SCOTTISH CONFERENCE



BIGGA's Scottish Regional Administrator John Young reports from a packed Scottish Regional Conference

Was it good planning or good luck? Neither, it was the quality of the speakers that drew a fantastic 210 delegates to the Scottish Conference on 5 March at the Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

Iain MacLeod, Conference Chair, welcomed delegates by promising an excellent array of speakers and providing details of the format for the day. He then introduced the first speaker, Ronnie Malcolm, who presented 'The Role of the Modern Head Greenkeeper', concentrating on the methods of management available to course managers and head greenkeepers to cope with current work pressures.

Grant Frogley from The Roxburgh Hotel and Golf Club then told his story 'Taking the Next Step', the journey he has taken over the last 12 months from being in a Deputy's position to that of Course Manager.

Our final speaker of the morning was Chris Haspell, Head Greenkeeper at Castle Stuart Golf Links. The audience were enthralled as they listened to the landslide problems experienced during the 2011 Scottish Open and the fantastic effort of the greenkeepers to get the course

available for play on the final day - then to hear of the great success that was 2012.

After lunch Andy O'Hara, Scottish Regional Chairman, stated his ambition of improving education opportunities for all and to make BIGGA a must join association. He then presented the Harry Diamond Award to the Scottish Student of the Year, Chris Watson.

The afternoon session provided technical presentations for the audience. Firstly Bill Lawlor from the Xact Group hosted a Q&A session on the importance of Health and Safety for greenkeepers.

This was followed by Dr Christian Spring from the STRI presenting an excellent seminar on 'Earthworm Control and Developments in Turfgrass Pesticides'.

Next up was John Bambury, Links Superintendent at Trump International Golf Links in Aberdeenshire. It was a very detailed presentation on the creation of the championship course and his team.

John also provided insight into the workings of the Trump Empire and how he enjoys being part of this organisation. One highlight was when John

explained the requirement to 'strim' 35 acres of rough each fortnight - which drew an audible gasp from the audience.

Andy O'Hara closed proceedings by thanking our speakers and indeed the delegates for making the day extremely successful.

A special thanks was extended to Peter Boyd, former RA for Scotland for interrupting his retirement to provide support throughout the day.

Elsbeth Coutts from Greens Progress said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and I felt that all presentations flowed together very nicely". Gordon Moir, Director of Greenkeeping at St Andrews Links Trust, added:

"I haven't been to all the conferences over the past five years but I thought this was one of the best I've attended.

"There was a great variety of seminars and presentations - something for everyone".

Looking forward to 2014, an exceptional line-up is already being put together for the conference on Tuesday 4 March with Steve Chappell of Gleneagles booked to provide a presentation on the run up to the 2014 Ryder Cup. I look forward to seeing you there.



SOUTH EAST GOLF DAY

Play unfortunately had to be abandoned due to incessant rain on the Old Course at Walton Heath – but the terrible weather did not dampen spirits at the South East Golf Day.

Despite the great efforts and hard work by Alan Strachan and his team to prepare the Old Course, heavy overnight rain followed by more rain during the day forced members and guests off the course. They took refuge from the elements and enjoyed the refreshments kindly provided by Johnny Beck and James Watson of Sherriff Amenity at the 11th hole.

Competitors were able to enjoy the warm hospitality of the Clubhouse before over a hundred sat down to an early meal in the Holderness Dining Room. Chairman Tom Smith introduced BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton who thanked the Club for, as always, making us so welcome on the day before proposing the toast to Walton Heath Golf Club and their guests. This was followed by Captain Michael Vaines who welcomed everyone to the club.

This year's guest speaker John Paramor, Chief Referee of the European Tour then entertained us with some fascinating and humorous stories experienced during his duties around the world.

The South East Region of BIGGA is most grateful to the following companies for their very generous sponsorship and help with this event: Avoncrop Amenity Products, Blade Amenity, BSM Golf, CMW, Ernest Doe Power, Everris, Golf Mats UK, Grass Roots/Dryject UK, JSM, P Tuckwell Ltd, Rigby Taylor, Sherriff Amenity and Speedcut Contractors Ltd.

Clive Osgood

BTME TO BE EVEN BIGGA FOR 2014

Following the success of last year's show BIGGA are gearing up for a huge BTME 2014, as it returns to a four hall exhibition with the world's major machinery manufacturers preparing to head to Harrogate.

The Harrogate International Centre is sure to be bustling next January with the likes of John Deere, Toro and Ransomes Jacobsen joining Kubota, RECO and New Holland at BTME 2014.

Many of last year's happy exhibitors are also returning with many increasing their stand space. After a surge of early bookings over 85% of stands are already reserved with eager companies determined to showcase their latest products. BIGGA are pleased to welcome a whole host of returning exhibitors including Baroness Mowers, Campey Turf Care Systems, Syngenta, Everris plus dozens more.

Jim Croxton, CEO of BIGGA, said: "We're delighted that the exhibition will once again feature four halls. This will allow us to both increase the number of exhibitors and attract even more visitors from all corners of the turf management industry.

"I'm particularly encouraged by the number of exhibitors who have already rebooked after last year's show. Many have also increased their stand space which is a reflection of how they see BTME as the place to meet potential customers and do business."

Discussing the success of BTME 2013,

Croxton continued: "This will be BTME's 25th year and it's becoming increasingly popular. The feedback we've received from exhibitors, buyers and guests has been extremely positive and we anticipate that returning to four halls next year will extend its appeal even further. It's a very exciting time for everybody involved."

Europe's leading turf care exhibition – which next year begins on Tuesday 21 January at the Harrogate International Centre – showcases market leaders from all sectors of the turf industry, including artificial grass, course furniture, drainage, fertilisers and top of the range machinery, to name just a few of the highlights.

BTME 2014 will also boast a terrific educational programme, with the extremely popular Turf Managers' Conference again returning to the week when the industry converges on Harrogate. There will also be more workshops and seminars through the superb 'Continue to Learn' programme with a terrific range of knowledgeable and passionate presenters – keep an eye out for the confirmed speakers over the coming months.

BIGGA is urging anyone looking to reserve a stand to call now to avoid disappointment. There is still limited space remaining and places are being taken quickly. For your opportunity to exhibit at next year's BTME, contact Jill Rodham or Matt Wignall on 01347 833812 or 01347 833 832.

ROGUE TRADERS CASH IN ON CHALARA CONFUSION

Reports from South East England suggest unscrupulous operators masquerading as professional arborists and tree surgeons are scaring landowners into felling perfectly safe and healthy common ash trees. They are preying on already considerable fears generated by the national media storm over chalara ash dieback at the end of last year. Kent Trading Standards is the latest to warn on this development.

The national media storm appears to have abated for now, but some landowners with ash trees on their properties clearly do not require much persuasion to err on the side of caution as they see it.

Current information from DEFRA says no-one will be forced to destroy ash trees unless they are young trees which are part of a recently planted site identified with chalara ash dieback disease. In these situations the Forestry Commission or another branch of the UK plant health authority will issue a Plant Health Notice. This effectively means that all mature ash trees could (for the moment) be spared. However, this does not take into account any developing issues with public safety which landowners (tree owners) are clearly responsible for.

Such a threat to perfectly healthy fully grown ash trees

from 'cowboy' operators shows the urgent need for FC and FERA to introduce the microinjection of systemic fungicide as a means of ash tree protection, so at least landowners have the option of protecting trees rather than pre-emptively felling them.

Finding a solution should not prove too difficult. North Americans have to deal with a potentially lethal disease of oak trees called oak wilt caused by a close relative of Chalara fraxinea (chalara ash dieback). Oak wilt is caused by a fungus called Chalara quercina. Oak trees in North America have been successfully protected (and in some cases cured) of oak wilt disease by injection of the systemic fungicide propiconazole, a member of the azole (sub group triazole) fungicides, and by mode of action described as a Steroid Demethylation (ergosterol biosynthesis) Inhibitor (DMI). The fungicide is injected into the tree trunk by operators working at ground level and is subsequently transported to all aerial parts of the tree in the xylem (water conducting tissue). There are other different triazole fungicides including tebuconazole which are used in a similar way to protect against and control oak wilt disease.

Dr Terry Mabbett



BLOGGING WITH ROYAL APPROVAL

This month's featured blog is from Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club in Kent, which will host the 2013 Amateur Championship and is one of four venues selected for Final Open Qualifying from 2014 to 2018. The blog was started by Assistant Links superintendent James Bledge shortly after joining the Club last October. It's crammed with information and high quality pictures documenting the greenkeeping team's work including rough management, tee platform renovation, bunker revetting and all manner of winter work taking place on the course.

The Club has already seen several clear benefits from writing the blog. James says: "Take the overseeding for example, we spent a good sum of money hiring an expensive machine to do a specific task. Many golfers were asking what we were doing and why we were doing it. They were able to view the blog and get the information they required. Weeks later we were able to post a picture of the results and we are confident that a good part of the membership now understand why we do what we do."

Links Superintendent Chris Barnard added: "I think the blog was a great idea from James, it's a very useful tool for keeping members informed about current projects on the course. It helps to answer many questions before they're asked giving us more time out on the course to get through this year's very busy winter programme.

"Our members are interested in the work we do and are proud of the course. We wanted to document and share with everyone exactly what we've been doing throughout the winter ahead of what will be a very busy season. James posted a link on the BIGGA bulletin board to see if anyone else was blogging. There were loads of positive replies and it seems a few courses have started blogs as a result. The Cruden Bay and Carnoustie blogs are particularly interesting as well as a few others. Some other blogs have inspired us to possibly try adding extras like video footage. Perhaps our blog inspires other courses to start!

"We're hosting the British Amateur Championship this year and the green staff are doing a lot of work ahead of it. 2013 will be a very exciting time for everyone at Royal Cinque Ports."

Contact Steve Castle at steve.castle@bigga.co.uk if you think your blog deserves to be featured in GI.

Ransomes Jacobsen's three-hole golf course, located at their European headquarters on the outskirts of Ipswich, has been re-certified by the Golf Environment Organization (GEO).

With this latest accolade, the RJ National becomes the first golf course in the UK to be awarded GEO Certified™ status for excellence in environmental performance for a second time.

Following his recent assessment visit, Keith Duff, an independent verifier accredited by GEO said:

"The creation of this small golf course, built and managed to good sustainability standards, has hugely improved the environmental quality of the area. What was once covered in cement and scrub, as part of an industrial park, is now an ecological asset.

"Good areas of semi-natural habitat have been created and are developing well, and there are plans for further biodiversity initiatives.

"Record keeping is exemplary, regulatory compliance is unblemished, and there are very high quality innovative communications, including newsletters and video blogs, to show others how the work is being done and what the benefits are.

"The quality of the playing surfaces is also very high, demonstrating well how playing quality and sustainable management can go hand in hand. I have no hesitation in



RJ NATIONAL THREE-HOLE COURSE BREAKS NEW GROUND

recommending that this course should be re-certified."

The unique three-hole golf course was the brainchild of David Withers, then managing director at Ransomes Jacobsen and now president of parent company, Jacobsen.

"With the support of some of our industry partners, our parent company Textron, and a tremendous team effort by everyone at Ipswich - spearheaded by Matt Le Brun, our former greenkeeper, the RJ National has been a great success on many levels," he said. "The course is a great asset for testing machinery, showcasing the products we manufacture and is a

facility to demonstrate our environmental leadership to distributors and customers. Hopefully our example serves as an inspiration - showing that creating and maintaining a sustainable golf course can be good for golf and good for business."

GEO's Chief executive Jonathan Smith concluded by saying:

"We are delighted that the RJ National has been re-certified, representing as it does, sustainability throughout their golf environment through a continued commitment to protect and enhance nature, while using resources efficiently and carefully.

"The reduction of waste and other pollutants benefits the surrounding community. Re-certification is a vital point of credibility for all ecolabelling, affirming the important 'continued improvement' principle that makes sustainability a mindset and a journey, rather than a static level to achieve. We are delighted to note all the new activities undertaken in the last three years.

"This also demonstrates that GEO Certified™ can celebrate the achievements of all types of courses, from RJ National's innovative short course to high-profile, internationally recognised facilities."

GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL SURVEY

Thanks to everyone who took the time to take the Greenkeeper International survey which was emailed to members. It's vital that the magazine continues to evolve and improve to be another real benefit of BIGGA membership, and the survey has thrown up a range of suggestions, ideas and opinions.

We're still going through your feedback and you will start to notice some changes resulting from this in future editions. There was also some particularly useful constructive criticism and observations which we've taken on board.

To take the survey, follow the link from our news pages or visit the education and training forum on the bulletin boards.

It will only take five minutes of your time, and we'll publish some of the results in next month's issue.





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Learning & Development

Sami Strutt, BIGGA Learning & Development Manager, with an update on education issues

I was recently bought a cushion with the words "Good Day Sunshine" written on it. This prompted me to look at the lyrics of The Beatles song of the same name where I found the words "I need to laugh, and when the sun is out, I've got something I can laugh about".

Let's hope the sun comes out soon and we can all start having a good laugh instead of looking outside and seeing persistent rain!



Future Turf Managers' Initiative

By the time you read this article, the inaugural Future Turf Managers' event will have taken place at the Ransomes Jacobsen headquarters in Ipswich.

Jacobsen recognise the importance of preparing the younger generation of greenkeepers to take on the role of Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager. The FTMI has been designed to provide practical tools and guidance to help the candidates to pursue their career aspirations through this professional development conference.

The group of 20 assistants and deputies were selected following an online application process. The successful applicants are:

Lewis Birch – Greenkeeper, Sunningdale Golf Club

James Bledge – Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club

Sean Borrett – Greenkeeper, Ellesborough Golf Club

Lee Brady – First Assistant Greenkeeper, Muswell Hill Golf Club

Tom Brearley – Greenkeeper, Sunningdale Golf Club

Paul Carella – Greenkeeper, The Richmond Golf Club

Robin Cheney – Deputy Course Manager, Farleigh Golf Club

Scott Davidson – Greenkeeper, Newmachar Golf Club

Tom Evans – First Assistant



Gold Key Individual Members:
Steven Tierney MG, Chris Lomas MG, Andrew Campbell MG CGCS
Ian MacMillan MG, Ian Morrison
Andrew Turnbull, W J Rogers
Sam Langrick, Espen Bergmann,
Nick Gray

Silver Key Individual Members:
Steve Dixon, Richard McGlynn
Douglas Duguid, Jaey Goodchild,
Graham Wiley, Michael Beaton,
Paul Jenkins, Justin Cheung

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

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Greenkeeper, Harleyford Golf Club
Wes Lenihan – Greenkeeper,
East Brighton Golf Club

John McLoughlin – Deputy
Head Greenkeeper, Grange Park
Golf Club

Adam Mitchell – First Assistant
Greenkeeper, Tehidy Park Golf
Club

Adam Moss – Deputy Head
Greenkeeper, Blackwell Golf Club

Rhys Norville – Greenkeeper,
Celtic Manor Resort

Ross Ovens – Deputy Course
Manager, Roxburghe Hotel & Golf
Course

James Parker – Deputy Head
Greenkeeper, Close House Golf
Club

Leigh Powell – Deputy Course
Manager, Hockley Golf Club

Daniel Scott – Greenkeeper,
Woburn Golf & Country Club

Ben Scrivener – First Assistant
Greenkeeper, Abridge Golf &
Country Club

Tom Wood – Greenkeeper, Out-
lane Golf Club

During the two-day event the candidates will concentrate on topics including communication, budgeting, organisational politics, CV writing and interview techniques as well as taking part in discussion group on subjects such as team management and alternative career paths.

Supporting the candidates are five mentors who will work with the groups during the event and will continue to support them throughout the year.

The mentors are:

Steve Chappell, Head Greenkeeper, Gleneagles

Matt Plested, Course Manager, Muswell Hill Golf Club

Michael Sawicki, Club Manager, Dulwich and Sydenham Hill Golf Club

Lee Strutt MG, Golf Course Manager, gWest

Stuart Yarwood MG, Course Manager, Lymm Golf Club

Lorna Sheldon and David Bancroft-Turner – who gave hugely successful presentations at

the Turf Managers' Conference at BTME will pass on their extensive knowledge of professional communication techniques and dealing with golf club politics.

A round up of the event will be in the May issue of Greenkeeper International.



BIGGA Higher Education Scholarships

The latest member to receive a scholarship is Ben Burrill for his Golf Course Turfgrass Management qualification.

Funding is available for those members who are undertaking a higher education qualification. Visit the website for further details: www.bigga.org.uk/education/funding-opportunities/



Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year

Application forms for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award have been distributed to all colleges and training providers and are also available to download from Education are of the website. The closing date for applications is Friday 10 May 2013.

In the coming months we're changing the content and layout of both the Membership and L&D sections of the magazine, based on feedback you gave in the recent Greenkeeper International survey.

Tell us how our education programme and membership benefits have helped you, and we can publicise all that BIGGA membership has to offer. Contact Communications Executive Steve Castle on steve.castle@bigga.co.uk



BIGGA Membership

The membership team reflect on current news and affairs affecting you, the BIGGA member

CHANGES ARE AFOOT...

It is with some excitement that I write this last membership column in its current format. There will be some subtle differences from May's issue of Greenkeeper International onwards.

As most members will be aware BIGGA have been going through some organisational changes at BIGGA House over the last 12 months with new personnel being appointed. Although change can affect us all in an emotional way, this change is bringing with it its own advantages. I think if you ask everyone at BIGGA House what they think of the alterations, they will say they are really positive. This is because the changes have been presented as a means of introducing improvements.

All the staff are very enthusiastic and excited about the future of BIGGA and are looking forward to working with the Board, the Regions, the Sections and you!

I read somewhere that "People don't resist organisational change - people resist being changed!" and I think this is true of many an organisation or even golf club, but most people can adapt to change if managed properly.

Greenkeeper International Feedback

BIGGA have recently been collecting your feedback on the Association's membership magazine, Greenkeeper International, to find out what you think about it. You've told us what's good, what's not, what's useful, what could do with improving and changing. The results gained via the survey, the Regional Administrators or the recent roadshows undertaken by Jim Croxton, Tony Smith and myself, have given us really useful and interesting feedback.

Thank you to all who took part in one or all of the feedback methods, but mostly thank you for being honest! Most of you provided excellent constructive feedback which we can now analyse, digest



and incorporate in future issues of Greenkeeper International.

This is a great example of how we can work together to change, improve or just tweak benefits and services that BIGGA offer. We hope you like the discreet changes that will be happening over the next few months within Greenkeeper International, please continue to let us know what you think.

Regional Roadshows

Jim Croxton, CEO, Tony Smith, 2013 Chairman and myself have spent a good majority of March travelling around the five regions talking to members of the section and region committees about elements of BIGGA's current business plan.

From feedback received this has proved a very useful and worthwhile experience and I think it's safe to say that the underlying message coming through was that as a unified group we can take BIGGA forward by working together, from sections to regions to national board and staff. Your section representative can brief you at your next meeting regarding the roadshow and its contents or contact your Regional Administrator.

Greg Skinner

Good luck to BIGGA member Greg Skinner, Head Greenkeeper at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club who's running the Brighton Mara-

thon on April 14th after already completing the Ashby20 race on March 17th. As if that isn't enough Greg is then going to run in the Woodhouse Challenge on May 6th, (a measly half marathon) and finishing his runs at the KABW Bosworth Half Marathon on May 12th.



Greg is running in aid of Leukemia & Lymphoma Research in memory of a good friend named Paul Glennon who died in 2012 aged only 56.

Greg can be sponsored by visiting www.justgiving.com/gregskinner1

Membership Subscription increase from 1st April 2013

BIGGA have made a small increase in membership subscription from 1st April, they are as follows: -

- Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper - £140
- Deputy/Greenkeeper aged 21 & over - £82
- Greenkeeper aged 20 and under - £82
- Unqualified greenkeeper 21 & over - £61
- Unqualified greenkeeper 20 & under - £30
- International Member - £97
- Affiliate Member - £94
- Student Member - £26
- Retired Member - £32
- Unattached Member - £36





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OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS
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Greenkeepers Support Services
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JOHN DEERE LAUNCH NEW ONLINE SHOP

A new online merchandise shop has been launched on the John Deere website for customers and fans of the brand in Europe. Featuring an updated design and improved user interface - you can visit it at www.johndeereshop.com/en_uk

PESTICIDE APPLICATION UPDATE



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We have all been waiting with bated breath for a National Action Plan - a document that each Member State of the EU has to produce to show how the Sustainable Use Directive (SUD) would be implemented in their own country.

When all is said and done, the outcome for the Pesticide Application is disappointing. Due to the current economic climate, the Government was unwilling to 'Gold Plate' EU legislation.

We are now left with a diluted SUD where although training, education and storage are still given prominence, great leaps forward have not been made.

When it comes to accurate Pesticide Application, ALL operators must have gone through PA training to the required standard and should always be able to demonstrate

good knowledge of calibration and understand the product they are using.

Too often, tired specifications are trotted out, only re-dated, and showing little understanding of what is happening in the weed control world. It is now awash with new formulations - Dichlobenil used to give medium longevity control of weeds at 150 kgs per ha. Now, the same level of control can be achieved using a thousandth of this amount - Flazasulfuron at 150 grammes per ha!

We are entering a new era for Pesticide Application, and we must all be armed appropriately to deal with the demands ahead. This will mean investing in people, equipment and associated training, which although expensive, ensures the job is carried out to the highest standard possible.



TADMARTON HEATH INVESTS IN 'THE BEST' TO GROW MEMBERSHIP

North Oxfordshire hidden gem Tadmarton Heath Golf Club has signed a new five-year agreement with Toro. This traditional private members club is investing in the new machinery as part of a ten-year course improvement plan to retain and grow membership levels.

Course manager Brian Owen – who recently celebrated 20 years of working at the club – is delighted with the arrival of the new fleet, which includes a Greensmaster TriFlex greensmower:

“The new machines will help keep us moving forwards – we want to achieve a lot more for this club.”

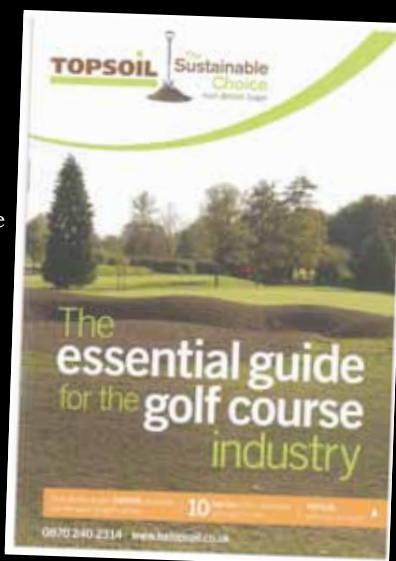
TOP TIPS FOR GREAT GREENS

British Sugar TOPSOIL, the UK's leading supplier of quality topsoil has teamed up with golf course expert Peter Jones to launch a new course management guide for the industry.

The eight-page technical guide called 'The essential guide for the golf course industry' is aimed at greenkeepers and course managers. It provides useful information and practical advice on using topsoil to improve course quality and performance, along with top tips on golf course management from industry expert Peter Jones.

British Sugar TOPSOIL is a fertile, consistent and traceable topsoil which is derived from prime arable soils to offer greenkeepers a sustainable topsoil solution. Possessing good nutrient and moisture retention properties British Sugar TOPSOIL is perfect for bunker construction projects and non-irrigated areas of a course.

The new guide is available to download from the TOPSOIL website: www.bsttopsoil.co.uk or by telephoning 0870 2402314.



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GI NEW PRODUCTS

The latest products on the market reviewed

APPLICATION ADVICE AT BIGGA SEMINAR

A new online Nozzle Selector will enable turf managers and sprayer operators to select the best combination of spray nozzle and water volume to optimise turf applications this season.

The simple tool, available at www.greencast.co.uk, enables operators to quickly select the intended spray target and the type of treatment or product being applied, to instantly see the appropriate XC Nozzle and water volume to use.

The Nozzle Selector covers the range of fungicides, herbicides and growth regulators, along with associated liquid fertiliser tank-mix combinations that can be included to improve turf health and vigour to counter disease risks.

Syngenta Turf Technical Manager, Dr Simon Watson, highlighted the new XC Nozzles can allow operators to apply at lower water volumes than previously used. This can enable greater sprayer output for more timely application, reduce weight carried on greens and, most importantly, increase product retention on the leaf that can give better results.

Greenkeepers, sprayer operators and students in the south west of England had



the chance to see the new Syngenta XC Nozzles in action and pick up some of the latest tips and information on spray application technology at the BIGGA Devon & Cornwall Spring Seminar, held at St Mellion Golf Club.

Dr Watson detailed how the new XC Nozzle Technology has been engineered to deliver more consistent coverage across the spray boom when spraying slopes on golf

courses, to counter the risk of drift to enable more spraying opportunities and incorporating exclusive design features to enhance all-round coverage of the turf leaf, to get the best possible results from every application.

Further tips provided in Dr Watson's presentation and practical demonstration included sprayer calibration and nozzle height setting - along with advice on calculating the

area of greens and fine-tuning sprayer filling to achieve more precise and accurate application across the course. All the techniques and advice offered by Dr Watson is available from the GreenCast website Application Zone. Thanks to Course Manager and Master Greenkeeper, Mike Bush, and the St Mellion greenkeeping team for hosting the event and assisting with the sprayer demonstration.

AERATION BRINGS RUTLAND'S GREENS UP TO SPEED



Sitting alongside one of the largest man-made lakes in Europe, Rutland Water Golf Club offers the golfer 18 holes on the championship Normanton Course and nine par three holes on the Hambleton course. The club did have standing water issues on greens, but following the acquisition of a Sisis Javelin Aer-Aid 1500, Head Greenkeeper, Dan Wren reports a dramatic improvement.

The tractor mounted Javelin Aer-Aid 1500 not only aerates with a vertical action, but also injects air into the root zone at a fast working rate, creating thousands of fissures.

Dan says: "Certain greens were holding moisture and it seemed that whatever action we took the problem persisted. The greens concerned were those where the thatch layer was thicker. We did our equipment research and our local dealer recommended the Sisis Javelin Aer-Aid 1500. I was aware of the beneficial effects of injecting air into greens and the improvement in the quality of our greens was achieved very quickly. The moisture retention problem has disappeared and the greens are consistent, firm and dry."

FANTASTIC FAIRWAYS AT BURGHILL VALLEY WITH HEADLAND AMENITY



“We then applied Multigreen temperature controlled release fertiliser, with Clipless growth regulator and Elevate FE complexed liquid iron in a tank mix,” he adds. “Clipless helps control excess growth while the iron in Elevate FE prevents any yellowing on the edges of leaves and helps carry it into the plant. The results have been an impressive thickening up of growth on the fairways which has filled in the divots so that they look like a carpet.”

Steve comments that the combination of Multigreen, Clipless and Elevate FE is a highly cost-effective solution, which gives the fairways a rich green colour rather than the light green of a growth flush.

Tricure AD is another useful product, he comments: “We don’t have many high spots on the greens, but using Tricure AD ensures that there are no dry patches. It is used in combination with Turfcomplex biostimulant to keep the turf healthy, which is essential as our greens are relatively small and get a lot of use. These are fantastic products and we get great results.”

Dramatic improvements have been made to the fairways at Burghill Valley Golf Club in Herefordshire last year using Multigreen, Elevate FE and Clipless from Headland Amenity.

Head Greenkeeper Steve Lloyd comments: “The course

is on fertile, heavy clay which drains well and the greens were built from a local soil and sand mix. However, 20 years of top dressing and soil exchange using hollow tines have built up a good growing medium which gives an improved root structure for the turf. We have

also reconstructed bunkers and tees over the years to make for more challenging play.”

Most recently the fairways came under the spotlight. The renovation programme began with hollow tining and deep aeration on the fairways before they were scarified in April.



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Four seasons in one day

There's no getting away from it – the West of Scotland is beautiful, but extremely wet. How do the team at **The Carrick on Loch Lomond**, lead by Jim Brown and Paul McClearn, cater for thousands of corporate clients while battling two metres of rain annually?



Greenkeeper Profile

Name: Jim Brown.....
Position: Course Manager.....
Born: Keighley, 1 January 1965....
Handicap: 18.....
Hobbies: Cycling.....
Favourite Sports Team:
 Keighley Cougars Rugby League....

Name: Paul McClearn.....
Position: Head Greenkeeper.....
Born: Galway, 28 September 1974
Handicap: 13.....
Hobbies: Spending time with two
 sons, cycling.....
Favourite Sports Team: Ireland
 Six Nations Team.....



As I drove towards The Carrick in glorious winter sunshine, little did I know I would soon experience the classic four seasons in one day – which is far from unusual in the West of Scotland.

The rainfall figures could be described as intimidating with last year's 1800mm proving a relative respite after 2200mm in 2011. So it's no surprise that the team at The Carrick (named after Doug Carrick, the Canadian architect who designed the course) are constantly challenged by drainage issues.

Jim Brown kick started a programme of improvements at The Carrick through his role as Group Golf Courses Manager for De Vere Hotels, before becoming Golf Course Manager at the heathland course. The first nine holes are played on open Lowlands while the second nine head into the Highlands close to the famous Loch before returning to the clubhouse.

Jim's regular meetings with Head Greenkeeper Paul McClearn identified various serious issues on the course – namely drainage and turf quality on the greens, regularly flooded fairways and collapsing bunkers. As we toured the course, we are in turns basking in glorious sunshine then hit with wind and rain – which seems to sum up the local climate perfectly.

Yorkshireman Jim says: "Obviously we can't control the rainfall but we can control how the golf course reacts and recovers to that rainfall. I began by inviting De Vere Hotels' CEO (and avid golfer) here to show him the problem areas, and convince him that we needed investment. It was pouring down at the time which was perfect to illustrate the issues! We needed various pieces of machinery such as a sand bander, a large enough tractor to power that sand bander and a big enough top dresser to start to top dress the fairways to improve the soil properties.

"We also needed significant annual investment to purchase sand – we applied 220 tons to the greens last year and we were looking to secure another 800 tons to apply to problem fairways and approaches. If he agreed it meant we wouldn't have to rely on contractors and could do the work when we wanted during conditions suitable for success – we were delighted when he accepted and supported our proposals."

Jim is crystal clear about the main challenge he faced on his arrival - the USGA greens with an excessive and increasing thatch

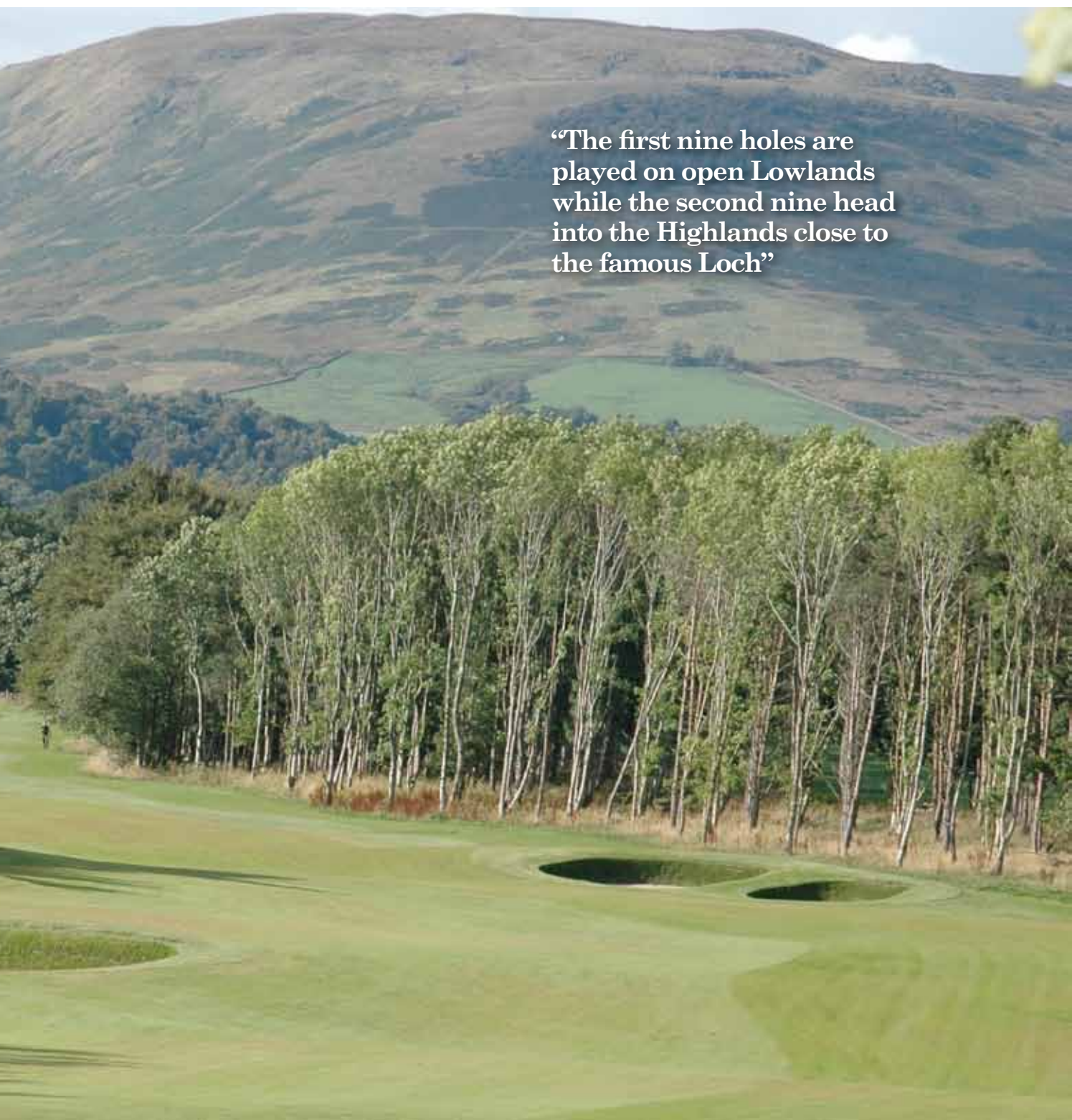


layer were "basically drowning".

"A number of the greens were down to 60% grass coverage with algae forming on the surfaces. Historically Potassium nitrate would be applied as a form of nutrition but within a week after application the turf would be wilting again. We had a five-year-old golf course with up to two inches of thatch on the greens - this led the greens to flood and ultimately turf saturation. With a change in nutrition and an improved aera-

tion programme including winter applications of Everris K-Step, we would try to build up a reservoir of nutrients in the high sand profile rootzone – this would help deliver nutritional supplements when the turf required – even during the winter months.

"I knew our success or otherwise would be measured by the quality of the greens throughout and after winter. As we enter spring it is widely accepted that turf quality and especially the greens have



“The first nine holes are played on open Lowlands while the second nine head into the Highlands close to the famous Loch”

never been better with a good turf density and disease free – all without an application of fungicide, using good old-fashioned aeration.”

Paul admits that the greens were also his biggest headache. He said: “Over the last few years we’ve used large amounts of fertilisers on the greens, which is not what we want to do. Every spring we’d be battling to get the grass growing to get good coverage and ultimately recovery.”

They also managed to convince the club that a regular aeration pro-

gramme needed to be put in place. Previous reluctance was down to the sheer number of golfers playing and an unwillingness to disappoint them. Paul says: “Communication was the key to success with the management and improvements needed with the greens, now the club management not only understand the challenges we face, but also encourage us to continue the good work”.

The team now alternate 5mm and 8mm solid tining every month.

During July and November last year they hollow tined with 12mm hollow tines, the latter not followed up with topdressing, allowing the persistent rainfall to pass through and drain away, as Jim says “aiming for a hydraulic conductivity of fresh air”.

They then introduced the Graden Sand Injector to physically remove thatch and inject sand, working on two greens at a time during the latter end of the growing season. This work is always communicated



to visitors and members alike through newsletters and golf sales colleagues.

Paul adds: "We've gone back to a very trusted, and dare I say old-fashioned form of greenkeeping. It's now spring and the worst green has 95% grass coverage. The greens are draining and there's good sward quality so we won't have to throw as much fertiliser at them to help them recover.

MACHINERY LIST

Greens: 4 x Toro Flex21, 2 x GM3250, Procore 648, Graden Sand Injection Deep Scarifier
Tees/collars: 3 x Toro GR1600, 2 x GR1000, 1 x John Deere 2653
Fairways: 2 x Toro 5400D
Roughs: 1 x Toro 3500D, 1 x 4500D
Tractors: 1 x New Holland TC45DA, 1 x TN60DA, 1 x John Deere 5080, 1 x 4520
Spraying: 1 x Toro 5800
Utility vehicles: 6 x John Deere 6x4 Gator, 1 x 4x2 Gator
Attachments: Procast PC3 Top Dresser, Wiedenmann XF Aerator, XP Aerator, Super 500 Flail, Tornado TM360XL Blower, Vicon PS303, Dakota 410, 440 Top Dresser, T.I.P. Groom-it Drag Brush, Redexim Sandmaster, Ryan Junior Sod Cutter
Trailers: Ifor Williams, Marshal S4, S2, Toro Trans Pro Flex 21, AFT 45 Chain Trencher.

"I'm an advocate of simple greenkeeping practices but you have to adapt on the day to temperature and rainfall, manage it on the hoof. Many of our customers travel great distances to hold a corporate day here, so we have to do our best to get them out on the course come hail, rain or shine."

Even before Jim became Course Manager in February last year, Paul and his team began a major programme of improvements with drainage on the fairways. The sand banding within the fairways was a bid to get the water off the surfaces and create a positive interface with the drainage below.

Paul said: "When the 1800mm we had last year is classed as a dry year you can see why we had problems! Because it's so wet, the organic matter in the top part of the fairway turf became quite thick and didn't take the water, so we invested in a contractor to cut out 50mm channels of soil, take the soil away then back fill it with sand so we were creating 12 inch deep sand channels to interface with the drainage below.

"We've bought our own chain trencher which involves a similar process to the sand banding. The rain comes, we know where the worst affected areas are on the course, it goes down the gravel drain, into the existing subsurface drainage then into soakaways. It then goes through a natural filtration system before flowing into the loch."

The next challenge was embarking on a huge renovation project concentrating on the course's 122 bunkers. They were degrading and collapsing due to the amount of rainfall – and were poorly presented with the sand becoming contaminated. So they redesigned and reurfed the existing revetted bunkers inhouse. Now they only require normal upkeep such as edging and replenishment leaving the greenkeeping team free to largely concentrate on other tasks.

The team also received feedback about a lack of definition to the semi-rough, so increased nutrition and fertiliser in these areas. They've constructed a brand new elevated tee at the stunning signature 14th hole which plunges towards the Loch. The next stages include installing further preventative drainage in the rough to complement the other drainage investment.

Jim adds: "We know how the golf course reacts to heavy rainfall and we're delivering high quality green surfaces 365 days a year because ultimately that's what the golfers care about. I'm not saying everything will be fixed in one go, it's going to be a slow process, but these small successes all add up and fill us with enthusiasm for this season and the years ahead.

"Feedback from members, visitors and regular corporate golfing parties is that they've seen a significant improvement in turf quality, particularly on the greens, and they're also pleased with the consistency of presentation throughout the year.

"The greens simply do not flood anymore, which is a huge success. Our focus now is the World Corporate Golf Final on 7 May. Some have suggested that taking on a four day high profile international golf tournament, at this time of the year, in this part of the world is a risk, but the greens are strong, the course is responding very well and we're very much up for that challenge."



MAIN ABOVE: Water on a green before the work

INSET ABOVE: Drainage channel on a fairway





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COVERING THE WORLDS GREATEST STAGES



“The courses have been maintained by three generations of ‘Mitchells’ dating back to just after the end of WW2”

Course management in a natural environment

Laurence Pithie travelled to the heart of Sussex to find out more from Course Manager Chris Mitchell about his working methods in managing Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club

The 36 hole club at Royal Ashdown Forest dates back to 1888 when the Old Course was laid out by golfing enthusiasts on undulating land within the confines of the forest, a former medieval hunting area in south east England.

The 'Royal' title was given to the club five years later following a visit by the Duke of Cambridge who was a cousin of Queen Victoria.

Royal Ashdown is unique in many ways. There are no sand bunkers, it is registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the land is leased by East Sussex County Council.

Also, it's governed by an independent body of Conservators to ensure that all land that falls within the confines of the forest is maintained within this natural environment.

As well as two adjoining clubhouses, a small pavilion exists for the benefit of the Artisan section, who in return for reduced annual membership fees and limited golf carry out fairway divoting work throughout much of the year.

But perhaps one of the most amazing aspects of the club is that the courses have been maintained by three generations of 'Mitchells' dating back to just after the end of WW2.

Chris was born and brought up on site, therefore greenkeeping and the love of the natural environment was a way of life since childhood, with an abundance of turfgrass knowledge passed down the generations.

Walking the course with him, it is clear he possesses tremendous knowledge of the flora and fauna throughout the site and how each forms part of the ecosystem within the 9.5 sq miles of forest, 60% of which is classified as open heath.

Chris was also one of the first greenkeepers in England to gain City and Guilds during the late 1970s which furthered his knowledge in turfgrass management.



Course Characteristics

The Old Course has regularly played host to a variety of national amateur tournaments as well as being used as a Regional Open Qualifier. Despite the absence of bunkers, great use has been made of the numerous water courses that traverse the site plus the ridges, mounds and slopes, many of which are covered in heather. With the highest points of the course at over 600 feet, there are several vantage points offering magnificent views in all directions. The main trees within the forest are Oak and Birch, with Alder in the wetter valleys and also Scots Pines that were planted in the early 19th century. Indigenous grasses comprising Bent and Fescue mix freely with other native grasses such as Molinia or Purple Moor Grass, Field Woodrush, Ling and Bell Heather and Dwarf Gorse, with Bracken present in the more peripheral areas. The acidic nature of the soil contains varying mixes of silt, sand and clay throughout both courses and in general, drainage is fairly good. A number of old clay drain tiles which were mostly installed in the 1960s still perform very well. The Old Course is by far the longer at just over 6500 yards whereas the shorter West Course is a tough challenge and requires a premium on accuracy from tee to green.

Fundamental Requirements

The management of the course falls under the auspices of the

Conservators who have responsibility to maintain the majority of the area as open heath, because as a National Park it is open to the public. Chris has formed a good working relationship with them, largely working for a common goal and supported by the club who are in the process of drawing up a Course Policy Document, adding to their existing Environmental Plan.

So what does this mean in terms of turfgrass management and any restrictions placed upon the club? Chris explains: "In basic terms, no buildings or structures can be erected on the site, other than those which currently exist.

"Even the maintenance building which is on two levels had to be built into the adjoining clubhouse and it's barely large enough to accommodate the range of necessary equipment. Fortunately it is centrally located to both courses although the site extends over a large area. Water is provided to both greens and tees with new polyethylene pipe and cable being fitted to all main areas, replacing the 30-year-old system. To ensure future water availability, an 'off-site' reservoir was built last year which can store almost two million gallons of water. For many, this may seem insufficient, but I have rarely used more than one million gallons per course in any given year, such is the resilience of the turf. Water can also be pumped from various areas on the course which makes us virtually self-sufficient in terms of this valuable commodity.

"Turf maintenance is just one



Low OM content and healthy ameliorated rootzone overlying the indigenous soil

BELOW: 12th hole in winter on open heathland following previous scrub clearance



"The basic objective for the 'Old' course is to maintain as much of it as possible as heathland"

Maintenance

In brief, the main playing areas are maintained as follows and relate more to the Old Course;

Greens:

Bent/Poa surfaces in varying amounts: Indigenous native soil, no drainage
OM content minimal, root depth 75mm on all but shaded greens
HOC Summer 4mm triplex, Winter 5mm pedestrian.
Frequent grooming, brushing and periodic 'vibrating' rolling
Top dressing: 80 tons per annum, 40 tons on West course
Fertiliser input: Max 40kgs N per ha. Primo Maxx monthly
Water input minimal: Only when required, staying on the dry side.
Fungicides: Spot treatment for Fusarium only. 1 - 4 lts max per year per course
Aeration: Mix of slit, deep and solid tine. No coring or deep scarifying

Tees:

Bent/Fescue/Poa surface, depending on shade and size of tees. Indigenous soil
HOC 10mm all year
Fertiliser input: 65kgs N per Ha. Two feeds per year with 11-5-5
Over-seed twice per year with standard non-rye mix

Fairways:

Fescue dominated with varying amounts of Bent, Poa and Field Woodrush
HOC 14mm all year
No fertiliser or chemicals applied, just deep tining

Surrounds:

Mix of 'above' grasses, depending on the degree of wear and level of shade
No fertilisers or chemicals applied unless required

Semi-roughs:

HOC 50mm. Limited to moderate sized areas between heather rough and fairway.

Out of play heather/grass/gorse:

Cut and cleared late Autumn to 6 inch height



aspect of site management, since much work involves preventing tree and scrub encroachment, thereby increasing the amount of open 'heather-clad' heath. A key requirement for managing any site is resources; namely manpower and equipment. The former comprises eight full time staff including myself, although some help is provided by the artisans for divot filling. Each member of staff needs to multi-task and this means being suitably trained and qualified; something which I believe is essential for this club to succeed. Also, without good and reliable equipment, the job would be impossible and we employ a qualified mechanic with a suitably equipped workshop, complete with Jupiter grinder. It means we have the right tools, when required, along with trained staff able to use them in a safe and efficient manner."

Work Plan

Chris continues: "This is split into two distinct areas - fine golfing turf and the environment since both must be in harmony with each other. Members and guests need to understand that we act as custodians - the objective being to provide good, year round playing surfaces while preserving the natural heath in the most sustainable way possible. A balance and understanding is required by all who are involved with the management of

the courses. This is what makes our club unique."

Heather Regeneration

Chris continues: "the basic objective for the 'Old' is to maintain as much of the course as possible as heathland. This includes removing scrub vegetation such as bracken and birch saplings and to fell those trees which are regarded as being unimportant to the forest or the golf course."

Bearing in mind that heather does not grow in the shade, the growth of trees needs to be controlled but in a manner that meets the requirements of both the club and Conservators.

Heather regeneration is a key part of this agreed policy and after much discussion and trials they now use the following procedures...

- Cut and collect heather 'brashings' during December to early March from an area of the site previously agreed. A Ryetec flail and collecting unit is used for this purpose set at 6ins.
- Prepare the 'new' designated area by clearing all vegetation down to a depth of anywhere between 3 to 5 ins. This includes any tree & stump removal.
- Once cleared and marked as GUR, the ground is 'scratched-up' and the 'brashings' are spread over the area and left to nature. Rolling is optional.

- It can take up to 5 years to be successful, requiring adequate sunlight and protection from any traffic. Patience and communication are essential.

There is always a quantity of dormant seed lying within the top few inches and this too can regenerate when the above vegetation is scraped clear.

Summary

Royal Ashdown is a unique golf club and frequently listed within the top 100 courses in the UK. It is maintained in a manner that befits this environment which is largely down to Chris and his passion to preserve the courses for future generations. With a lower than average labour input and minimal use of fertiliser, water and pesticides, it is clearly a course that is environmentally sustainable and economically viable, while offering firm and consistent playing surfaces for both members and guests.

As Chris concludes: "Without the support and ongoing commitment from the club and in particular the Club Secretary and Chairman of Green, the members, my staff and the Conservators, the successful transition of the course from consisting of overgrown woodland to more open heath would not have been possible. There remains so much more to be achieved and it is encouraging to receive the support of those around".



MAIN ABOVE: Ground cleared and surface prepared ready for heather brashings.
INSET ABOVE: Spreading heather brashings over prepared area

about the author



Laurence Pithie MG

Laurence Pithie MG runs his own training and consultancy company, Turf Master One Ltd. Previously he spent 17 years managing multi-site golf operations in the UK. With 42 years in the golf industry, Laurence has used his experience and knowledge to produce a number of recent 'case study' articles.

Laurence is grateful to Chris Mitchell and RAFGC for their help and input in producing this article.

Thomas's travels

TORO

Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Thomas Flavelle tells us about a life-changing eight weeks in the States, his reward for scooping the coveted prize last September

I felt very nervous as I sat on the plane about to fly out to the States. On arrival I found myself waiting at a very cold bus stop, when a large pick-up truck pulled out of the hotel car park and the driver leaned out and offered me a lift - a big thank you to Mike Prescott from turf contractor Sportscape for that.

At first it felt strange to be back in a classroom, taking notes and revising for tests at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMASS). The college day consisted of two-hour lessons from 8am-5pm with subjects including Entomology, Pathology, Turf Management and Soil Science. I enjoyed listening to some very interesting guest speakers such as Bill Spence, Superintendent at the Boston Country Club which held the 1999 Ryder Cup.

I expected the American way of doing things would be totally different to ours, and in ways they are, maybe less environmentally friendly, but the biggest hurdle was learning the different grass names for the cool seasons grasses. The lessons were very informative covering topics new to me. Networking with the other students on the course was priceless - I discussed the different techniques they use as well as how their courses are run.

As a part of my prize I was lucky enough to attend the GCSAA golf show in San Diego. I would be travelling there with Dave Canterbury - the Australian Toro winner. Unfortunately our flight to Chicago was delayed, and with only 40 minutes between flights I could see it was going to be tight. Firstly

we headed in the wrong direction through the huge airport, but after a rushed chat with an official we turned around and ran back the way we came, just making the flight and collapsing back into our seats.

San Diego was like landing in a different country - it was warm and sunny with palm trees. That evening I attended the opening ceremony, with some very interesting speakers. After this I joined my tutor Jonathan Knowles for some dinner and explored a few bars around the Gaslamp Quarter. The show itself was very interesting, with lots of products that are rarely used in the UK, including big fans to improve air circulation. It was great to catch up with people I already knew but I also met many new people. I also managed to make time for a tour of the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier which was very interesting.

I knew the trip home was also going to be eventful when I discovered storm Nemo was forecast to dump three feet of snow on the east coast. Even though my flight from Philadelphia to Hartford was cancelled, I decided to take the flight to Philadelphia. On arrival I was informed that there would be no flights for two days which created a weekend in Philadelphia for me, and what a beautiful city it is. I then headed to Washington.

We began by visiting some of the local bars and restaurants and had some great nights out at basketball and hockey games. I was lucky enough to watch UMASS beat the number one seeds Boston College 5-1. It was a great atmosphere.

Unfortunately my trip to Boston got cancelled due to the snow, but the final leg of my trip went ahead

- a visit to the Toro factories in Minneapolis.

This was an amazing tour full of information about Toro as an employer as well as the products they produce. Standing at the start of the production line was very cool, as you looked down the line a shell turned into a mower. I was now sad that the end of the trip was near.

I would like to thank Toro, Lely and BIGGA for organising this award, as it gives an amazing opportunity for aspiring greenkeepers to progress their knowledge and careers. I had a fantastic time in America, making some lifelong friendships along the way, and these people made the trip so much fun.

It truly was a once in a lifetime experience, and I wish I could start it over again. I would strongly recommend to any enthusiastic greenkeeper who wants to stand out from the crowd and study at a highly recommended University while having the time of their life to consider the Toro award.

I will never forget the experience that I had at UMASS and the people I met there.



ABOVE: Thomas at the UMASS campus

FAR RIGHT: At Toro HQ from left Rory Bairnsfather-Scott (winner of the Australian award) Thomas Flavelle, Cameron Shaw (Canadian winner) Dave Canterbury (another Australian winner)

RIGHT and BELOW: San Diego





UMASS
AMHERST

“I will never forget the experience that I had at UMass and the people I met there”



Open Support Team Q&A



The chance to be a member of the BIGGA Open Support Team is one of the many benefits of BIGGA membership. If you were lucky enough to have been chosen, what can you expect at Muirfield in July?

The BIGGA Open Support Team members are an important part of the behind the scenes unit at one of the world's greatest sporting events. It offers members the chance to follow in the footsteps of legendary golfers and learn from the greenkeeping teams at the UK's top golfing venues – another real benefit of BIGGA membership.

We've had several queries over the years about the way the Team is formed and the various roles they perform at the Open Championship – so here's BIGGA's General Manager Tracey Maddison to answer your questions.



Q) How many BIGGA members applied to join The Open Support Team 2013?

A) We received over 100 applications with a wide range of ages, experience and geographical locations. We had applications from as far afield as Ireland, Sweden, Vietnam, Australia, USA and Germany.

Q) What process do you follow to select the Team?

A) It is quite a scientific process! We look at every single application we receive thoroughly - it's vital we have a good mix of experienced members, younger members and overseas members. It's important to

ensure that there is a core of people who have Open Championship experience in the Team to act as mentors for those who are involved for the first time.

Over the years the responsibilities of the Team have increased and the R&A and the host club are keen that there are some experienced heads in the key roles during the week. As part of the process there is a guarantee that a certain number of first time applicants are selected as well as a good number of members who are engaged with BIGGA at Section level or through CPD. The Team are split into five groups or 'pods' with each having a Pod Leader who has good prior experience of the event. Each pod remain together for transportation etc throughout the week, and generate a real camaraderie.

Q) What do the Support Team do?

There are a lot of early mornings! We have a team on the course from 4am every day from the Tuesday through to the Sunday, preparing the golf course alongside the home greenkeeping team – particularly the bunkers – for the day's play. We then send out a member with each match to rake every single bunker the players land in and attend to any other greenkeeping issue that may arise. Then they can be out until late at night on divot duty. It depends what time the last match goes out, but sometimes they can still be working on the course after 9pm.

The evening before each day's play we have a random draw to decide who joins which group of players – so there's real excitement as nobody knows if they are going to join a quiet early morning round or

follow the champion up the final fairway. It's fair to say that everybody is absolutely exhausted by Sunday, but the adrenaline and excitement keeps everyone going.

The Team are also on hand to deal with whatever the weather throws at us. Last year an enormous amount of rain fell unexpectedly during the Thursday night, so we got a bunch of extra guys out of their beds at 4am on the Friday to go and deal with the water in bunkers. When you think of the millions of people across the world tuning in just a few hours later, you appreciate how important this job is.

Also, I think it's a huge educational opportunity. No matter where in the country or what course the members of the Support Team are from, they will always learn something – a new technique or a way of approaching a problem – from the greenkeeping team working at The Open venue itself and from their fellow Team members, and that can only help their daily work and future career.

Q) How important is their role?

We've supported the existing greenkeeping teams at Open Championships since 1984 now, and the team's responsibility is increasing all the time.

We received a terrific letter from Paul Smith, Head Greenkeeper at Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club, after last year's event saying how the team did a sterling job under very difficult circumstances – particularly overnight Thursday into Friday – which shows how vital the team's work is. Paul also came into the BIGGA marquee on the Sunday to personally thank the whole team.

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BTME 2013 at Harrogate saw the Baroness stand busy over all three days with the LM315 being a real focus of attention for all visitors!

Photographic competition

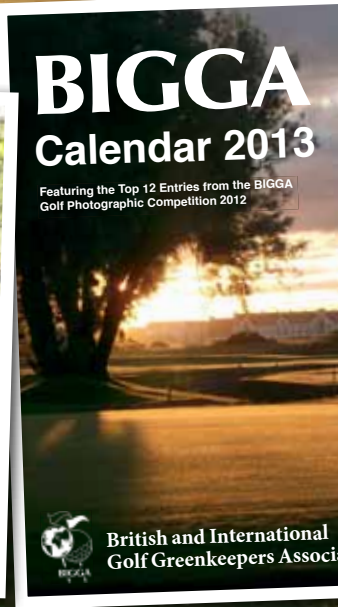
How you can win our coveted members' competition, and see your photography grace Greenkeeper International and the next BIGGA Calendar - following in the footsteps of recent winner, Craig Boath, Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Carnoustie

Do you fancy yourself as a budding photographer? The competition offers you the chance to portray your course in a variety of BIGGA publications.

Our industry offers terrific opportunities for stunning pho-

tography across the year – and now is the time to send in the images many of you have captured from the autumn and winter (or from the recent late March influx of snow!)

The forthcoming weeks offer another chance for great spring and summer shots.



The competition is judged by a panel of experts including professional photographers Alan Birch and Eric Hepworth – and the winner will receive a framed image of their choice from Eric’s super selection of golf course photography (www.hepworthgolfphotography.com).

Two runners-up will receive an unframed print, and the final 12 will all be featured in next year’s calendar.

To enter, please send your images to comps@bigga.co.uk - the closing date is Friday 19 July – the second day of The Open Championship.

Please write “BIGGA PHOTO COMP 2013” in the subject header of your email, and label your entries with your name, club/college currently at, membership number and a brief caption of the course.

Images need to be high resolution and landscape shape, suitable for a calendar.

Please avoid reducing the file size as this will reduce the quality – we recommend one image per email if file size becomes an issue – or use a compression facility such as winzip or an ftp site such as www.mailbigfile.com

There is no limit to the amount of images you can send us, but please identify three which you would like to be considered for the competition.

Please seek permission of the club before sending your entries – we are sure they will be delighted with the potential coverage.

Good to luck to all entrants.



Craig Boath's stunning early morning shot of Carnoustie's Burnside Course



Suck it and see

Tractor powered vacuum, sweeper and flail mower/scarifying collectors cover a broad equipment base. Choosing the right machine to collect everything from leaves and litter through to clippings and even cores can be tricky. Here's James de Haviland with key advice

Although there are potentially a large number of tractor powered collectors to choose from, homing in upon what you actually want the machine to do makes selecting the right tool for the job easier.

Some models are designed more for hard surface work and do not have the necessary clearances within the machine to cope with large bulky materials such as leaves and grass clippings. Others have a hopper capacity that is suited more to dense 'road' type sweepings than bulky organic matter.

Firstly a bit of a shortcut taking in the main machine types. These fall into two basic types - vacuum with or without a powered brush or flail systems and units with just

brushes or flails. The most popular self-contained vacuum collectors include the Trilo models from the Grass Group. For golf courses, the company's Trilo S4 now ranks as the top seller. At the heart of the S4 is the 850mm diameter turbine that provides the suction. It is designed to have enough power to draw even heavy debris into the 4m³ hopper. The main suction head has a working width of 1.80m and is complimented by a 5.0m long 250mm diameter wonder hose. Designed for use behind mid-range compact tractors of 45hp plus, the Trilo S4 will tip into trailers or skips 2.15m from the ground. Those seeking a model that can be fitted with an integral scarifier or flail head can choose the Trilo SG400.

When considering the purchase of this type of model, it is important to match the machine to its intended application.

For the most part, vacuum suction alone is perfectly adequate to collect grass clippings and leaves but you may want to consider a model that can be used to also carry out scarifying work or have a powered brush.

Moving on to tractor powered sweeper/flail collectors, there are a several makes and models to choose from, but they are sometimes hard to identify due to the emphasis that can be placed upon what they do. A good example is the Redexim Charterhouse Turf Tidy models.

These versatile machines are



LEFT: The Trilo S4 self-contained vacuum collector from the Grass Group features a 850mm diameter turbine that provides the suction. It is designed to have enough power to draw even heavy debris into the 4m³ hopper. The main suction head has a working width of 1.80m and is complimented by a 5.0m long 250mm diameter wonder hose.



BELOW: Redexim Charterhouse Turf Tidy machines are sold as a de-thatcher and scarifier that collects debris as it works, with less emphasis being placed on their abilities as a collector.

Offered with a choice of 1.50 or 1.80m working widths, the Turf Tidy 1310 and 1710 machines are supplied with multi-function scarifier heads with blades spaced at 18mm.

ABOVE: With its 4.5 m³ capacity, the latest Super 600 from Wiedenmann combines a flail mower, scarifier and sweeper in one unit. As with other similar design, the action of the flails creates a vacuum to allow the collection and shredding of bulk material such as leaves.

RIGHT: Fitted with a large diameter steel drum rotor with four rows of flails and two rows of draft paddles, the Wessex ProLine STC flail collector is designed to create suction for collecting the grass as it cuts or dealing with other debris, even in the wet. Offered in 1.2m and 1.8m working widths, the ProLine STC is semi-mounted to the tractor but runs on its own four wheels in work.



sold as a de-thatcher and scarifier that collects debris as it works, as opposed to emphasis being placed on their abilities as a collector. Offered with a choice of 1.50 or 1.80m working widths, the Turf Tidy 1310 and 1710 machines are supplied with multi-function scarifier heads with blades spaced at 18mm.

These can be user swapped for flails or a sweeper with four brush elements. Duties can include mowing, leaf collection or hard surface sweeping. Fitted with 2.50 and 3.00m³ high tip collector bodies, Turf Tidy units are designed for tractors of 25hp when just sweeping, 40hp being recommended for work with flails.

Another versatile machine is the

Wessex ProLine STC flail collector. Fitted with a large diameter steel drum rotor with four rows of flails and two rows of draft paddles, it is designed to create suction for collecting the grass as it cuts or dealing with other debris, even in the wet. Offered in 1.2m and 1.8m working widths, the ProLine STC is semi-mounted to the tractor but runs on its own four wheels in work. The front wheels are repositioned by a simple pin mechanism to adjust the working height. Applications will include cutting and collecting golf course roughs through to verticutting when the interchangeable knives are fitted. The same unit can also be used to run with just a brush rotor.

The Litamina HT from SISIS

come in 1.2m and 1.5m working widths and are offered with the choice of a screen hopper bottom, enabling sand or top dressings to fall back onto the swept surface whilst retaining debris such as leaves. This sort of unit is useful when brushing in top dressing materials but also taking out debris such as leaves.

Wiedenmann UK collectors include the Super 500 and Super 600. These have respective hopper capacities of 2.5m³ and a significant 4.5m³. Again, these units combine a flail mower, scarifier and sweeper in one unit. To help reduce ground pressure, the Super 600 runs on four 23x 10.5 pneumatic tyres. The hopper lifts via a parallel system so the hopper rotates to





The Imants RotoSweep from Campey Turfcare Systems is purpose designed to remove surface debris from fine turf, to include cores, grass clippings, leaves and general litter. The dual powered brush is claimed to cope with heavy debris and operate in less than ideal working conditions.

help improve emptying. As with other similar design, the action of the flails creates a vacuum to allow the collection and shredding of bulk material such as leaves.

The Super 600 attaches via a draw bar to tractors 50hp and above. Options include rear lights, a front roller to help reduce the chances of scalping, a dethatching and scarifying unit with verticut blades that can be spaced 19mm, 38mm and 57mm centres. Optional Durablades™ made of tungsten steel are also available.

Campey Turfcare Systems have started to see increased interest in its Imants RotoSweep. Designed to remove surface debris from fine turf, the machine can collect cores, grass clippings, leaves and general litter. The RotoSweep features a dual powered brush system that is designed to enable it to cope with heavy debris and allow operation in less than ideal working conditions. Tractor towed and PTO powered, the RotoSweep has a hydraulic tipping 2.5m³ hopper.

Amazone Groundkeeper models include semi-mounted variants suitable for use behind compact tractors of 20 through to around 35hp. Offered in working widths of 1.20m, 1.30m and 1.50m, the machines have a flail rotor that can be fitted with a choice of blades to

mow, collect leaves or pick up litter and other debris. Scarifying blades can also be included. All variants have a 1.80m hopper dump height and have respective capacities of 1.25 m³, 1.40 m³ and 1.55 m³.

How do you choose?

The models detailed are not intended to provide a definitive list of what is available, but they do give an idea of not only what's on offer but also how the machines differ. Choosing the right machine is easier if you can set out clear priorities before buying. Different circumstances will impact upon performance too, word of mouth recommendations needing to be put into the context of individual machine usage.

A demonstration of the machines is well worth the effort. It's no good selecting a machine to clear under trees if it proves too tall. It is also worth looking at a blower to compliment this type of equipment, these units helping to 'windrow' debris for faster collection. Other points to consider are

- Weight
- Standard and available tyre sizes
- Versatility
- Material capacity
- Power requirements

- Physical size
- Discharge heights
- Available options
- Main duties

One final point. This is not a buyer's guide and does not list every sweeper collector on the market. Further, many rotary ride-on tractor mowers can be fitted with a vacuum collector that will also enable leaves to be cleared without investing in a different machine. You may also consider a mulching deck for this type of work. The key is to establish what you need to clear and collect, how the debris is subsequently handled and if you are looking to also work on hard surfaces. Understand what your priorities are and the right machine should choose itself.

The essential workings of the Amazone Groundkeeper is much the same between the various models, the inclusion of two rows of 'paddles' creating enough draft to lift and shift heavy and wet leaves. The flail rotor can accommodate a choice of flail and either 2 mm or 3mm thick scarifying blades. All the blade types simply slot into place without the need for tools.





A high tip hopper allows debris to be emptied directly into a skip, trailer or heap for composting. Units that collect with flails will lacerate incoming material, such as leaves, so helping to maximise hopper capacity. Vacuum and brush collectors can work on hard surfaces to include car parks. What do you need a machine to do?

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OPM to be targeted by aerial spraying

How aerial spraying in the South of the UK is bidding to halt the march of Oak Processionary Moth, writes Terry Mabbett





about the author



Dr Terry Mabbett

Dr Terry Mabbett is a disease, pest and weed control specialist with forty years international experience covering research, advisory and journalism. His current fields of focus are professional turf and alien insect pests and pathogens of Britain's native and naturalised trees.

The message on the grapevine is that oak processionary moth (OPM) could at last be controlled by aerial spraying in the UK. After five years of dithering, the UK Plant Health Authorities appear to be learning a lesson, taking the lead from their counterparts in Germany and trialling aerial application of insecticide against OPM.

OPM (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) is moving mainly westwards and southwards from its initial twin infestation focus on oak trees imported from the Netherlands and planted in the London Boroughs of Richmond and Ealing during 2005/2006. A total of nine contiguous London Boroughs – Richmond, Ealing, Hounslow, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth are now affected by this main infestation. Last summer the infestation leapfrogged the Thames from its southern front at Hampton Court and into the Elmbridge area of North Surrey.

Two ongoing 'satellite' infestations, originating from later separate introductions of OPM on oak trees also imported from the Netherlands, are in the Pangbourne area of West Berkshire and the West Wickham area of the London Borough of Bromley. This latest infestation has spilled over into the neighbouring London Borough of Croydon.

Aerial spraying is not something done on the hoof with pilots leaping into cockpits wearing ten-gallon hats and shouting 'chocs away'. It requires thorough planning and regulatory hoops to be jumped through, especially since nearly all OPM affected oak trees in the UK are in urban and suburban areas.

Any aerial spraying undertaken will be carried out using helicopters to apply the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki* (BT). Aerial spraying experts will carefully consider and calculate a comprehensive range of spray and formulation factors and parameters. These will include aircraft speed, height above the target, nature and concentration of the liquid formulation used, mean droplet diameter and droplet size distribution, spray volume and insecticide dose sprayed per unit area, as well as wind speed and wind direction on the day.

Biological perspectives

In addition, there will be key biological factors and requirements, related to OPM larva behaviour

and the canopy characteristics of oak trees, that must be understood and satisfied if the programme is going to work, irrespective of how nominally accurate aerial application might be.

Spray timing is crucially important for several reasons. BT kills OPM larvae via ingestion and stomach action through larvae feeding on the foliage. Consequently the target for spray droplets is the new oak leaves produced in spring, usually appearing from mid-April onwards with OPM larvae hatching sometime during the second half of April.

The twin synchronised starting points are therefore timing of oak tree re-foliation and hatching of the L1 (first instar) larvae from plaques of insect eggs on small branches at the top of the canopy. Both are dependent on temperature. An early spring with higher than normal temperature should realistically see earlier synchronised oak tree re-foliation and larval hatch, and vice versa.

Next thing to be established is when the larvae start to feed on bursting buds, young leaves and flowers. Is it immediately after hatching or sometime thereafter? If a contact insecticide is used spray operators would additionally benefit from knowing when larvae are most exposed to spray droplets by being, for instance, on the upper (adaxial) surface of oak leaves.

Synchronisation of aerial application with start of larval feeding is vital for another very important reason. Youngest small larvae (L1, L2 and early stage L3) are the easiest to kill with insecticide. The lower the larval body mass then a correspondingly lower dose of active insecticide ingredient is required to kill the larva.

Secondly this is the only time during the entire juvenile insect stage period that larvae will be permanently feeding on foliage in the outer shell of foliage at the top of the oak tree canopy where the bulk of spray droplets from aerial application will be deposited. Once larvae have successfully passed through the L3 (third instar) stage they are that much bigger and heavier with correspondingly higher doses of insecticide required to achieve mortality.

OPM larvae in the late L3 to L6 stages spend progressively more time during the day on the trunk and main scaffold branches and increasingly in their silken nests. As such they are less likely to be feeding in on the outer canopy shell at the tops of trees where BT depos-



MAIN ABOVE: Aerial spraying using a Robinson 244 helicopter fitted with Micronair AU700 atomisers (Picture Micron Sprayers Ltd)

FAR LEFT: The adult oak processionary moth lays its eggs in plaques (strips) on small branches in the upper reaches of the oak tree canopy (Picture Forestry Commission)

SECOND LEFT: Operators need to monitor the timing of egg hatch in spring. A plaque of OPM (Picture Forestry Commission)

LEFT: Older and larger larvae with their higher body mass require larger doses of insecticide to cause mortality (Picture Forestry Commission)

its are made, so they will become increasing difficult to 'reach' by aerial spraying.

Larvae start to develop the irritating hairs from L3 onwards, and last thing wanted is for thousands of dead larvae with still active stinging hairs falling out of oak trees after aerial application of insecticide.

The window of aerial spray application opportunity is clearly quite narrow and generally closed by mid-May.

Collection of biological data is standard practice when planning any spray programme against a lepidopterous (butterfly and moth) larval (caterpillar) insect pest, but is easier said than done on a 20m tall oak tree than a 1m high cotton plant.

Nevertheless it needs to be done and clearly requires entomologists in MEWPs (cherry pickers) to see exactly what is going in the tops of oak trees infested with OPM.

Longevity of BT on plant foliage is relatively short.

The product is applied as a water-dispersible granule and is therefore prone to wash off from the foliage by rainfall. Activity is also reduced by UV light levels which can clearly

be high at the tops of tall oak trees.

These factors, depending on spring weather experienced, may shorten the interval before a follow-up spray application is needed.

Aerial spraying trials on trees are ideally carried out on larger expanses of woodland and as such the majority of golf courses might not seem like the obvious place to start. However, word on the grapevine is that trials may involve (by necessity) spraying by helicopter of small groups of oak trees or even individual trees.

Provided it is carried out when play is not in progress, golf courses would appear to offer as good a place and opportunity as anywhere, within an urban or suburban area, to trial aerial application of insecticide against OPM.

A number of golf courses are already being forced to use ground spraying equipment against OPM every year with many more at risk. BT is completely harmless to humans. It has been used for many years as a bioinsecticide in agriculture and horticulture to control lepidopterous larvae on dozens of different everyday fruit and vegetable crops.

Collateral cost: aerial spraying against OPM

One question sure to be asked by today's environmentally-aware greenkeeper is the extent of any collateral ecological damage from aerial application. Provided aerial spraying against OPM is well planned, well timed and carried out with the required precision any ecological fall-out should be minimal, and acceptable given the alternative of giving OPM a 'clear run' and 'free hand'.

BT is specifically active against the larval stages of the Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) and only via ingestion and stomach action. OPM larvae have to eat BT covered oak foliage to pick up a potentially lethal dose.

No other class of insect or arthropod (e.g. woodlice) is affected. Only insects at potential risk are Lepidoptera which use oak as a larval food plant and only one native British butterfly falls into this category. Larvae of the purple hairstreak (*Neozephyrus quercus*) feed on pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and sessile oak (*Q. petraea*) and sometimes Turkey oak (*Q.*



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Philip Baldock
Ganton Golf Club,
Yorkshire

cerris) and evergreen or holm oak (*Q. ilex*).

Whether the purple hair streak is at risk from sprays of BT will largely depend on timing of egg hatch and larval feeding and how this matches with that of OPM. However, 'oddities' in larval feeding behaviour indicate purple hairstreak could avoid significant collateral damage.

The female purple hairstreak lays eggs singly at bases of plump oak buds in late summer. It prefers mature trees outside of dense woodland, and often isolated hedgerow and landscape oaks with twisted and gnarled branches, just the sort of oak trees found on many golf courses.

Eggs hatch is synchronised with first signs of bud break. However, L1 (first instar) larvae do not start to feed from the outside but burrow into buds and stay there feeding safely until the first moult is complete. As larvae get larger and oak buds open, they spin silken protective retreats outside and feed only at night. During growth and development of the larva there are three moults prior to pupation.

These idiosyncrasies may be

enough to spare the purple hairstreak from most risk and damage. Egg hatch and appearance of L1 larvae starts well before that of OPM with some British butterfly websites indicating the first half of March, which means up to 8 weeks before any OPM spraying can be contemplated.

Situation for moths is more complicated in number at least. No less than 2400 different moth species have been recorded in Britain including 800 found regularly. In Northumberland over 50 different species of moth are recorded with either *Q. robur* or *Q. petraea* as a larval food plant.

However, the larval stage of many moth species is in June and July well after any anticipated spraying against OPM.

Last but not least is 'His Majesty', the male purple emperor butterfly (*Apatura iris*). Purple emperor butterflies are closely associated with oak woodland although the female lays its eggs on sallow, mainly great sallow (*Salix caprea*) and also called goat willow or pussy willow, growing at the woodland margin and along woodland rides.

With sallow as the larval food



ABOVE RIGHT: Late L3 to L6 larvae spend more daytime hours on the trunk and main scaffold branches and increasingly in their silken nests (Picture Forestry Commission)

plant the purple emperor should be safe. However, the adult butterflies drink oak sap and honeydew excretions from aphids feeding on oak foliage.

Whether or not they could pick up BT in this way, and indeed whether BT would be infective against the adult insect stage, is something which doesn't appear to have been considered.

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BIGGA members recently took part in a survey concerning the use of compost on golf courses. Here Tricia Scott, Research Analyst from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) summarises your responses

It's a WRAP

As you will be aware, compost is produced from biodegradable organic waste such as garden clippings, grass cuttings and leaves as well as household kitchen waste.

The survey results show two in five of you make your own compost on site using grass cuttings and leaves collected around the course, and the mixes vary from 70% grass/15% leaves to 10% grass/80% leaves. One respondent mentioned using kitchen waste, while another uses seaweed and leaves and one clearly had his own special recipe: "grass, wood chip, cardboard, kitchen waste, dung. I look for a 40 % green/high N content".

Composting is a great way to recycle nutrients from green and food waste. It contains slow release nitrogen, potash and phosphorus, as well as trace amounts of magnesium and iron. Most of you who responded to the survey said you used your compost in flowerbeds as well as for turf top dressings and repair (in divot mixes). Some said they use compost on fairways, roughs or for landscaping around the course.

There are a number of uses for compost on the golf course. It can

be blended with other materials such as sand to create reliable topdressings. It can also be blended with grass seed in divot mixes, and because compost contains nutrients and holds moisture effectively, it enables rapid regrowth of grass. The dark colour also absorbs heat from the sun, speeding up germination.

It can be used to establish or renovate turf by applying a 25-50mm layer on the surface and then incorporating it to a depth of around 100-150mm. Once this is done, a seed bed can be established by lightly brushing seed onto the surface. The mixture of nutrients and minerals in the compost provides a stable, reliable and sustained base for rapid growth.

The amount of compost applied to a site will depend on the properties of the compost to be applied, the characteristics of the receiving course and what the final requirements are. When compost is produced on a commercial scale, it is often made from a combination of green waste and municipal household kitchen waste.

These composts are produced under controlled conditions so that microbial activity drives the breakdown of the material, and can then

be used in a range of applications around the golf course.

It was clear that many of you are happy to use compost, however half of you were concerned about the effects of using it on finer turfs such as on greens, and were particularly concerned about possible fungal diseases.

Some of you also raised concerns over the consistency, quality and possible health risks associated with using it. Comments included "the local supervisor couldn't guarantee the quality. No temperature checks in place, rogue weeds getting through" and "Local supplier doesn't screen small enough, or risk of contamination if compost is not made properly."

These concerns are valid but can be avoided by using compost that is certified to the PAS 100 specification. This specification is a quality assurance scheme that puts in place a number of measures in the composting process to ensure minimum standards are met, to ensure compost is safe and consistent.

It includes restrictions on what materials can be used for composting thus reducing the likelihood of unwanted materials in the end product. It requires high temperatures to be consistently





“Two in five of you make your own compost on site using grass cuttings and leaves collected around the course”



ABOVE RIGHT: Carnoustie Golf Club used PAS100 Compost for turf maintenance and repair courtesy of WRAP

INSET ABOVE: PAS100 Compost produced in windrows courtesy of Fife Council

reached during the composting process, so that weed seeds are thermally destroyed, plus regular tests to ensure the product meets minimum quality standards.

Compost that meets the PAS 100 specification can also be screened to very fine particle sizes as low as 5mm and can be applied as top dressings both to fairways and greens.

Trials have demonstrated that using compost as a top dressing is just as effective as a traditional sand based topdressing. In fact, rather than increasing the prevalence of fusarium fungal diseases such as dollar spot, compost based top dressings have been shown to suppress them due to its slow release nitrogen.

Compost top dressings are best applied during spring or autumn. This helps to avoid run off and material loss during heavy rain. Periods of hot and dry weather should also be avoided as this may inhibit the level of incorporation of the compost into the underlying soil.

Many of you are aware of the benefits of using compost. We received comments such as: “this is a good way of controlling waste products on site and saves us money” and

“improves soil biology and soil food web to reduce chemical reliance”.

The environmental and sustainability benefits of using compost are clear. It recycles waste materials, helps reduce the need for artificial fertilisers and the addition of organic matter can help to improve soil structure. You can also save money too both by using your own compost and by using PAS100 compost.

Carnoustie Golf Links welcomes over 115,000 golfers a year and needs to maintain its courses to the highest standards. Following successful trials, the club took the decision to use quality compost in the repair and maintenance of the courses. Divot mixes comprise of 6mm grade compost at a ratio of 1:3 with sand which is then blended with seaweed meal and grass seed.

The blend creates a material close to a sandy soil which offers moisture retention and nutrients. It has been found to provide a practical cost effective and sustainable alternative to the virgin materials used in the past - such as fensoil and fertilisers. Using locally sourced PAS 100 compost led to cost savings of circa 30%, or around £13 per tonne as a result of the reduced haulage costs.

In a trial conducted at Monifieth

Golf Links, comparing divot mixes based on compost and fensoil, found that not only did the compost perform as well as the fensoil but also resulted in an annual cost saving of £1,480.

Some of you who responded to the survey are keen to use PAS 100 compost but either don't know enough about it, or have struggled to find a suitable local supplier.

We recognise these are issues that need to be addressed and are looking at ways to improve access to information.

A good practice guide is available on the WRAP website, providing information about how compost can be used successfully on golf courses.

Also available is the Compost Suppliers Directory: compostsuppliers.wrap.org.uk This tool helps identify suppliers of compost and compost-based topdressing in your area. It will be updated over the coming months to include a wider range of suppliers who can deliver the most suitable products.

If you are interested in finding out more about the results of the survey, please contact lee.best@wrap.org.uk

Selective weed control



Graham Paul's latest BASIS article looks at unusual turf weeds and how to identify them



With spring weather hopefully around the corner, maybe it's time to consider some strategies for selective weed control. In the UK there are over 50 species of broad-leaved weeds that can be found in mown turf.

Some species will be affected by mowing closer than they can tolerate, so these will only survive in more natural, less intensively managed areas. Coastal environments support a number of salt tolerant plants (halophiles) such as Buck's-horn plantain (*Plantago coronopus*) and Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) that are not normally found inland. Soil type, pH and the availability of water will reduce the list still further.

The first step in selective weed control is to identify the weeds present. Starting with seaside plants, 'bathed' in the salty mists that pervade coastal habitats. Their ability

to survive in this environment is due to a genetic adaptation that allows them to withstand conditions of high salinity. The salt mist coming from the sea will increase the levels of sodium chloride in the soil, which is then absorbed by the roots and accumulates in plant tissues. Abnormally high levels in plant cells will seriously affect the movement of water across cell membranes and as a consequence, growth is slowed or halted completely. This osmotic imbalance can cause the 'stunted growth habit' that some species exhibit in coastal regions or it can eliminate them altogether.

Three other weeds occasionally found in coastal turf include; Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) similar in appearance to Ribwort Plantain but with narrower fleshy leaves, Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*) a creeping perennial weed with stalkless fleshy leaves and



pink flowers and lastly Sea Stork's-bill (*Erodium maritimum*), which has simple lobed leaves and small pale pink or white flowers that rapidly lose their petals.

These species fall into the category of 'unusual turf weeds' and are relatively easy to control with what I have termed the 'general purpose' selective herbicides.

These are a group of similar products that contain MCPA, mecoprop-P and dicamba such as

MAIN ABOVE: Thrift *Armeria maritima*

INSET ABOVE: Plantain - Bucks Horn *Plantago coronopus*



'Longbow', 'Relay', 'Re-Act' or 'T2 Green'.

The common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) gets its name from the corrupted French description of the leaves ('dents de lion' – lion's teeth) but natives of France may also know this weed by the name 'pis en lit' – a reference to bed wetting that myth tells us can result from picking dandelion flowers! Most people can identify a dandelion but there are several other lookalikes that produce a similar single yellow flower-head, which can fool the untrained eye when the weed is found in mown turf. The first of these; Cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) has fleshy, lobed, hairy leaves that (with a bit of imagination) resemble the 'fight-torn' ears of a tom cat! I have seen many different species of cat but never one with green ears! The flower stalk is quite different from a dandelion; being thinner, wiry and bearing a few scale-like dark-tipped bracts.

Cat's-ear is relatively easy to control with most general purpose selective herbicides but some products may require a further application.

The next of the dandelion 'look-

alikes' are the Hawkbits; Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*) and Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*). Rough Hawkbit is a very hairy plant in contrast to Autumn Hawkbit; which has more slender, often hairless leaves. Rough Hawkbit has un-branched flower stems whereas Autumn Hawkbit can have two or three branches in its flower stems.

These two Hawkbits can be controlled by with two applications of products containing MCPA, mecoprop-P and dicamba at a rate 3.5L/ha, such as 'T-2-Green' or 'Re-Act'

Another dandelion flower 'look alike' is Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum* – formerly *Hieracium pilosella*) This perennial herb has long leafy runners and produces a rosette of grey-green leaves that have soft, dense, short white hairs on the underside and long stiff hairs on the upper surface.

The florets have red stripes on the under surface.

The leaves are quite different from the dandelion but the flowers can appear similar when fully open because the red stripes are not visible from above. Mouse-ear Hawkweed is fairly easy to control



with products containing 2,4-D, MCPA and mecoprop-P.

Selective herbicide products are usually formulated from two or more active ingredients in order to extend the spectrum of control to deal with as many turf weeds as possible in one spray. Manufacturers try to match the weaknesses of one active ingredient with strengths of another, to create a 'one product' answer to weed control in turf.

However, due to the diversity of weeds found in managed turf situations, the quest for complete control has so far been elusive. Further-

MAIN ABOVE: Hawkbit Autumn Composite

INSET ABOVE: Cats Ear Composite



MAIN ABOVE: Medick - Spotted
Medicago arabica

INSET ABOVE: Black Medick
Medicago lupulina

RIGHT PAGE BOTH IMAGES:
Speedwell - Ivy Leaved
Veronica hederifolia

more, repeated use of products that leave some weeds uncontrolled can, over several seasons, lead to domination by these resistant species. Two weed groups spring to mind in this respect; the yellow clovers and the speedwells can both increase in numbers to the extent that the small flowers become highly visible, requiring specialist herbicides to remove them.

The yellow clovers are all members of the pea family (Fabaceae); three species of Trefoils and two species of Medick. These five species can all be found in UK turf and are fairly difficult to control and even more difficult to identify!

To distinguish between the three yellow trefoils look for leaf hairs, leaf size and the number of flowers in the flower head.

- Hop Trefoil (*Trifolium camp-estrie*) has sparsely hairy leaves and has 25 to 40 flowers per head.
- Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium* – also known as yellow suckling clover) has similar sized leaves to Hop Trefoil but they are usually hairless and there are between 15 and 25 flowers per head.
- Slender Trefoil (*Trifolium micranthum* – also known as Least Yellow Trefoil) has smaller leaves and flowers with only 2 to 10 flowers in the flower heads.

The yellow trefoils are best controlled with specialist selective herbicides containing mixtures with fluoxypyr such as 'Cabalex', 'Praxys', 'Swiftsure' and 'Trafalgar'. The general purpose products will give some control but re-growth

from early treatments may require a second spray.

The two species of Medick have similar shaped leaves and flowers to the Trefoils. Spotted Medick (*Medicago arabica*) has obvious dark spots on the leaves that easily separate it from all of the others.

Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), a perennial, can be distinguished from the yellow trefoils by its 'mucronate' leaf tips. These are short, abrupt points on the end of the leaf mid-vein. The seed pods are kidney shaped and turn black when ripe.

Black Medick can be controlled with the general purpose products at the highest dose (where a range of rates is recommended) but retreatment may be necessary in some cases. Best control is indicated with the specialist herbicides suggested for the yellow trefoils. Spotted Medick may also respond to these recommendations but I could not find a label or other reference to confirm this.

Speedwells are members of the genus *Veronica*, which includes about 15 UK species, many of which are found in turf and will require specialist selective herbicides to control them. All speedwells have flowers with only 2 stamens but vary considerably by the leaf shape, size, hairiness and by the colour of the flowers; which can range from deep blue to lilac, with some that are almost white.

The more common varieties found in turf include; Slender, Ivy-leaved, Thyme-leaved and

SELF ASSESSMENT

Use the questions below to check your understanding of this topic. Readers can claim BASIS points if the questions are answered correctly

- 1) What is the term used for salt tolerant plants?
 - a) Halogenic, b) chlorophile, c) halophile, d) osmotrope
- 2) Alongside the weed Autumn Hawkbit, which other member of this family was mentioned?
 - a) Rough Hawkbit, b) Smooth Hawkbit, c) Lesser Hawkbit, d) Mouse-ear Hawkbit
- 3) What term describes a leaf or bract with an abrupt point at the tip?
 - a) Periodate, b) stylate, c) dentate, d) mucronate
- 4) What characteristic do all Speedwells have in common?
 - a) Blue flowers, b) hairy leaves, c) they are all annuals, d) flowers have only 2 stamen
- 5) Yellow clovers found in turf are all members of which botanical family?
 - a) Figwort (Scrophulariaceae), b) Pea (Fabaceae), c) Carrot (Apiaceae), d) Rose (Rosaceae)

“Most speedwells flower very early in the spring so they are often difficult to control before the flowering stage”



Germander Speedwell. The latter, Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), has two opposite lines of long hairs on the stem and is notoriously difficult to control, with frequent reports from users of re-growth after 6 weeks of treatment with some products.

Other species occur in local environments and particular habitats such as Marsh and Heath Speedwell. Like the yellow clovers, if they are left uncontrolled by general broad spectrum herbicides, they can proliferate to the point that they dominate the sward. Most speedwells flower very early in the spring (March/April) so they are often difficult to control before the flowering stage.

The majority of speedwells can be controlled with specialist selective herbicides containing fluroxypyr, for instance; ‘Cabadex’, ‘Praxys’, ‘Swiftsure’ and ‘Trafalgar’. The dual purpose moss control product ‘Jewel’ that contains carfentrazone-ethyl and mecoprop-P will also give moderate control of speedwell species.

Tank-mixing to increase weed spectrum

In circumstances where the weeds present in turf include deep rooted or difficult to control weeds

such as thistle, speedwell or yellow trefoils then it may be prudent to treat the area with a tank-mix to extend the capabilities of a general purpose product such as ‘Relay’ or ‘T-2-Green’ with another amenity approved product.

To achieve control of deep-rooted weeds, consider using a mix with a product containing 2,4-D amine, such as ‘Depitox’. Difficult weeds, for example speedwell or yellow trefoil would require a mix with one of the specialist herbicides referred to in the relevant sections above.

In order to stay legal when tank-mixing it is important to stick with the following guidelines:

- Check with your supplier that the proposed mixture is suitable for the intended use. A supplier offering to support a mix should have tested it and will know if there are any compatibility issues or effects on the performance of the products.
- Note that when mixing two or more pesticides in a tank-mix all conditions of approval on all of the product labels and safety data sheets must be complied with.
- If any product in the mix is subject to a LERAP requirement, then this applies to the tank-mix as well.



Section Notes

Please email your notes to steve.castle@bigga.co.uk by the 15th of the month



All the latest news from your Section

Around The Green

SCOTLAND



CENTRAL

Congratulations to Stephen Jack who has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Pitreavie GC. Stephen, who comes from Leuchars in Fife, started his career as an apprentice at St Andrews before moving to Loch Lomond GC. He then moved to England and worked at The Buckinghamshire and other courses in the London area before deciding to move back to Scotland.

Also new to the area is James Lindsay, the new Course Manager at Stirling GC who took up his position a few months back. Welcome to the Central Section to both of them. Congratulations also to Richard Colley of Dunfermline GC who got married in Lapland at the beginning of March. As I write this you could have stayed in Fife and got more snow Richard!

The Pairs competition is up and running again with over 20 teams which is an increase again from last year. There are a few new ones this time round so it should be a good competition again.

The spring outing is at Carnoustie on 17 April, entries close on 11 April and a report will appear in the May edition as well as on our website www.biggacentralsection.org.uk. Amazingly, out of 280 members in the section, over 80 have not supplied us with an email address. As this is the main method of communicating with members about education and other events 30% of members are missing out.

Gordon



EAST

Unfortunately due to work commitments I was unable to attend the Scottish Conference, by all accounts I missed out on a very good day with some great topics, well done to all involved with a maximum turnout on the day showing how highly this event is held in the greenkeeping calendar each year. I would like to welcome and introduce Jamie Martin (Gifford GC) as my Vice Chairman, I look forward to working with Jamie over the new few years. Various events may be held for our section over the year with a possible course walk at Muirfield prior to The Open this year, and we are also looking at holding a get together at Mussleburgh Races with the possible date of May 24, first race at 6.15pm. By the time this report goes to publication the Masters will be on our screens with the golfing world expecting all the golf courses to resemble the magnificent Augusta track, spare a thought for the poor greenkeepers fighting the elements - snow, rain and cold winds. G

ood wishes to Alan Lawrie who has taken over as Head Greenkeeper at Royal Mussleburgh GC - the section wishes you well Alan in your new post. We have had a good response for our spring outing to Seahouses (23 April) and at present we have 26 golfers (well 25 golfers and Charlie Allison) looking to attend so we still have some space for any latecomers, just get in touch if you would like to attend. If any members would like to volunteer to write a piece for GI drop me a line - till next month enjoy the spring weather.

Scott Corrigan scottcorrigan4@aol.com or 07877098237



NORTH

We would like to start of this month's report by saying congratulations to Steve Frost Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Royal Aberdeen Golf Club. Robert Patterson got in touch to say that Steve has been at the club now for over 30 years which is a great achievement in the modern age so well done and keep up the good work.

We also heard that Billy Craig has taken over from Jim McCormack as Head Greenkeeper at Kirriemuir Golf Club so best wishes to Billy in his new position and hopefully the weather will be kind to you in your first year in charge.

The Section would also like to pass on their best wishes to John Robertson from Aitkens who we believe has retired, John has been a regular at our section outings over the years so thanks very much for your support and hopefully it is not the last we will see of you.

Another section member in the news is Scott Davidson for Newmachar Golf Club who has been chosen in the final 20 delegates (only two in Scotland) for the inaugural Jacobsen Future Turf Managers Initiative.

Scott's looking forward to a very intensive two days of seminars and workshops at the Jacobsen Headquarters in Ipswich. By the time you read this report you will have your 200 club tickets and entry form for the Duff House Royal outing on 25 April so it will be good to catch up with everybody again.

Please remember to send in any news to no matter how big or small to Dale Robertson on mob 07784517534 or Robert Patterson on mob 07931639548



WEST

Not going to start with the weather just want to wish everybody a great season and hope this is a good one for a change.

We have the spring outing at Buchanan Castle golf club 25 April courtesy of Ronnie Mills and his council, secretaries match at Douglas Park golf club on 8 May, and a football match on Sunday 28 April at Fir Hill against a select team.

Congratulations to Gary Divers who has secured the job at Crow wood golf club. Gary used to look after Ralston golf club but moved off to pastures new, we wish him well.

The site visit to Loch Lomond has been cancelled as David Cole would prefer to conduct the tour at a more beneficial time for him and the club. David feels he can deliver a better talk when his workload is slightly reduced at the present time all guns are blazing to get things ready for the start of the season. November is the planned date but members will be informed well in advance, thanks to David and Loch Lomond for their help.

Finally John Robertson of Aitkens is taking early retirement after 26 years with the company this being due to ill health, John covered the East Section more than the West but I had bumped into him on a few occasions at the Scottish outings at one of those venues (Kingknowe) I remember him shooting 59, a remarkable score for anybody and I doubt if it will ever be matched. The West Section would like to wish him well and hope he enjoys his retirement.

Remember if you need to get in touch then call 07790823914 or e-mail me at stuart.taylor@glasgowgolfclub.com

NORTHERN



NORTH EAST

Congratulations to Michael Gunn Deputy Head at Tyneside GC and Ashley Marshall assistant greenkeeper at Matfen Hall who have been chosen for the Open Support Team. Also well done to Craig Kilgour Deputy Head at Ponteland GC who will be on the Support Team for the BMW at Wentworth in May good luck to you all.

Plenty of news from Close House to write about, four staff have recently completed formal qualifications and six more are currently undertaking either Level 2 or Level 3 in Sportsturf.

Deputy Head James Parker at the Filly course will be attending the Jacobsen Future Turf Managers Initiative for two days including Seminars and Workshops covering a range of subjects designed to equip them for success in their future careers.

Still on with Close House, it's baby boom time as four greenkeepers are about to become fathers congratulations to them. Also Paul Wright who used to work at Gosforth has joined the greenkeeping team, finally MJ Abbotts are about to start work on improvements to The Filly course work is expected to be completed by July.

We have a match arranged against the Cleveland section on July 3 at Durham City tee off time is 1pm, the team will consist of eight per side and play will be 4BBB. They have also asked if we could have a eleven side football match sometime in May, that should be interesting so if anyone is looking for a game please get in touch with me.

Jimmy



NORTH WEST

First of all my apologies for the lack of section notes last month. I had a family bereavement and certain things had to take a back seat. The Spring tournament is to be held at Lytham green

drive golf club on Thursday 11 April first tee time 14:05, please contact Phil Dewhurst for a booking. The summer tournament is to be held at Ormskirk golf club on Monday 1 July with a 1:30 first tee time. I am finding it increasingly difficult to arrange the fixture list as golf clubs understandably don't want to give prime tee slots to courtesy golf given the present financial climate. The north West v North Wales match is on Friday 31 May at Haydock Park golf club (TBC), I will be looking for a team to play in this very enjoyable fixture. The cricket match versus the North Wales Section is at Ashley cricket club on 24 July contact Nick Gray for details. The Bert Cross trophy and AGM will be at Wilmslow golf club on 12 November 2013.

From time to time I get asked to try and arrange training courses, recently we arranged one for operating excavators if you think you may be interested please contact me.

That's all for now, if you have anything of interest to our members please send it to me and I will put it in the magazine

Chris Sheehan



NORTHERN

As many of you guys will know Alan Gamble - former course manager at Pannal Golf Club - sadly passed away at the age of 83. A great supporter of the section and association, our thoughts go to his wife and family. This white stuff is starting to get on my nerves now, Monday morning it's -5 but with the wind chill its -10! Can't get on with things. A bit of tree work keeps me happy, a man and his chainsaw - what damage can I create this week?! All this freezing weather can get morale down but you can rely on those fully qualified greenkeeper members we work for to make me you smile. Picture the scene, Saturday morning I set off to work the car is clear, my garden is lush and green a hard morning awaits. Ten miles later I'm greeted with a Christmas card scene with two inches of snow covering the course. The first guys start turning up and

walk onto the first tee for a nosy and ask me "Is the comp on? It's sunny with blue skies - will it clear while I have a coffee?". Bless 'em for making me laugh. The first fixture will be on us shortly so dust off those clubs and get ready for a good season. Andy Andy.slingsby98@google-mail.com 07506407867



CLEVELAND

Well it's certainly been a wet 2012 for us all and challenging as a result. The weather is now improving and spring is in the air. Here at Dinsdale we are currently giving the course its first cuts of the year getting fairways, tees, greens and surrounds well presented for the season.

Over the past weeks continual verti draining has been ongoing on the remainder of the wettest areas - hopefully these will improve. Our winter programme is coming to an end after reconstructing and redesigning a number of new fairway bunkers with the aid of Nathan Stones. Certainly an improvement to our course.

Soon to begin graden work on greens, hopefully the weather will be kind. This work will be carried out by Marc Kerr whose contract work and advice has been invaluable so far in my career. I would recommend this operation and Marc's services to all greenkeepers.

I would like to thank Barry and Allie for all their hard work organising their annual quiz night at Teesside Golf Club, much appreciated by all who attend. With spring on the way, lets hope for a better, drier year.

James Taylor, Dinsdale Spa Golf Club



NORTH WALES

I'm hoping that spring has finally sprung now after winter held on so firmly to March and we can get on with the competitive season proper. Our season starts this month with the spring tournament and national

qualifier taking place at Bull Bay G.C. on Tuesday 23 April, please return your entries and cheques to Carl Crocher by 15 April. I have been asked if bank transfer as requested at the AGM has been set up for this year's competitions, but as of yet this has proved more difficult than first thought so it's still in the pipeline. Most competitions this year will feature a draw for partners so if you wish to play together as per your entry form please make this request on return of your form. On the education front Paul Lowe and Rhys Butler have fostered a very good relationship with Deeside College and we can confirm another half day seminar later this year followed by a full day seminar next spring, we are also organising a short talk and course walk for the autumn, dates and contents of seminars will be confirmed closer to the time. All the best until next month.

Pete Maybury 07756001187 e-mail petemayb66@aol.com Facebook North Wales B.I.G.G.A

MIDLAND



EAST MIDLAND

There are certain pivotal moments in your life, such as your first day at school or when you learn to ride your bike without stabilisers or the day your wife walks in the living room and says 'Darling, there's an allotment plot that's become available in the village and I think we should take it and grow our own vegetables like Tom and Barbara Good'. How much and whereabouts is it? '£8 per year and it's just behind the pub!!' 'We'll have it'. I can see this allotment needing a lot of attention especially between 7pm and 11pm on a Friday and Saturday. You never know after Leicester's recent car park discovery I may dig up another King...Edward?

Cold Ashby Golf Club was the venue on 7 March for Jim Croxton, Tony Smith and Tracey Maddison to present 'Working together for the future success of BIGGA' to the Midland, East Midlands, Mid Anglia, East of England and BB&O sections. A well attended afternoon high-

lighted the association's vision to improve communication between HQ and its members and move the professional status of greenkeeping forward. They also plan to further improve the level of education available to BIGGA members and to make the association a 'must join' organisation for greenkeepers. It enabled those who attended to engage with Jim and the BIGGA team and discuss issues and concerns that they had. The association's strategy is changing, reflecting the different demands that the industry is putting on it. BIGGA is moving with the times, get on board or get left behind...

So I'm just over a week away from my Brighton Marathon adventure. As my challenge was highlighted in last month's magazine you will know that I am running this year for Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. I have a JustGiving page set up www.JustGiving.com/greg-skinner1 so anyone who would like to support me can donate via the JustGiving.com page. I am already grateful to those kind and generous souls who have already supported me with sponsorship or auction prizes. Ding ding tickets please...

Greg Skinner, 07970 095264, greg.skinner92@btinternet.com



MIDLAND

As I sit here in Stratford Towers pondering what news to report, the most important (and indeed all I have) is that of our calendar sponsors and the long running "Everris Doubles" Competition. Indeed, without our many sponsors the Section would be far poorer. Our thanks to all of our sponsors though out the year.

This month's calendar sponsor is Matt Gresty, Amenity Seed Specialist: matthew.gresty@limagrains.co.uk or Tel: 07767 278 335. Please consider his expertise regarding your seed requirements. And what a great picture it is.

Our long running "Everris Doubles" final is to be played at Wentworth. Please get your entries in before the Spring event. This is a wonderful opportunity to not only play one of best

course's in the country, but also to enjoy our great courses here in the Midlands on the way. Good luck to all.

Sean McDade



BUCKS, BERKS & OXON

As we move into April hopefully spring will get underway as the golfing season kicks in and courses get back to normal following the wash out that was last summer and a cold winter! The Section's first golf event will take place this spring please see the website for application forms, dates and times. An email will be sent out nearer the time so please make sure your contact details are up to date etc.

In other news thieves have been operating in and around the BB&O section with Berkshire being targeted most recently. Compact tractors, trailers and plant machinery have been taken from golf courses in the area so please be vigilant and take extra care with security measures.

Alec Macindoe Course Manager at Newbury and Crookham was fortunate to attend the GCSAA Show in San Diego care of John Deere. By all accounts the trip was a great experience with the highlights being the show itself combined with a tour of the San Diego Padres baseball stadium and a brief visit to Las Vegas to see some rugby sevens action. As ever the level of investment and resources required to produce the playing surfaces was phenomenal. Alec would like to thank all those who made the trip possible in particular the John Deere representatives who made sure everyone was looked after.

The Rigby Taylor Pairs Knockout competition has been well supported again this year with 32 teams entered. The first round of matches are due to be played this month so good luck all to those involved!

Frilford Heath Golf Club is this year's venue for the BIGGA National Championships which take place on 7 and 8 October, a week following the European Tour event. The finals will be played over the Red course and provide a fitting end to what will be a busy year for Course

Manager Sid Arrowsmith and his team.

If anyone is interested in or needs any training be it chainsaw or spraying courses etc plus funding then please get in touch with our Regional Administrator Sandra Raper sandra@bigga.co.uk As a reminder if anyone wishes to have their current e mail address added to the BIGGA HQ system then please drop Sandra an e mail with your contact details. If anyone has any news, views or ideas they would like to see for the BB&O section then please don't hesitate to get in touch: bboscribe@gmail.com or contact the committee/Matt Nutter: bbosecretary@gmail.com

Alternatively keep up to date with what is happening in the BB&O section by following us on Twitter, Facebook and the web site: www.bbogreenkeepers.co.uk

The Stick



MID ANGLIA

I trust all are in good spirits despite another onslaught of the awful weather we have once again been enduring? The poor run continues with no immediate sign of improvement on the horizon so we can only hope that we get some warmer days soon as by the time you all receive this the US Masters will be all over our TV screens and this generally signals the start of the golfing season for us in the UK. This is always a great watch seeing the world's greatest players being tested at Augusta.

The summer tournament will be held at Brookmans Park GC in Hertfordshire on Tuesday 6 August so please put this date in your diaries. I believe it will be a pm start but the finer details are still to be arranged. This is a venue that we haven't visited for a long time so will be a new challenge for all golfers on what is a fantastic course. That's all for this month, please get in touch if you wish to have any input for the column as it really would help.

Darren - d.mugford@rigbytaylor.com 07843 513387

SOUTH EAST



SURREY

Footgolf! A game played similar to golf, the player's intent is to introduce football into a hole with the foot, in the least amount of strokes possible. The field may well be a golf course, but the distance between the tee and the hole is flexible and may be adapted proportionally based on the full playing area. It's taking the country by storm, at least at Leatherhead GC anyway. Golf courses are starting to host these events, perhaps an Olympic sport of the future? No April fool here, patents are pending for FootGolf boots with adaptable striking angles enabling the footgolfer to achieve longitude when elevating the football with his boot. Sounds like a seven iron attached to your ankle, whatever next!

Last year's winner of the Surrey Bowl, Mark Harvey, welcomes you all to the Texas Scramble event at Epsom Downs GC on the 18 April. So stick it in your diary now and enter via the website for a great day out.

After more than ten years at Cophorne GC in Sussex, Richard Webb joins the Surrey section after moving to Purley Downs GC as Deputy Head Greenkeeper. We wish you the very best for the future and look forward to seeing you at some of the section events in the future.

Gary Ogilvy's blazer has taken some serious punishment this year, celebrating as Captain of Hill Barn GC in Sussex. Gary has played at the club since 1976 which to you and I is almost 36 years, nearly as old as me. The outgoing Captain has been hard at work and has raised a large amount of cash for Diabetes UK, a charity very close to his heart, Well done Gary.

Congratulations to Deputy Course Manager Iain Dyke who has taken over from Neil Baker as Course Manager at Tandridge GC. Neil is on the way north to Little Aston GC - all the best Neil.

Walton Heath is one of the world's most famous and prestigious clubs. The two excellent championship courses have hosted close to ninety amateur

and professional championships and events, including five European Opens, The Ryder Cup, the US Open qualifying and recently the Senior Open Championship. On March 8 the South East regional members and their guests prepared to test themselves on the Old Course.

However, it was simply not to be. The rain Gods had put the Old Course to the test and only after a prolonged deluge, the event had to be called off. John Paramour entertained the 100 or so well turned out golfers who listened to fascinating accounts of a chief referee on the European Tour as the catering staff served some of Walton Heath's gastronomic delights.

Clive Osgood organised this event with Swiss precision to ensure all departments came together on the day. Thank you Clive and thank you to all who attended.

Mark Day



KENT

I was hoping to be writing this report following a landmark day in the history of our section as we were due to be playing the one and only Royal St. Georges Golf Club on 12 March. Unfortunately, the day before the event, Mother Nature conspired to scupper things by unleashing the 'beast from the East', which brought snow, minus seven wind chill and general misery to most of the country. As I write this the snow is still falling as we are again reminded of the fickle nature of our seasons and that nothing can be taken for granted in so far as programming renovation works or golf days are concerned. This is the first event that we have had to cancel in the eight years that I have been section secretary so I suppose we should not be too downhearted.

There's not much else to report so I would just like to take this opportunity to thank all of our sponsors for their generosity this year. Your funding ensures that we can put on superb golfing, educational and other fun events for our mem-

bers. Your details our proudly displayed on our webpage to encourage as much extra business as possible. Please visit our webpage for up to the minute news and events. Hopefully Springtime is just around the corner!

Rob Holland 07545 424880
www.kentgreenkeepers.com



SUSSEX

I would like to start my report with the news that Ian Gosling has been appointed as Head Greenkeeper at East Brighton Golf Club. Ian has worked at the club as Deputy Head Greenkeeper for a number of years. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing him all the best in his new role. Also I would like to welcome to Sussex Nick Stevens who has just been appointed as Head Greenkeeper at Seaford Head Golf Club. Nick was previously the Head Greenkeeper at Carmarthen Golf Club in Wales, which was Welsh Golf Club of the Year in 2011. Again, I am sure that you will join me in wishing him all the best (as long as he doesn't bring the weather from Wales with him, we have had enough rain thank you!). Both courses would make smashing venues for a BIGGA competition!

The Spring Competition & National Championships Qualifier is now just around the corner - this event will be held at The Dyke Golf Club in Brighton on 23 May. Entry forms for this competition and the section's away day at Littlestone golf club in June will be coming out soon, so make sure that you have got this date in your diary as places on the away day will be limited and available to those attending the qualifier as priority. If you would like any further information, please contact Peter Smith or give me a call.

At the time of writing we have four inches of snow, and yet last year we were in the grip of the great drought, with record high temperatures in March and no end in sight to the dry weather, hosepipe bans were in place and drought orders applied for. Who would have thought the last 12 months would pan out

quite as they have! What will this season bring? Let's hope it's a boring and consistent one with nice average temperatures and rainfall, fingers crossed!

Finally, a funny story comes back from America where two of our members attended the GCSAA show followed by some down time in Las Vegas. After checking in at the hotel they returned to their courtesy bus to find the driver had broken the key off in the lock of the luggage compartment! Guests at the five-star Trump International were then entertained by the sight of two greenkeepers' ingenuity as they were forced to break into this "highly secure" vehicle, using just two screwdrivers obtained from the valet parking desk!

Chris Humphrey. Tel: 07912 669457 or chris@collier-turf-care.co.uk



ESSEX

15 members, sponsors and guests travelled down in very foggy and damp conditions to Walton Heath early last month for the South East Region Dinner and Golf Day. As the morning progressed, drizzle turned to rain and the course could take no more, unfortunately shortly after 1.30pm play was abandoned. We all enjoyed a fine meal, as always at this venue and were entertained by Walton Heath's Club Captain Michael Vaines. BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton and Guest Speaker; John Paramour. The Essex section would like to thank our Regional Administrator Clive Osgood for arranging yet another well supported day.

In the past few weeks the section committee have held two meetings the first a conference call and the second a full meeting held at Little Channels. Matters discussed were the future golf days for this season and education, the following fixtures have been arranged with one to be confirmed.

Spring Trophy, 16 May - Frinton Golf Club; Summer Trophy & BBQ plus National Qualifying, 15 August - Channels Golf Club; Autumn Trophy, (Blind Pairs) TBA; Christmas Team Event, 3 December - Orsett Golf

Assistant Profile

Our monthly look into the life of an assistant greenkeeper...



Name: Simon Reardon
Age: 38
Club: Kingsthorpe Golf Club, Northampton
Position: Assistant
Nickname: Pebble Eyes

How long have you been greenkeeping? 17 years

What was it about the career that attracted you? The opportunity to be involved in a game I revere

If you weren't a greenkeeper what do you think you'd be? Conservationist or arborist

Which task do you most enjoy doing and why? Changing holes - I enjoy setting up the course for both general play and competitions

Which task do you least enjoy doing and why? De-stoning bunkers. Would rather get to the route of the problem than go round in circles

What one thing - other than a pay rise - would improve the greenkeepers' lot? Free or heavily subsidised education, training and seminars

Hobbies? Golf, rugby, squash and socialising

Favourite Band? Crowded House

Which team do you support (football or otherwise)? Northampton Saints RFC

What is your claim to fame? Completed a cycle ride from John O'Groats to Lands End for charity

BIGGA welcomes the following new members

Scotland

Daniel Chapman, SRUC (Elmwood), Student
David MacMillan, East Kilbride Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Jed Sigsworth, Cupar Golf Club, Assistant
Greenkeeper
Lewis Valentine, Moray Golf Club
Assistant Greenkeeper
Fergal Cushen, St. Andrews Links Trust,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Dave Beardwood, St. Andrews Links Trust,
Greenkeeper
John Bateson, St. Andrews Links Trust,
Greenkeeper
Stuart Lindsay, St. Andrews Links Trust,
Assistant Greenkeeper

Northern Region

Steven Grantham, Lees Hall Golf Club, Head
Greenkeeper
Christian Johnson, Chesterfield Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Andrew Cuffe, Lytham Green Drive Golf
Club, Affiliate Member
Tim Baldwin, Amega Sciences plc, Affiliate
Member
Jonathan Carmichael, Eastham Lodge Golf
Club, Assistant Greenkeeper
Lee Whittaker, The Mere Golf Resort & Spa,
Greenkeeper
Kevin Fowler, Flaxby Park Golf & Country
Club, Greenkeeper
David Raper, Easingwold Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Neil Armitage, Headingley Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Steven Cockshott, Headingley Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Jon Hall, Headingley Golf Club, Affiliate
Member

Midland Region

Richard Sheldon, Stonebridge Golf Centre,
Greenkeeper
Phillip Dick, Myerscough College, Student
Stanley Wallis, Myerscough College, Student
Steven Edwards, Harewood Downs Golf
Club, Greenkeeper
Connor Bodman, Woburn Golf & Country
Club, Assistant Greenkeeper
Daniel Quininn, Woburn Golf & Country Club,
Greenkeeper
Daniel Wright, Woburn Golf & Country Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper

South East Region

Luke Grounsell, Bramley Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
David Cameron, Wentworth Club (The),
Greenkeeper
Daniel Reading, Oaks Park Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
James Lumley, Sutton Green Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Terry Carver, RAF Marham Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Harry Cannon, Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Keegan Powell, Sunningdale Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Paul Holmes, Hadley Wood Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Harry James, Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Keith Pooley, Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club,
Greenkeeper

South West/South Wales Region

Nick Stephens, Carmarthen Golf Club, Head
Greenkeeper
Tim Haycock, Carmarthen Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Tom Easterbrook, Pyle & Kenfig Golf Club,
Assistant Greenkeeper
Jordan Jones, Pyle & Kenfig Golf Club,
Greenkeeper
Nigel Thompson, Cleeve Hill Golf Club,
Greenkeeper

Overseas

Etienne Scott Pillier, Student, France
Tryggi Olver Gunnarsson, Oddur Golf Club,
Iceland
Pierre Del Bono, Golf Club Villars, France
Gary Schweber, Rolling Green C.C., USA
Bradley Sim, Cape Kidnappers Golf Course,
New Zealand

Club. News and entry details on the section website.

Our new education officer Ben Scrivener outlined plans for an education program over the next months with some exciting ideas, more of these as soon as they are arranged.

Richard Freeman announced that plans are well under way for the Toro (Lely) sponsored football tournament, team details will be announced on the website. So if you would like to play please take the contact details from the website and get on the phone. The final is again at West Ham United's ground 21st May for your diary, but unlike past years this year there will be some knockout rounds to get through first. That's all for this month more details next month on education, golf and the football.

www.essexbigga.co.uk 07764 862337 or at essexbigga@talk-talk.net

Arnold Phipps-Jones

SOUTH WEST & WALES



SOUTH WEST

Maybe I spoke too soon last month but that sliver of spring that was on the horizon has vanished. A few superlatives come to mind; arctic blast... brass monkeys...all I know is that when I arrived at the shed the other morning it was -5C and that was before the wind chill.

Any of you who decided to go with an early season coring programme must surely be in position and poised for soil temperatures to rise and get the season under way, it is all about positioning!

A successful day was had by all at the recent presentation and course walk event hosted by Chris Sealey and Chippenham Golf. All four presenters including myself, Jaime Acton, Adam Matthews and Stephen Jack who came down from Surrey overcame heavy nerves and a Chippenham-wide power outage to present our audience of nearly thirty four talks on a wide range of subjects that seemed to keep everyone at full attention. Personally I really

enjoyed the experience and I am sure that Adam, Stephen and Jaime did too, well done to my co-presenters!

Coming up on Wednesday 24 April is the Am/Am at Minchinhampton Golf Club which will be in fine spring form, make sure that entries are in promptly as there is sure to be high demand on this event at a great club and venue. Following on, Wednesday 29 May is the Section v Secretaries match at stunning The Manor House, Castle Combe, that one is sure to be a cauldron of competition.

Finally a welcome to new section member Nigel Thompson of Cleeve Hill Golf Club in Gloucestershire who has recently joined BIGGA, good to see new members coming in to see the benefits of the association.

Keep up the support, see you all at the upcoming Section days and keep the news coming in. Jaey Goodchild (07984422295 j.goodchild@bowood.org)



SOUTH COAST

Hopefully by the time you read this the sun will be shining with golfers in shirt sleeves. We have come in today to a covering of snow and wind chill -8, it can only improve!

The annual seminar at Milton Abbey School was another huge success with 80 attendees treated to excellent speakers. Sadly I was unable to attend because of family issues but I understand the food was also outstanding.

Thanks as always to Alex for the hard work in organising the event, thanks also to Joe Cooper and Milton Abbey school for allowing us to use their facility. Last but not least our thanks go to the sponsors for the day Banks Amenity, Huxley Turf and E.G.Cole.

The first golf event of the year is on 16 April at the renowned Remedy Oak Golf Club, this will be very popular so if you haven't booked your start time do so quickly. Contact Kevan Glass at glassy2003@hotmail.com, the cost is £35 and that must be received before the day. As usual for our spring event Avoncrop will be the sponsors in memory of Colin (chalky) White.

Several people have asked me about the Management Trophy which sadly I have to report that this year we do not have a sponsor. Hopefully this will be rectified and this very popular event will continue next year.

Here at Barton on the "sunny south coast" I can only say we survived an appalling winter, more days closed than ever before. No golf, no members coming in means no-one is spending money-very hard times. We have in the last week managed to get out and punch holes in as many areas as possible, a light top dressing and a liquid feed and now things are looking much better. The next thing will be bringing the bore hole back on line and priming the watering system!

Hope you have a great Easter (I will as I am off to Cuba) with some warm sunshine and of course a light shower, see you at Remedy Oak on the 16th!

Tony Gadd



SOUTH WALES

With our weather patterns trying their best to destroy all our best laid plans thank God we have a rugby team to be proud of even if it is kick and clap (Mr Kinley). Our biggest ever victory over England has made my last few days visiting my English golf clubs very enjoyable...

Our Spring seminar will again take place on April 24 at Royal Porthcawl GC sponsored by Countrywide Amenity, confirmed speakers are Steve Chappell Gleneagles, Mark Hunt Headland Amenity, Tillers Turf, Sports Metals and Enviro-bunker. A great line up, I'm sure you'll all agree, booking forms should now have been received but for extra bookings please contact Gareth Knight on 07595 988512.

Our spring tournament should have taken place at Fairwood Park by the time you read this so please read next month's article for the results. Just before I leave congratulations must go out to Jim Jenkins the new Head Greenkeeper at Carmarthen GC welcome back mate we wish you all the very best.

Keep enjoying the spring guys Peter H.



Diary of Events

Details of your Section's forthcoming events in 2013 can be found here...

Date	Event	Venue	Contact
APRIL 2013			
April 10th	East Midland Section Spring Tournament	Beedles Lake Golf Club	ALL WELCOME – Members and Non-members. Nick Miles Tel: 07842 960686
April 11th	North West Section Spring Tournament	Lytham Green Drive Golf Club	Phil Dewhurst Tel: 07768 180604
April 16th	South Coast Section Spring Tournament	Remedy Oak Golf Club	Alex McCombie, Tel: 07561 001299 or Email: southcoastsecretary@gmail.com
April 17th	North East Section Spring Competition	Heworth Golf Club, Gateshead	Jimmy Richardson Tel: 07910 641745 or Email: jamesrichardson17@sky.com
April 17th	East Anglia Section Golf Day	Ufford Park Golf Club	Ian Willett email: info@biggaeastanglia.co.uk
April 23rd	Scotland, East Section Outing	Seahouses Golf Club	John Young, Tel: 07776 242120 or Email: johnyoung@bigga.co.uk
April 23rd	North Wales Section Spring Tournament	Bull Bay Golf Club	Carl Crocher, Tel: 07702 316886
April 24th	South West Section Golf Day	Minchinhampton Golf Club	Adam Matthews, Tel: 07732 503855 or Email: adam.l.matthews@hotmail.co.uk
April 24th	Northern Section Spring Tournament	Hornsea Golf Club	Andy Slingsby Tel: 07506 407867
April 24th	South Wales Section Education Event	Royal Porthcawl Golf Club	Gareth Knight Tel: 07595 988512 Email: garethknightuk@yahoo.co.uk
April 25th	Scotland, North Section Spring Outing	Duff House Royal	Dale Robertson Tel: 07711 274525 or Email: daleturnberry@aol.com

BIGGA Regional Conferences

Midlands - 6 November 2013. Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, Leicester.

Contact Sandra Raper
- 07866 366966

North- 7 November 2013 at Phoenix Sports Club, Rotherham.

Contact Sandra Raper
- 07866 366966

South East- 2013 date and location tbc.

Contact Clive Osgood
- 01737 819343 / 07841 948410

South West & South Wales - 21 November 2013 at Oaktree Arena, Bristol.

Contact Jane Jones - 01454 270850 / 07841 948110



Greenkeepers Training Committee

David Golding, GTC Education Director, with a monthly update



This month David Golding, GTC's Education Director, looks at how modern technology has opened up education for all levels of greenkeepers – but have not replace the tried and tested traditional methods of learning

People of all ages now use Facebook, Twitter, Skype and other social networks. Access to computers and mobile phones have revolutionised not only the way we communicate but also learn.

The Internet is a fantastic resource to access knowledge and there is much more openness by organisations to give free information and help.

Golf is very fortunate in that there is a coming together of the many bodies who have some role to play in promoting the game, maintaining standards on and off the golf course, coaching and in the case of the GTC ensuring employers and greenkeepers have the best information available to educate and train their staff.

All of the GTC's representative bodies, Associates and Quality Assured Centres and Training Providers have excellent websites which can be viewed via www.thegtc.co.uk

One recent additional website offers employers and greenkeepers access to training courses, workshops and seminars dates and venues through an online calendar. England Golf has engaged many golfing bodies involved in organising training courses and www.golfeducation.co.uk is well worth a visit. All of the contributors including GTC and BIGGA will be posting all events as they are developed.

The GTC's Quality Assured Centres are all developing various learning platforms using the very latest technology and thankfully we are saving many trees as paper is getting replaced by online learning. The demand for hard copies of the Greenkeeper and Groundsman-ship Training Manuals is reducing as some Centres now have online versions available.

For some Centres and students the traditional methods of delivering courses towards the recognised qualifications are still the preferred option but more and more employers and students are considering the "on the job" delivery option. Either route to learn is fine by the GTC and we are very pleased as student registration numbers are still increasing annually - especially the number of apprentices.

The GTC is also pleased to report the steady increase in student registrations on higher education courses, this again is mainly where online learning is a feature of the delivery model offered by the Centre.

Education and Training from Apprentice to the Degree, all with Government Accreditation, is a model Britain should be proud of and the students who have progressed through their careers by both vocational and HE courses and qualifications are now not only managing golf courses in Britain but across the globe.

I was invited to speak at the recent FEGGA Conference in Zurich and the exchange of experience and knowledge amongst delegates was, as with any gathering in our sector, so productive and we can all keep in touch so easily using modern technology.

Many international delegates from golf developing countries are looking for support from organisations like FEGGA, BIGGA and the GTC.

I will report in more detail on our supportive role through the European Greenkeeping Education Unit (EGEU) next month but my personal involvement has highlighted just how much smaller our community is now through the development and use of modern technology.



The GTC is funded by:



BIGGA's bulletin board is another example of how members across the world help share their experiences and knowledge which is a tremendous resource.

I know for some nothing will replace the classroom with the hard copy books and handouts and the GTC fully supports that tried and tested method but nowadays the classroom can come to you.

Finally the GTC has reviewed all of its learning materials, which were originally written by specialist subject authors in 2003/4, are shortly to become available again in PDF format. A list of subjects, 18

“Students who have progressed through their careers by both vocational and HE courses and qualifications are now not only managing golf courses in Britain but across the globe



Contact Details

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GTC Education Director
and European Greenkeeping
Education Unit Standards
Director

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david@the-gtc.co.uk

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chapters in total, and the authors will shortly appear on the GTC's website. This review project has been part funded by The R&A.

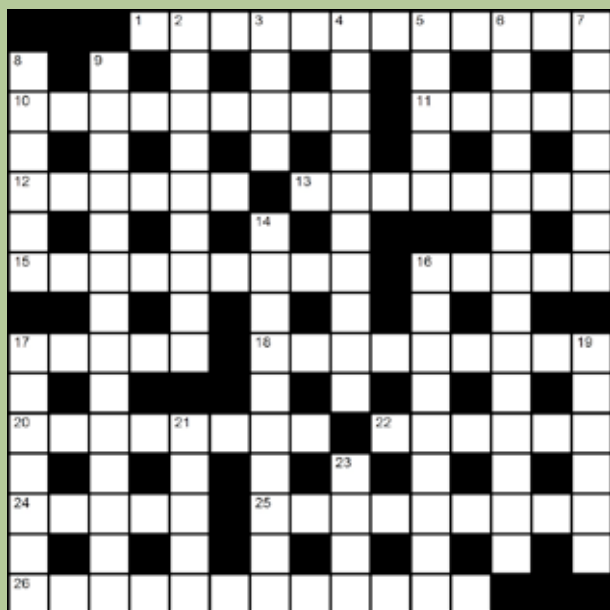
Such has been the demand for these learning resources from across the globe, as used by the GTC's QA Centres, we have commissioned an additional chapter on the development and establishment of warm season grasses. All chapters are based on best practice and principles of golf course maintenance and management and more importantly available to everybody. Our thanks go to The R&A and all the core funding bodies for their continued support to the work of the GTC: BIGGA, England Golf, Scottish Golf Union, Golf Union of Wales, The PGA and The PGA European Tour.



puzzlepage

Our monthly puzzle page to keep you entertained

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

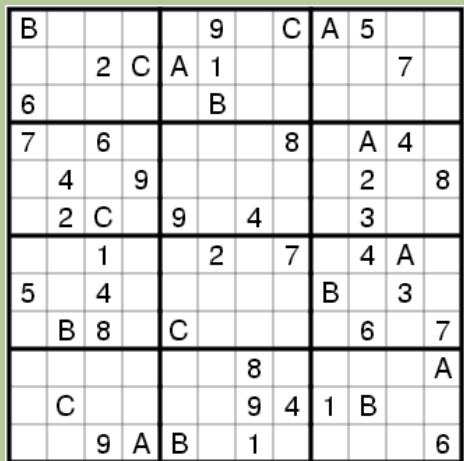
- 1 Author of the campus novel *Lucky Jim* (8,4)
- 10 Study of speech processes (9)
- 11 Japanese martial art whose name means 'way of the sword' (5)
- 12 Metrical foot of one short syllable followed by a longer one (6)
- 13 By population, the world's largest city (8)
- 15 MP elected Labour leader after the death of John Smith (4,5)
- 16 Rhotacism-based nickname of a popular TV presenter (5)
- 17 Alcoholic beverages (5)
- 18 Sequence of numbers identifying a domain name (2,7)
- 20 In a similar manner (8)
- 22 Music (and its dance) originated by Enrique Jorjrin (3-3)
- 24 Model of excellence (5)
- 25 Imaginary instrument (3,6)
- 26 Buckinghamshire 'new town', designated thus in January 1967 (6,6)

DOWN

- 2 Inconsistently distributed (9)
- 3 Goddess of the earth in Greek mythology (4)
- 4 Final performance, swan song (4,6)
- 5 Canadian territory, focus of the 1890s Klondike gold rush (5)
- 6 Premiership football club founded as St. Mark's (West Gorton) in 1880 (10,4)
- 7 Music streaming service based in London (originally in Sweden) (7)
- 8 Thin sliver of wood (6)
- 9 US artist noted for his Four Freedoms series (6,8)
- 14 US-based electronics retailer, known in UK as Tandy (5,5)
- 16 Pelham Grenville ---, English writer (9)
- 17 European monarchy in which the EU and NATO have headquarters (7)
- 19 Stepped flight (6)
- 21 Signalling message indicating compliance with instructions (5)
- 23 System of weights used for precious metals and gems (4)

QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ

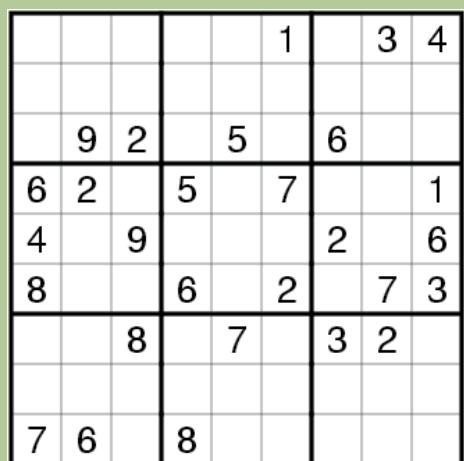
- 1) Which tennis player won the men's tournament at Indian Wells?
- 2) Which Indian international cricketer recently scored the fastest ever Test century by a debutant against Australia?
- 3) Nigel Worthington was recently appointed manager at which football club?
- 4) Name the venues for the five Ashes Tests in England later this summer,
- 5) Which sportsman tweeted "The UK weather is 9 months of winter and 3 months of bad weather".
- 6) Manchester United's Nani was controversially sent off against Real Madrid. But who did he 'foul' to be dismissed?
- 7) Jurgen Klopp is manager of which side who have reached the quarter finals of the Champions League?
- 8) Which striker scored a crucial late winner as Aston Villa beat QPR 3-2 in the Premier League?
- 9) Which football club play their home games at Griffin Park... which has a pub in all four corners of the ground?



Monster Daily SuDoku: Thu 28-Mar-2013 hard

MONSTER SUDOKU

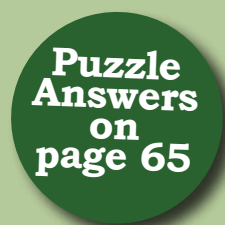
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 4x4 box contains the numbers 0 to 9 and the letters A to E.



Daily SuDoku: Thu 28-Mar-2013 medium

SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 9 box shape contains the numbers 1 to 9.



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How you can influence committee meetings

Paul Worster, recently elected onto the board of FEGGA, takes a look at Golf Club Committee Meetings and states how, by helping to steer them, the Greenkeeper can become more central to the needs of the golf club business in today's difficult times

Recently, I've heard of many greenkeepers coming under severe pressure or even being made redundant, but I want to see the greenkeeper increasingly becoming regarded as the most important figure in the club structure; the person to who the club look to for leadership, especially in difficult times.

I'm aware of what can sometimes go wrong in Committee and Board Meetings and I'd like to look at how the Greenkeeper/Manager can not only avoid the pitfalls, but start to take charge.

Last year, I attended an evening to recognise the environmental success achieved by a famous club in the South of the UK. About 40 delegates enjoyed several presentations charting the progress of various environmental initiatives and discussed the issues encountered along the way.

However, during the Q&As a visiting Secretary stood up. "This is all fine and good" he said, "but it's only working well here because this club wants it to work. At my club, I've spent six months working with my Course Manager, Catering Manager and Pro to form an Environmental Policy for our club.

We dealt with everything; wildflowers and composting, re-use of waste cooking oil, disposal of cardboard and stationery, energy, lights - the whole lot. I presented it to the Committee, who gave it a quick two minute reading and then threw it out with the comment "the ruddy staff are starting to run this place".

Another Secretary added: "That's because some clubs are still not being run as proper businesses.

He added: "At my Board meeting last week we had a twenty-five minute debate on the appropriate length of socks to be worn on the course this summer. Long socks, short socks, football socks, nylon socks, red socks, white socks - the list was endless - I

tried to minute it, but we didn't reach any firm conclusions.

"The next item on the agenda was the purchase of a £26,000 tractor, and that went through in less than a minute".

Now this all set me wondering...my experiences as a volunteer director taught me that meetings don't just happen. The Chairman and Managers' inputs into the agenda are vital, and the agenda is the most important document.

Preparation is everything and disputes and discussions around anything remotely sensitive or controversial need to have been resolved well in advance. In other words, individual members of the committee often need to have been won over sensitively outside of the meeting by lobbying and discussion.

Let's take another look at those two examples. It's not realistic to expect a far-reaching Environmental Policy be accepted and embraced by volunteer committee members 'on the hoof'. This laudable policy making should, right at the outset, have involved the input of the Chairman of the Committee.

He must run it by every single member of his committee in advance of the meeting and iron out any sticking points or concerns. It should not have been included as an agenda item even for discussion, never mind a vote, until the Chairman was assured of the support of the meeting.

Likewise the socks issue is not an appropriate matter for a Board of Directors to waste valuable time debating at length during a formal meeting. The Chairman should have asked for notification on any issues which may require attention at least a month in advance.

When the dress code issue was flagged up,

he would have had time to refer it straight to the General Manager, who would then be able to confer with a couple of other local clubs and source an appropriate existing policy. The easily reworded document is then circulated well in advance of the meeting for comment. Come the actual meeting, a new policy for the club, previously agreed and proven to have worked in a similar background, can be formally signed off without any undue delay.

Relieved of lengthy discussions over trivia, the Board then has the sufficient time and energy to properly consider the important tractor purchase. To summarise - the input of General Manager and Greenkeeper/Course Manager into the meeting agenda is vital.

"A secretary told me of a board meeting which featured a 25 minute debate on the length of socks to be worn on the course. The next item on the agenda was the purchase of a £26,000 tractor, and that went through in less than a minute"

Setting a suitable well-researched agenda with well-presented supporting information is critical to the smooth running and positive outcome of any Committee Meeting.

Discuss and resolve any remotely controversial matters with all committee members prior to the meeting to ensure there are no lengthy debates or nasty surprises.

We, the greenkeepers, need to identify our professional objectives for the meeting and work to achieve them. The Chairman will very soon recognise us as the professionals - because we make his job easier.

Recruitment

Vacancy for Assistant Greenkeeper



Applicant should ideally have qualifications in the turf industry. It is essential that the individual is motivated and enthusiastic and will work under the direction of the Course Manager. Salary is dependent on qualifications and experience candidates will be required to submit a detailed C.V. and attend an interview if shortlisted. For further information please contact Mr S Pugh on 0161 998 9278 (option 3)

Closing date 26th April.

**Head Greenkeeper, Didsbury Golf Club
Ford Lane, Northenden, Manchester M22 4NQ**

PANNAL GOLF CLUB

SEASONAL ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER

Pannal Golf Club, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

In line with our business needs and aims, we are looking to recruit an experienced Seasonal Greenkeeper from late April to late September 2013. Greenkeeping Certificates would be an advantage. Own transport essential.

Working week 7.00am – 3.30pm Monday – Friday, together with some weekend overtime.

Please send your CV to Neil Douglas, Managing Secretary at: Pannal Golf Club (Harrogate) Ltd, Follifoot Road, Pannal, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 1ES

Or by email: secretary@pannalgolfclub.co.uk

Closing Date: 12th April 2013

Golf Course Head Greenkeeper

Melton Mowbray Golf Club is a private members course opened in 1925 set in the rolling north Leicestershire county side. Arranged over 18 holes with a covered driving range and additional short game practice area.

We are seeking an enthusiastic and self-motivated Head Green Keeper who must be qualified to NVQ/Work-based Diploma level 3 in Sports Turf maintenance. You should also have PA1, PA2 and PA 6A qualifications in the application of pesticides, chainsaw certificate desirable and knowledge of basic IT systems. The successful candidate should have at least five years experience of green keeping, with the desire to produce the course to the highest standards.

An attractive, remuneration package will reflect the ability of the successful candidate. Please apply by email including your CV, and qualifications to: secretary@meltonmowbraygc.co.uk

Full Job Description can be supplied up on application.

Closing date for applications 12th April 2013.

Interviews will take place w/c 12th & 15th April 2013

Mechanic/Greenkeeper

Saffron Walden Golf Club requires a Mechanic/ Greenkeeper to join its greenkeeping team.

Applicants should possess the appropriate experience to carry out routine maintenance, repairs and servicing to the club's large fleet of turf equipment. The ability to diagnose mechanical, hydraulic and electrical faults, and to keep accurate service records, is essential.

The successful candidate will also be required to assist with golf course maintenance tasks. Any experience and qualifications in this area will be a distinct advantage but not essential. Salary will be in line with CGCS recommended rates.

Apply in writing with CV and a covering letter to:

The General Manager, Saffron Walden Golf Club, Windmill Hill

Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1BX

Closing Date: :20th April 2013

Advertise your recruitment here ... and online for one month

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Contact **Jill Rodham** on

01347 833 812



TWO-YEAR SPONSORED PLACEMENT

Your springboard to a successful career

Ransomes Jacobsen Limited manufactures and markets a range of turf maintenance equipment for the golf course, municipal and professional lawn care markets. To demonstrate our products to new and existing customers, we have built a three-hole golf course, which is now in its fifth season.

We are currently looking to recruit a Greenkeeper on a two-year sponsored placement. The successful candidate will be responsible for the routine maintenance of the golf course and a 7-a-side football pitch, in accordance with our Risk Assessments and Health and Safety Policies.

As the ideal candidate you will have been working for at least a year on a golf course or fine turf environment, studying at NVQ level 2 in a turf or horticulture-related subject and be prepared to continue studying to achieve NVQ level 3 in this subject. We will actively encourage and support you in these studies and honour day-release obligations.

This is a varied role with other responsibilities that include:

- Maintaining the golf course including furniture and decking



- Maintaining and operating the water irrigation system to meet the seasonal growing requirements of the grass plant, whilst managing the resource by monitoring rainfall and forecast weather conditions
- Maintaining trial grass plots for our business partners
- Operating and maintaining machinery to the standards set out in the operators and maintenance manual for each piece of equipment
- Cleaning, preparing and storing each piece of equipment after use in line with the manufacturers' recommendation to maintain its quality and precision.
- Pruning trees, trimming hedges and cutting

back shrubs, as required.

- Assisting with customer visits, demonstrations and product training, as required
- Assisting with the test and trial of newly developed equipment

This could be your springboard to a successful career in the turf care industry, so if you're looking to progress and are interested in this career opportunity, please send or email your CV to:

Carol Mellelieu, HR Director, Ransomes Jacobsen, West Road, Ransomes Europark, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 9TT

Email: cmellelieu@tip.textron.com



puzzlepage answers

QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ ANSWERS:

- 1) Rafael Nadal
- 2) Shikhar Dharwan
- 3) York City
- 4) Trent Bridge, Lords, Old Trafford, The Riverside Durham, The Oval
- 5) Shane Warne
- 6) Alvaro Arbeloa
- 7) Borussia Dortmund
- 8) Christian Benteke
- 9) Brentford

CROSSWORD

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MONSTER SUDOKO

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A	2	C	8	9	7	4	1	6	3	B	5
C	6	1	3	5	2	B	7	8	4	A	9
5	A	4	7	1	8	6	9	B	C	3	2
9	B	8	2	C	4	3	A	5	6	1	7
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Monster Daily SuDoku: Thu 28-Mar-2013 hard

SQUIGGLY SUDOKO

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Daily SuDoku: Thu 28-Mar-2013 medium

The Back Nine

A column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

As the golf season begins properly it seems many golfers will be struck by the highly contagious annual virus known as 'Augusta Syndrome'. Scott Corrigan, Head Greenkeeper at Greenburn Golf Club, grabs his stethoscope and searches for a cure

For golf course greenkeepers, Augusta National Golf Club and The Masters is a wonderful example of what can be achieved and created with unlimited resources.

I couldn't even guess at their annual course budget – but I reckon Greenburn Golf Club could comfortably survive for the next century on what they spend in a year.

We're now yet again approaching the start of a new golfing season which will inevitably be accompanied by the dreaded 'Augusta Syndrome'.

As we emerge from the wettest year on record off the back of two very wet years previously, the golf industry around the world again looks to a single date during the second weekend in April to signify the Masters tournament as the unofficial start to the golfing season.

Ever since the Masters was first televised in colour in 1967, golfers have aspired to what they thought was the next best thing, an emerald green golf course to play on every week. We all know of golfers who race out and expect their local course to be conditioned like Augusta the Monday after the Masters.

But as the average golfer settles down to watch the Masters on his 46inch widescreen HD television with the central heating on full, think of the struggling superintendent and his team at Augusta National who enjoys a mindblowing budget, enjoy the use of the world's best equipment to look after the course and have thousands of man hours available each week.

Then there's the under-soil heating and sub-air systems they have on the greens, and don't forget about the large fans and lighting rigs they can utilise on those dull days with little sunlight, and all this mentioned is just for starters! As Ron Dobson famously denounced: 'Augusta National is a television



Mowers run down the first fairway at the Masters, Augusta National Golf Club. (Photo by David Cannon/Getty Images)

studio on which a golf tournament is played in the spring'.

Augusta reportedly dye their ponds blue, paint the grass green, refrigerate or warm the azaleas to allow them to bloom perfectly for the Masters, and rumour has it that last year Hollywood set designers were brought in to hide damage caused by the use of weedkillers. Granted, the pressures to prepare Augusta compared to the average golf course are immense.

But here's an interesting exercise for you. Look up 'Augusta National Golf Club' on Google Maps to see it in its natural state, and when you zoom in you will find the true golf course.

You'll see grass that looks like natural grass, with bare patches and faded greens with dry ponds, a rather scorched appearance that people will not associate with the Augusta we know.

We greenkeepers love watching this tournament as much if not more than the next golf fanatic, but the expectations placed on our industry after the Masters is

“Augusta reportedly dye their ponds blue, paint the grass green and refrigerate or warm the azaleas”

about the author



Scott Corrigan has been Head Greenkeeper at Greenburn Golf Club in Harthill, North Lanarkshire for four years, and in total has spent 23 years working at the 18-hole course which is a combination of moorland and parkland.

He studied at Oatridge College, and since last November he has been Chairman of BIGGA's East Scotland section.

enough to make many of us tear our hair out. So golfers - please spare a thought for greenkeepers in the real world who work tirelessly to produce the best courses possible with more and more restrictions imposed in the form of limited funds and reduced budgets, and with the minimal manpower available.

Also bear in mind the issues that come with working with ageing equipment and don't forget the unpredictable weather that we need to work with (eight inches of snow have fallen in March here already).

So this year, as spring approaches, I hope the golfers understand it's as realistic to expect the average golf course to look like Augusta National as it is to expect their own golf game to perform like Rory McIlroy or Tiger Woods.

The views expressed within this column are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International

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