



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."