



## BIGGA SEMINARS AT SALTEX

BIGGA are staging a whole day of free education presentations at this year's SALTEX (Sports Amenity & Landscape Trade Exhibition) at Windsor Racecourse – with CPD credits available for those attending.

The BIGGA Golf Education Day on Wednesday September 4 will appeal to greenkeepers at courses of every size and type and will focus on drainage, bunkers, composts and disease management.

The day will start with 'Greens Drainage - Mission Possible' presented by Andy Wood, Course Manager of Robin Hood Golf Club. He will outline a workable solution for transforming soil-based greens with deep thatch and black layer, highlighting the methods used to solve drainage problems on troublesome greens.

Stuart Yarwood MG, Course Manager of Lymm Golf Club, will then discuss 'Sand Traps and Money Pits'. He will look at managing and constructing golf course bunkers on limited budgets, while revisiting the

past to shape our future. Stuart's presentation will also include the art of compost creation and its role in greenkeeping.

The schedule is completed by the joint Evertis/Syngenta presentation 'Go In Green... Come Out Clean' as Dr Simon Watson, Syngenta Turf and Landscape Technical Manager, points out how winter disease on golf greens is particularly problematic since there is little turf growth to allow recovery and for scars to heal.

This, he says, can impact the playability of greens right through to the spring period leading to dissatisfied golfers.

Simon will highlight how an integrated approach to disease management can reduce the disease pressure, improve turf health and enhance the performance of fungicide applications.

New findings on disease management will also be presented along with practical advice on how to deliver smooth, disease-free greens

right through the high risk autumn and winter periods.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton, said: "BIGGA is delighted to once again have the opportunity to work with our friends the IOG and bring top-class greenkeeper education to the SALTEX experience. I hope many of our members take the opportunity to attend the seminar programme.

"BIGGA's revamped CPD programme launches on July 1 so it is great that SALTEX provides the chance for our members to improve both their knowledge and their CPD profile. I hope many also take the chance to view the exhibition; the turf industry is a constant provider of innovation, and opportunities like SALTEX where new products and services can be seen at first hand are always a benefit."

One BIGGA CPD credit is available for each seminar and a CPD register will be available at the end of each seminar. Visit [www.iogsaltex.com](http://www.iogsaltex.com) for full details.



## CHRIS ROARS OFF INTO RETIREMENT

Keen motorcyclist Chris Mitchell has retired after working at Maidenhead Golf Club in Berkshire for 45 years.

Chris – currently a 13 handicapper – joined the club in 1968 as an apprentice greenkeeper, then moved on to assistant and first assistant before taking the Course Manager position ten years ago.

The club have promoted two of Chris's former colleagues with Barry Gardner assuming the mantle of Course Manager and Mark Sweeney the new Deputy.

Chris said: "I've really appreciated the support of the club, the members and management in providing the resources to do the job to the best of my ability."

He added that one of the highlights of his time at Maidenhead was when the members clubbed together to pay for a much-needed full fairway irrigation system several years ago. Chris intends to lower his handicap in retirement as well as indulging his passion of motorcycling, and travelling with his wife Jane.

## TORO MOWER AT THE HART OF WEDDING

A greenkeeper at Newcastle-under-Lyme Golf Club is so attached to his Toro mower – he took it to his wedding.

Darren Hart tied the knot with sweetheart Stephanie on a glorious June day.

He took the opportunity to be pictured with his Toro Greensmaster 3250, which was specially transported to the nearby wedding venue.

Ian Beech, Head Greenkeeper at the Club, attended the nuptials and confirmed a good time was had by all!



## GREENKEEPERS VICTORIOUS

Ashley Wood Golf Club played host recently to the 17th Annual Course Care Cup, this year with the secretaries keen for a win!

Good weather and a fine course ensured good golf with the day thoroughly enjoyed by all. Despite huge efforts the Secretaries could not prevail and the Greenkeepers took the trophy again winning three matches to two. Thanks from all were extended to Highspeed Group Ltd for sponsoring the event.

Highspeed Group's Area Manager Paul Dyter presented the trophy to Tony Gadd, Chairman of BIGGA South Coast Section.



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## AN ISLAND BLOG

The latest impressive blog set up by a BIGGA member is from the Head Greenkeeper at Royal Jersey Golf Club - Ben Blampied-Smyth. Ben has used some spectacular photography of the links course in tandem with pages of in-depth greenkeeping information, all set out in a clear and attractive format.

Ben said: "As a fairly new Head Greenkeeper it's allowed the members to get to know me professionally. It's also been extremely helpful when I've changed maintenance practices to inform the members why I'm changing things and the benefits of these changes.

"For the greenkeeping team as a whole it has hopefully allowed the members to get to know the team better. It's massively improved communication to the members in terms of why certain procedures are necessary, what is involved in carrying out the procedure, timescales and potential inconvenience.

"In my first year we had TPL Thomson Perrett & Lobb golf course architects do an audit of the course. My first winter program involved implementing some of these changes to the course which were fairly major. The blog became very important to a lot of members to keep them up to date with these changes and how they would improve the course long term.

"This winter we also carried out changes to three holes from the TPL proposal and started upgrading our irrigation system which is a massive investment for the club. Again we were able to inform and educate the members on this work via the blog."

See for yourself at <http://royaljersey.getrefined.com>



## JIMMY READ RETIRES

Jimmy Read (above left) has retired from his position of Head Greenkeeper at Hunstanton Golf Club. Jimmy spent 37 successful years at the Championship links, 34 of which were as Head Greenkeeper. Jimmy's son Peter is currently Acting Head Greenkeeper.

Club Secretary Bob Carrick said: "He has overseen many amateur competitions over the years and is

proud to leave the course in superb condition.

He has seen great changes in the course as part of the recent development work masterminded by Martin Hawtree and Gordon Irvine. All members and staff wish Jimmy all the best for his retirement and we would like to thank him for his tireless work over the years."



Former BIGGA Chairman George Brown recorded two holes-in-one in the space of ten days - and was rewarded with two exclusive Hugo Boss watches!

Seven handicapper George, 74, began his winning streak by hitting a four-iron into the cup on the 160 yard 6th at Turnberry's Kintyre course during a seniors competition.

He followed this up with an ace in a medal competition on the 175 yard 11th at the Ailsa course - and he is now the

proud owner of two Hugo Boss Watches because the luxury brand is rewarding club golfers with a special timepiece for every hole-in-one recorded during official competitions.

All official competitions are recorded on the HowDidiDo system, so anyone hitting a hole-in-one between April 15 and October 31 can claim a watch.

George, former Course Manager at Turnberry, has now taken his career total of aces to nine.

UK plant health authorities identified sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria fraxinea*) at orchard sites in Warwickshire and East Sussex in late autumn 2011. They waited five months to inform the industry then said virtually nothing until May 2013.

The flashpoint is in Sussex and neighbouring Kent where the vast majority of Britain's sweet chestnut coppice grows. *C. parasitica*, like *Chalara fraxinea*, is a fast moving, spore-spreading fungal pathogen. A lot of golf courses have some sweet chestnut trees but those around the Sussex and Kent Weald often have large tracts of sweet chestnut coppice woods as important integral components of the course landscape. There is nothing 'sweet' about chestnut blight. It is a killer disease just like *Chalara ash dieback*.

No news could be good news but tucked away in a recent Forestry Commission (FC) statement is: "a trace-forward exercise has identified a small number of infected trees delivered to a further seven locations in England." Never mind the 'small' numbers - one infected tree will produce thousands of spores!

Other utterings suggest FC could be about to confirm the disease is already in the wider environment. Given the ease and speed of blight spread in North America and Europe this is the mostly likely scenario.

FC say are following their



disease outbreak contingency plan and developing a strategy for a longer-term response.

Infected material planted in Warwickshire and East Sussex was sourced from the same nursery in France but FC continues to prevaricate.

Sweet chestnut imports from EU countries are subject to plant passporting and since January 2013 are scrutinised by plant health inspectors.

However, FC admits a latent infection phase can still allow diseased plant stock to slip through.

If so, why have EU imports not been subject to a sufficiently long period of plant quarantine (observed isolation) before planting in UK soil, or better still banned just like all *Castanea* imports from non-EU countries? Even risking the importation of sweet chestnut infected with such a fast spreading and aggressive disease is mind boggling.

DEFRA has finally called for a ban on sweet chestnut imports from infected countries.

Environment Secretary Owen Paterson announced the

intention at the government supported "Stop the Spread" garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show. A six-week consultation is underway with expectation of a ban before the autumn planting season, although EU regulations could still thwart these plans.

On past performance I can't help thinking this sudden flurry of interest and activity in sweet chestnut blight is a softening up exercise and a prelude to the government announcing blight is here to stay.

Dr Terry Mabbett

## BIGGA SCOTLAND TRIUMPH (BUT ONLY JUST!)

It didn't look promising for golf to be played as the weather was quite nasty in the morning but thankfully the annual match against the Scottish Section of the GCMA went ahead at Douglas Park Golf Club on Wednesday 8 May.

Although a strong team from the region was assembled, the GCMA managed to win 5 points to our 4 following the completion of the day's play. However, the region managed to retain the trophy thanks to a walkover result for the final game. The board would like to thank all members of the team for taking part.

On accepting the trophy, chairman Andy O'Hara (shown left with Derek Scott) praised the course manager Drew McKechnie for the excellent presentation of the course on the day particularly considering the weather.

