

BILLY'S HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE RECOGNISED AT BTME 2013

In December's GI (shown inset) we featured Alan Kite, Head Greenkeeper at Sutton Coldfield GC, who had marked 50 years of service at the club. Remarkably he's not alone, as another terrific servant to the industry was honoured at BTME.



Billy's good friend Brian Summers added: "I have known him for a good many years and we have grown old together, I wish him all the luck for the future."

Billy Mitchell has worked at Perranporth Golf Club in Cornwall for half a century and this achievement was a highlight of the South West and South Wales 'get-together' in Harrogate. He's been a key member of the BIGGA Devon and Cornwall section since its inception in 1977, and has been happy to remain in the background working away to help the section run smoothly.

He is well known in the BIGGA family and has made lots of friends through his many trips to Harrogate to visit BTME. He and his brother John, who has now retired from green keeping, were given Life Membership of the association for all the work they have done to promote BIGGA and the Devon and Cornwall section.

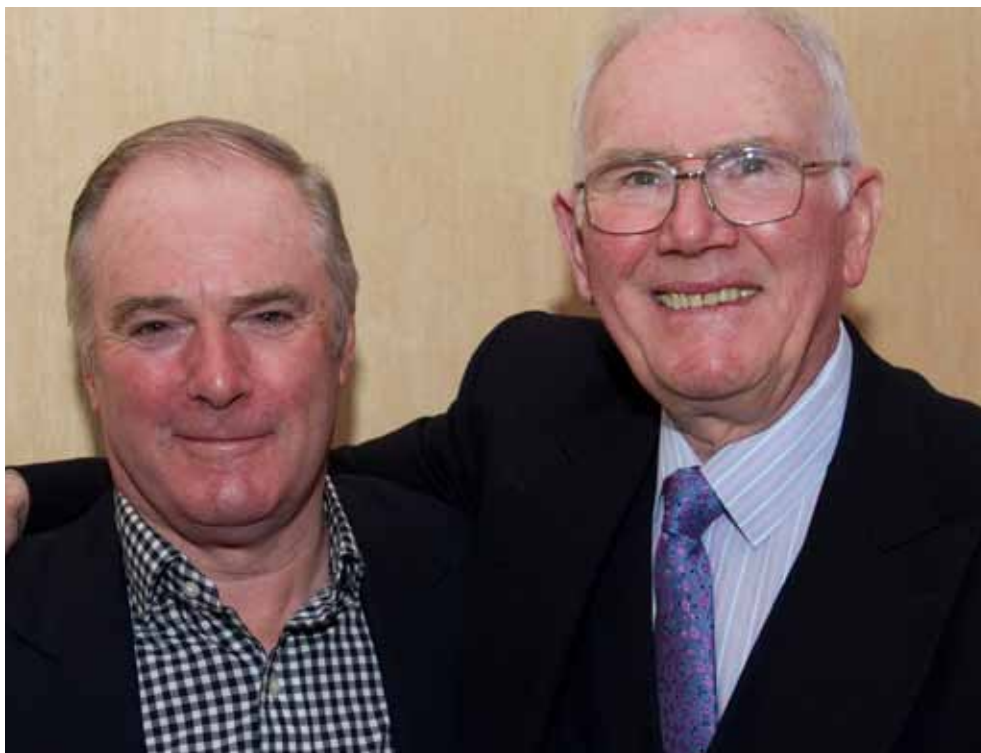
They have also been on the Open Support teams throughout the country and hugely enjoyed themselves assisting with the smooth running of the world famous tournament and also mingling with top professional golfers.

Billy is an assessor and helped set up the Duchy College training programme and remains very much involved with the assessing and education of trainees.

He's also involved with the Links Forum for South Wales and the South West. The promoting of pure links golf is Billy's passion and he will talk to anyone who is interested on the subject, giving them his knowledge he has gained after 50 years at one of the most unusual links golf courses in the country at Perranporth. He has no immediate plans to retire.



Billy is presented with a bottle of whisky by Richard Whyman, Course Manager at Burnham & Berrow Golf Club



GREENKEEPING LEGENDS AWARDED LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Two hugely prominent members of the greenkeeping fraternity became the latest recipients of the coveted BIGGA Life Membership at the recent BTME show.

John Philp MBE (right) and Chris Kennedy (above left, with Walter Woods) were unanimously awarded the accolade - which less than 50 greenkeepers have ever received - at BIGGA's AGM, joining an illustrious list.

John will forever be associated with his work at Carnoustie, where his tireless work brought The Open Championship back to the famous links. He even had the 11th hole on the Championship course named after him after 27 years of service.

Despite retiring last year he remains highly active in the industry and gave a fascinating presentation focusing on the history of the Open Championship and modern course performance guidelines during BIGGA's educational programme at BTME.

Commenting on joining the

likes of Walter Woods and Jack McMillan MBE on the roll call of BIGGA Life Members, John said: "It's a fantastic honour to receive such an accolade from your peers. I didn't know anything about it until it happened at the AGM so it was quite unexpected. I'm sure a few people knew about it but they managed to keep it quiet!"

Chris Kennedy spent 22 years as Golf Courses Manager at Wentworth Club until his retirement last summer. During his tenure he was responsible for presenting the courses for a staggering 52 professional events, and renovated the West Course in partnership with Ernie Els.

He was also presented with Life Membership at BTME and is now looking to pass on half a century of industry knowledge to younger greenkeepers in an advisory capacity.

He said: "I'm delighted that BIGGA feel I deserve this accolade. It was a very nice moment for both John and I to be awarded Life Membership and it means an awful lot to both of us."

BIGGA Chairman Tony



Smith said: "Both John and Chris have done wonders to raise the profile of greenkeeping through sheer excellence throughout their careers.

"They've also helped to inspire many young greenkeepers, many of whom have gone on to enjoy terrific careers themselves.

"The accolade of BIGGA Life Membership is only awarded to a select few, they are both hugely deserving of it and I congratulate them warmly."

MERVIN DOWNING

We were saddened to hear of the death of Mervin Downing, former Head Greenkeeper at Aldenham Golf & Country Club, earlier this year. Here's Peter Hopkinson, branch manager at George Browns in Chesham, with a tribute to his great friend.

"Greenkeeping recently lost one of the good guys. I first met Mervin Downing 20 plus years ago one evening at Aldenham for a meeting of the BIGGA London section.

"I remember we attended various educational seminars at the club - one by a young Jim McKenzie with a slideshow of improvements carried out at Wentworth Golf Club. Afterwards we would of course retire to the bar and the company was always convivial, with Brian Anderson, Martin Smith, John Edwards, Norman Exley, Jeremy Hill, Michael Peters, David Low, Don Wilson, Derek Mason, Alex Low, Mervin, Alan Moffat of Parkers, Dennis Smith of Rigby Taylor and many others. By the end of the evening I always seemed to be chatting happily with Mervin. I was always comfortable in his company - a capable, hardworking man who understood the countryside, liked a pint and a cigarette and a chat. Mervin joined Aldenham in 1987 and worked with Dave Knight and Graham Pooley under the direction of Head Greenkeeper Alec Low. Always cheerful, Mervin was good company.

"Mervin loved all aspects of shooting, vermin control on the golf course, pigeon shooting on neighbouring farmland and on the pheasant shoot he set up.

"When Alec Low retired in 1995 Mervin was promoted to Head Greenkeeper. In 2009 after 14 years in charge Mervin stepped down, and he continued as course mechanic.

"He was now able to spend more time with his wife Jenny, daughters Samantha and Melissa and grandchildren John, Molly and Fern. Sadly illness was to strike but Mervin endured the treatment with great stoicism. He passed away on 1 January 2013, and will be missed by all who knew him."



MARRIOTT HOLLINS SIGN AGREEMENT WITH SHERRIFF

Sherriff Amenity is delighted to announce that an agreement has been reached with Ian Pullan (shown right), the Course Manager of Marriott Hollins Hall, to become the preferred supplier of chemical, fertiliser, seed and other golf course maintenance requirements.

Marriott provide some of the most immaculate golf courses across the UK. Mark Pyrah (left), Sherriff Amenity Director said "We are delighted that Ian has chosen Sherriff Amenity to be their preferred supplier.

The agreement that has been reached will ensure that Marriott Hollins Hall benefit from our extensive product portfolio. However this is only one aspect of the agreement. We firmly that IT will play an increasingly important role in our industry and Ian will be able to benefit from the latest technology that Sherriff Amenity are able to provide to group customers. This, along with bespoke technical and product training for Ian's staff makes this an exciting and innovative package for our group customers.



PRODUCT MANAGEMENT ROLE AT RJ FOR LEE

Lee Kristensen has been promoted to the role of Product Manager at Ransomes Jacobsen, one of the leading manufacturers of commercial mowers, turf maintenance equipment and compact utility and industrial vehicles, based at Ipswich in Suffolk, UK.

Reporting to Richard Comely, Director of Marketing and Product Management, Lee will manage the development and enhancement of all Ipswich designed and built Ransomes and Jacobsen branded products and liaise with colleagues at the Charlotte facility in North Carolina, USA with regard to the Jacobsen product line.

Commenting on the appointment Richard Comely said, "Lee has an excellent technical background in a related industry and will bring further expertise to the Product Management team here in Ipswich. We have some exciting product developments in the pipeline and he will be a great asset to the business."

GOLF'S BILLION POUND IMPACT REVEALED

A new report supported by BIGGA has revealed that golf is worth over £5.1 billion annually to the economy of Great Britain and Ireland – and a staggering €15.1 billion throughout Europe.

It also reveals the sport is responsible for nearly 80,000 jobs in Great Britain and Ireland and generates employee wages in excess of £1.5 billion.

The report, commissioned by The Professional Golfers Association and supported by leading British and European bodies including BIGGA and FEGGA was produced by Sports Marketing Surveys Inc and highlights the importance of the golf industry across the continent.

Key economic findings across the 27 European Union nations plus Norway and Switzerland, which represent a combined population of 510 million, show the sport is responsible for a minimum of 180,000 full time jobs and employee wages of €4.4 billion.

And based on models employed by the Australian Golf Industry Council (2010) and Golf2020 in the USA (2011), the results show total expenditure per golfer throughout Europe of €1,911 which is in line with Australia (€1,917) and America (€2,007) golfing counterparts.

While the well-documented economic downturn has hit popular European golf destinations such as Spain and Portugal, golf tourism still

contributes €1.5 billion of the annual impact.

On the course, the strength of the game matches the economic impact with eight men in the top 20 end of year world rankings and nine women in the top 50 of the Asian dominated standings. International team success is exemplified with the Ryder Cup, Solheim Cup, Walker Cup and Curtis Cup all residing this side of the Atlantic.

PGA chief executive Sandy Jones commented: "Golf plays a significant role both in its economic impact and also in delivering social, behavioural and sporting benefits with the PGA professional firmly at the centre of the golf industry.

"In addition golf is also a

huge contributor to charitable causes in Europe and last year generated more than €85 million supporting a range of good causes."

BIGGA chief executive Jim Croxton added: "Such a comprehensive report is of great value to all stakeholders in the golf industry. The largely unsung work of BIGGA members in maintaining and managing the nation's golf courses contributes hugely to a sport that is enjoyed by several million people and provides nearly 80,000 jobs in Great Britain and Ireland alone. We are grateful to the PGA for leading on this project and all the other stakeholders whose contribution has helped produce this important study."



SHOCKWAVE HERALDS A BREAKTHROUGH AT LANCASTER GOLF CLUB

There is no doubt that we have had an awful lot of rain recently but Warren Bevan, Course Manager of the historic Lancaster Golf Club is not a man to let the elements get the better of him. Following one of the wettest years on record, Warren has had a real challenge to keep the course looking and performing at its best.

He has met this challenge head on by tackling flooding on the greens with a grim determination. "We had to combat the sheer volume of rainfall that threatened to overwhelm the greens," said Warren.

To complement his existing maintenance armoury, he requested delivery of an Imants Shockwave 155 from Campey Turf Care Product Specialist Ian Campbell. "I wanted to source a machine to tackle some deep seated compaction problems and encourage rapid dispersion of water in extremely adverse conditions."

"The worst case scenario would be to close the greens until the water subsides, but that's not how we do things round here. When the course is closed it affects everything; loss of play, cancelled events,

lost revenue. We want play to remain unaffected by the weather conditions for as long as possible."

The Imants Shockwave is a linear decompactor, designed to revitalise heavy wear areas by relieving soil compaction, improving aeration and removing surface water. The important feature for Warren is the working depth – up to 250mm. This is deep enough to penetrate the sub soil layer and allow the water to flow more effectively into existing drainage lines and slits.

Six of the greens have been treated with the Imants Shockwave as have a large number of the traffic routes as well. The effect on the 18th green has been dramatic.

"I'm very impressed", says Warren. "Following a sudden downpour we had standing water on the 18th green and to my surprise Ian agreed to operate the Shockwave in these extremely wet conditions."

"Within 20 minutes of completing a single pass over the entire green, the puddles had gone. The green was playable within 10 - 15 minutes. On less effected greens play was back on within 5 minutes."



COURSE TRACKER WINNER

Steve Isaac, Director of Golf Course Management at The R&A (left), presents David with the iPad

David Braid, greenkeeper at St Michaels Golf Club near St Andrews, was the lucky winner of the iPad offered by The R&A at BTME, as they launched CourseTracker.

David joined Head Greenkeeper Adam Turner four years ago after deciding on a career change from his position of bank manager. Born and bred in St Michaels,

David joined the club at the age of 12.

David couldn't believe he his name had been drawn, describing it as "the perfect end to a fantastic week". He added: "BTME is a great place for us to do business and network". St Michaels registered to CourseTracker within days of its launch at BTME.



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WHERE DO YOU READ GI?

Jack Davies, Greenkeeper at Five Lakes Hotel Golf & Country Club in Essex, posted this terrific picture on the BIGGA Message Board, showing him reading February's GI on a boat!

Jack said: "After a spell of prolonged wet weather we now have a sixth lake lying on the fifth carry. I thought I could read February's magazine on the flood while we pumped it out – my boss was a bit sceptical of the plan though! February's magazine made a great read while I was on the water".

In what unusual locations have you read GI? Send a picture to steve.castle@bigga.co.uk and we'll print the best...



BOB'S BLOG

We're continuing to receive some excellent suggestions for blogs penned by greenkeepers across the land. The featured blog this month is Bob Meikle's at Craill Golfing Society in Fife, Scotland.

Course Manager Bob has used the blog for three years, and it features regular updates, pictures of Bob and his team working on what is one of the oldest clubs in the world.

Encouragingly, it also features on the main website meaning members and visitors alike are able to discover exactly what the team are up to – and why they're doing it.

Bob said: "I started it mainly to make our BIGGA section website more relevant and up to date. Barely a day goes by without a member mentioning to me that they've been looking at it, and a lot of the complaints we used to get have stopped because people know what's happening. It helps them understand what we are trying to achieve on a regular basis by keeping them informed on what's going on – everything from basic cutting and aeration to winter projects.

"Visitors to the blog also find it informative because

The screenshot shows the Craills Greenkeepers blog interface. At the top, it says 'Craills Greenkeepers blog' and 'MONDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2013'. There is a 'Followers' section with a 'Join this site' button and a 'Members (62)' section with a grid of profile pictures. The 'Blog Archive' section is expanded for February 2013, listing several posts with dates and titles. Below the archive are 'About Me' and 'About Us' sections with profile pictures and text.

we have particular issues at Craill, such as high tides damaging the course in spring and autumn depending on wind direction. It also helps them understand what we are trying to achieve on a regular basis by keeping

them informed on what's going on – everything from basic cutting and aeration to winter projects.

Check the blog out for yourself at www.craillgreenkeepersblog.blogspot.co.uk

MARATHON MAN PLANS TO SKIN COMPETITION

On April 14 Greg Skinner, Head Greenkeeper at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, is running the Brighton Marathon.

He's running in aid of Leukemia & Lymphoma Research in memory of a good friend named Paul Glennon who died in 2012 aged 56.

Greg would welcome any donations to this extremely worthwhile cause large or small – to donate and for further information please visit www.JustGiving.com/Greg-Skinner1