

# Bernhard delegates ...where are they now?

If you're still undecided about applying to join the next BIGGA Delegation to America, read on to find out how much influence the trip had on delegates from the last few years



**Jaime Acton, 2012 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Head Greenkeeper,**  
**Worlebury Golf Club**  
**NOW: Golf Course Manager,**  
**Rushmore Golf Club**



I had no idea just how much the trip would impact on me both professionally and personally.

I feel it has given me the confidence to hold my own professionally, to push myself more in new situations and to move my career to the next level. A few months ago I was offered a new job and took on the challenge of running a lovely proprietary club set in ancient parkland on a private estate. The Show, seminars and site visits we all attended in the States gave me a real thirst to improve myself.



**In August Greenkeeper International will again be asking for members to apply to become a member of the Bernhard's Delegation heading to the States and the Golf Industry Show in January.**

It's a fabulous shared experience, an opportunity to build new friendships and make new business contacts, but most importantly a priceless tool for learning, educating, training and growing. But don't just take our word for it. GI spoke to some of the delegates from the last decade to find out how much the trip influenced them professionally and personally...



**Richard Jenkinson, 2013 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Deputy Course Manager G West**  
**NOW: Same position**

It truly was the most unforgettable experience I've had in my career. One real highlight were the tours around Torrey Pines and La Costa. It was fascinating to see the differences between them even though they are only ten minutes apart.

The management style is similar but the terrain and composition of the courses are completely different. I now understand why previous delegates described it as a very tough but life-changing week.



**Rob Sandilands, 2011 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Elsham Golf Club**  
**NOW: Head Greenkeeper, Grange-over-Sands Golf Club**

I was the only deputy on the trip, and the group of Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers during the week in Orlando had a big influence on me at the time, and they've continued to have a major influence on me since. They gave me some great advice, including some really important tips you don't always get in the textbooks!

I really feel the experience gave me that boost to get my first Head Greenkeeper job, which I secured just two months later.



**Matt Plested, 2006 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Deputy, Old Ford Manor Golf Club**  
**NOW: Course Manager, Muswell Hill Golf Club**

A year after my trip, I secured my first Course Managers position at Muswell Hill and the Bernhard Delegation certainly helped – I was told it made my CV stand out. It's a fantastic, amazing experience. It opened my eyes to how professional they were in the States, and I returned determined to incorporate some of their ideas into my club. I learnt so much.

It's also fantastic from a personal point of view. My roommate was Greg Skinner, who's now at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, and we had a real laugh and became good mates.

Not only that, we still speak to each other about issues on our courses and help solve problems – all this as a result of that one week.



**Les Howkins MG, 2004 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Head Greenkeeper, Cleethorpes Golf Club**  
**NOW: Course Manager, The Richmond Golf Club**

I remember thinking on my trip that the US were much more advanced in certain areas, although I do feel we've caught up now. I recall we went to a seminar discussing absolutely everything about Primo, which at that time was unavailable in the UK. This meant that when Primo did become available over here, I had a head start over other greenkeepers and wasn't afraid to use it because I was very well informed about it. The Golf Industry Show was also an amazing experience, the scale of it was colossal.

Another thing that sticks in my mind is one of the course visits to a course called The Bridges. They had 55 staff and 14 gardeners looking after an 18-hole course, and they couldn't believe how few staff we had in comparison! You're looked after so well while you're out there and I can't imagine why a greenkeeper would not want to apply to join the delegation.

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**Matt Plested, 2006 Delegate**



**Ian Kinley, 2006 Delegate**  
**THEN: Course Manager, The Glen Golf Club**  
**NOW: Course Manager, Royal Porthcawl Golf Club**

I went to Atlanta (right) and the key for me was the feeling that you're getting involved not just in the American perspective on course maintenance, but the world. Lifetime friendships were made on that trip, you spend a lot of time with the other delegates and get to know them really well and exchange opinions and ideas.



**Gordon McKie, 2003 Delegate.**  
**THEN: Head Greenkeeper, The Eden Course, St Andrews**  
**NOW: Course Manager, The Old Course, St Andrews**

The ten years since I went has flown by but I still remember so many elements of the trip. A real highlight for me was the educational side, I recall attending a GCSAA Seminar on Communications which I found particularly useful, and I referred back to it repeatedly as my career progressed.

I also learnt a lot from the guys I travelled with. We were all able to offer advice to each other, and we really built up a great camaraderie between us. Several of us still stay in touch now, either meeting at BTME or on Facebook or Twitter. I've no doubt that the whole experience really enhanced my career.

