

## BIGGA GOLF MANAGEMENT TROPHY LAUNCHED



Now's your chance to enter the inaugural BIGGA Golf Management Trophy, sponsored by Everris, which features matches across the Regions and Sections in England this summer.

This is the perfect opportunity for the management team of any golf club to spend time as group and network with similar management teams from across BIGGA's Regions.

There will be five Regional qualifiers played at prestigious courses with the Final taking place at Frilford Heath Golf Club in October.

There must be a BIGGA greenkeeper member either playing in the event or attending the meal afterwards to validate each team.

Entries are on a first come, first served basis with the cost £99 per team. This includes coffee and a bacon roll on arrival, then a two course meal afterwards. The format is Stableford. Dates:

9 July – Northern Region  
-Workshop GC  
23 July – South Wales  
Section – Cardiff GC  
29 July – Midland Region –  
Buckinghamshire GC  
20 August – South West  
Section – Chipping Sodbury GC  
11 September – South Coast  
Section – Parkstone GC

For more details please contact Regional Administrators Sandra Raper on 07866 366966 (Sandra@bigga.co.uk), or Tracey Harvey on 07841 948110 (tracey.harvey@bigga.co.uk).



## BERNHARD AND BIGGA TEAM UP

Bernhard's team of trainers have visited Scotland as part of a series of workshops in conjunction with BIGGA.

The workshops presented to greenkeepers, club managers and mechanics are designed to inform and advise – and offered the opportunity for delegates to pick up CPD Credits.

The workshops, held at Royal Aberdeen, Turnhouse and Dundonald Golf Courses and Elmwood College covered a range of subjects including the setting of cutting units, reel maintenance, grinding and the benefits of correctly setting cutting units.

Willie Nisbet, himself a former greenkeeper at St Andrews Links and now Bernhard's man in Scotland, said: "We have been very pleased with the feedback that we've had from these seminars. It is vitally important for busy greenkeeping staff to be able to set units quickly and efficiently. There is always

something new to learn and judging by the comments we received afterwards, even the oldest dog can learn new tricks!

"Good players notice the quality of the surface not just in terms of how it plays, but how the place looks. An exceptional shine on the course shows up the definition in the greens. As there's no dead tissue, the green retains its colour and plays faster and more evenly."

Ben Taylor, Bernhard Training Manager, began the seminars. He commented: "I introduced the delegates to the company and product, including the technicalities of angles, attitudes and details of cutting units. After a short presentation we went into the workshop where we ran through all features and benefits and demonstrated exactly what makes this machinery unique across the world. We then demonstrated how to sharpen quickly and efficiently."

David Grey, First Assistant at Ladybank Golf Club, and former Bernhard Delegate, said "This was a fantastic in-depth presentation which detailed the importance of maintaining sound sharp units and the many consequences of failing to regularly do so.

"It was very interesting learning the various angles and how vital these are to achieve the perfect finish."

Stuart Green, BIGGA's Learning & Development Executive – Technical, added: "CPD is a vital tool in a turf professional's career toolkit.

"It's essential that greenkeepers update their skills, keep abreast of changes in legislation and maintain an awareness of current industry trends to benefit themselves and their employers.

"BIGGA offers its members the opportunity to record their CPD through an online system and reward them for their efforts."

# AERIAL BLITZ AGAINST OPM RETURNS

Aerial application of insecticide over West Berkshire in May 2013 against oak processionary moth (OPM), and reported first by Greenkeeper International in April 2013, will be repeated in May 2014 said the Forestry Commission (FC) in a surprise announcement.

Given the furore created by last year's aerial spraying of the biological insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki* over Herridge's copse and Broom's copse near Pangbourne, this year's blitz on nearby Sulham Woods, also a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), appears strange to say the least, and especially since no OPM nests were found in Berkshire in 2013. The action is apparently based on the capture of five male adult moths in late summer 2013 during a routine pest monitoring exercise using pheromone traps.

FC says this does not necessarily mean a viable breeding population of OPM is still present in the Pangbourne area but that their aim remains eradication of the pest. This begs the question as to why another round of aerial spraying, when last year's operation clearly failed to 'do the trick'. In 2013 FC admitted they were unsure as to whether there were actually any pest insects in the treated woodlands and 'Butterfly Conservation' branded the operation a 'sledgehammer to crack a nut'.

And what about the even stranger decision taken this year to spray just very small part of a single wood called

Sulham Woods, in the same general area as last year (to the south of Pangbourne) but this time nearer to Tilehurst on the western outskirts of Reading. Male oak processionary moths are strong fliers with flight distance capabilities of up to 25 km, which means they could have exited nests and mated with females over a potentially extensive area.

It is now over one year since the May 2013 aerial application 'trial' took place with no sign of the results being made public by FC. In January 2014 I asked someone who was operationally involved in the 'trial' if he was privy to how it went. He had asked to see the results but was told he would have to go through the 'Freedom of Information Act' to retrieve them.

I thought he was joking until I discovered that a Pangbourne resident had already used the Freedom of Information Act to find out why Natural England had sanctioned aerial spraying of an SSSI oak woodland in the first place, and especially since most conservation organisations thought the environmental and ecological risks were a 'no brainer'.

According to BBC Berkshire, the Freedom of Information request revealed how Natural England had sanctioned aerial application of insecticide despite believing that it would not eradicate the insect pest, and also believing it would have "a very significant impact" on other species of moths and butterflies in the area.

Natural England was right to think a single pair of BTK



sprays will not have eradicated OPM in 2013, even if present in the treated woodland, but for entirely the wrong reasons.

Spraying BTK as a stand-alone measure is essentially a pest management tool rather than a pest control tool and requires repeat applications over a number of years to achieve pest eradication if at all. If the capture of five male adult moths in 2014 shows one thing it is that aerial spraying with BTK in 2013 failed to eradicate OPM, so why should the same treatment prove any different this year. And especially since there is no hard evidence of pest presence in the woodland earmarked for spraying this year.

BTK is a biological insecticide lacking the potency and

persistence generally required to achieve eradication with a single application, but which is possible using more powerful chemical insecticides like diflubenzuron (an insect growth regulator) and deltamethrin (a pyrethroid insecticide acting through contact and ingestion). These insecticides are used in ground based spraying against OPM but are not licensed for aerial application.

UK plant health authorities are apparently keeping the results (if any) from these 'trials' very 'close to the chest'. It will probably take another 'brave soul' to make a Freedom of Information request to secure the findings for general viewing and scrutiny - any volunteers?

*Dr Terry Mabbett*

## 40 YEARS FOR DAVE AT CHILDWALL

BIGGA member Dave Macavoy has celebrated a 40-year stint as Head Greenkeeper at Childwall Golf Club.

Dave began his greenkeeping career at 15, and spent eight years at Royal Birkdale before joining Childwall - a

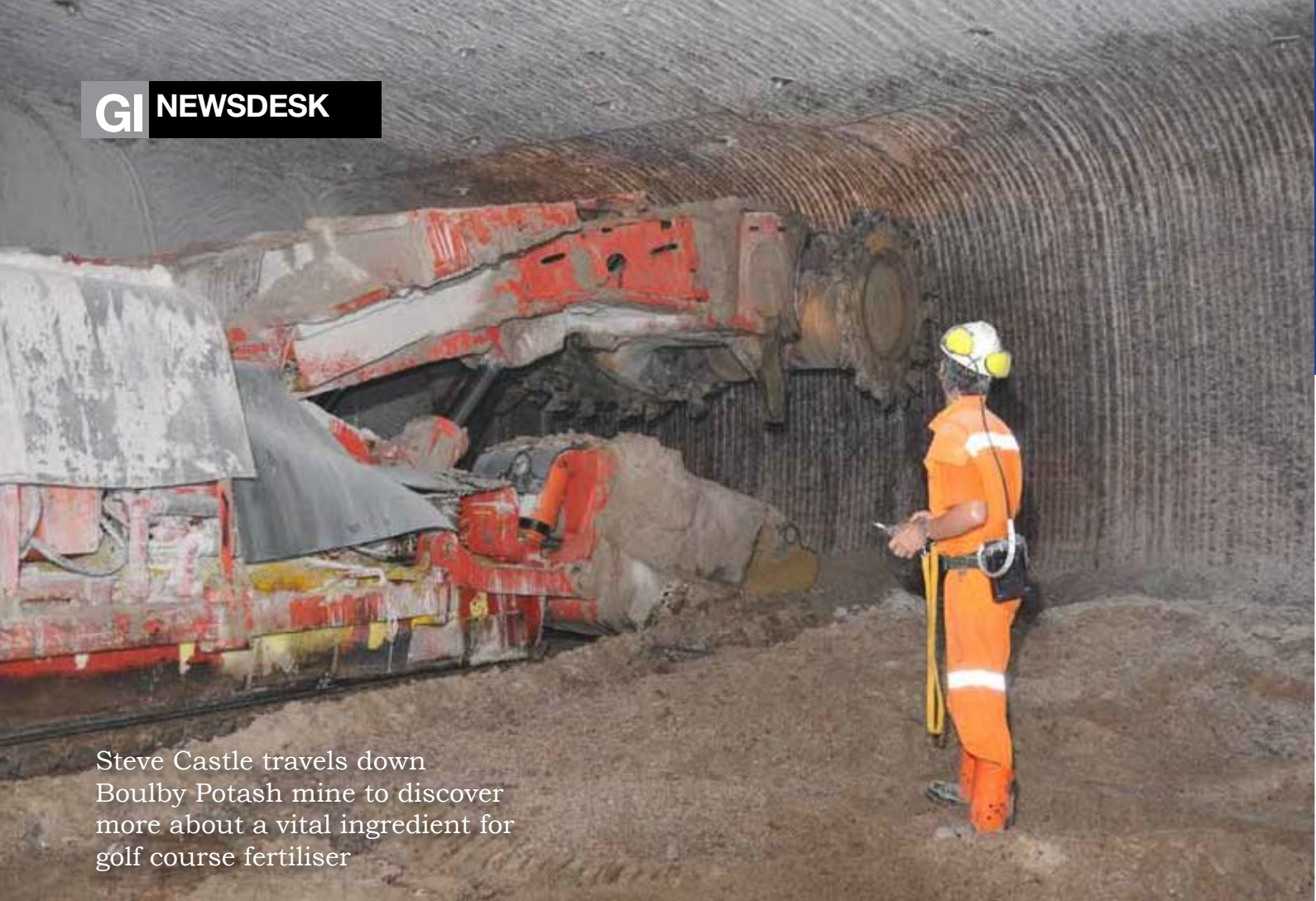
parkland course close in the Huyton area of Liverpool - which was established in 1912.

He heads a five-strong greenkeeping team with a seasonal member joining in the summer.

He said: "We don't have major events

here but we've held many county matches down the years and we're proud of our work here.

"We've reconstructed 16 of the 18 greens with work on the remaining two coming up, and all the work is always done in house."



Steve Castle travels down Boulby Potash mine to discover more about a vital ingredient for golf course fertiliser

## GOING UNDERGROUND

I'm three quarters of a mile beneath the ground, six miles out under the North Sea, and a burly miner, visible only because of dim torchlight and his orange uniform, is tucking into a lunch of Dairy Lea Dunkers. Just another average Tuesday afternoon for the intrepid turf journalist.

The location is the east coast of Yorkshire and I'm watching on as workers at Boulby Potash mine operate a huge machine which is prising potash ore from the earth. The mine is run by Cleveland Potash Ltd - a wholly owned subsidiary of Israel Chemicals Ltd - and I'm on site to discover more about the beginning of the fertiliser production process.

Potash is the common name for potassium chloride, and Boulby Mine produces over half of the UK's annual supply - from a staggering 2.4 million tonnes of potash ore a year.

This dark, warm and dusty atmosphere thus eventually leads to the production area of polyhalite, a different seam, some 140m beneath the potash - which contains potassium sulphate, calcium sulphate and magnesium sulphate. This polyhalite, a unique, organic mineral, is the key ingredient of Evertis's ProTurf fertiliser - which we would learn more of later.

After an informative briefing from our guide Neil Rowley, we don the all-orange outfit worn by the workers.

This features an oxygen self-rescuer (which converts CO to CO<sub>2</sub> if smoke inhalation occurs) clinging to the belts we wear in case of fire.

We file into a small, dark lift which then plunges at surprising speed beneath the earth. We then walk through piles of silvery dust before we reach a Ford Transit which will shuttle us 45 minutes to the face where the mining is taking place.

The vehicle trundles through the darkness. One of my colleagues compares the landscape to a Terminator film. It does almost seem post-apocalyptic. The roof is low and it's stuffy and warm - around 32C - as the Transit rattles along a path of compacted dust in the gloom.

I'm astonished at how far we have to travel. There seem to be no obvious points of reference, with only the odd safety refuge point and mechanical station to be seen. It's hard to imagine that this is someone's daily commute.

At the face we meet several miners, who are happy to chat about their work. Some of the workforce began as coal miners before joining Boulby, and all have several years of experience as a necessity to allow them to work at the face and operate the huge, complex and potentially highly dangerous machinery.

As well as potash, Boulby produces between 0.5 - 0.8 million tonnes of rock salt



annually, which is the crucial substance which de-ices UK roads.

The end result of all this labour and expense goes into ProTurf - a high impact fertiliser with a combination of controlled release and conventional release of nitrogen designed for use on all outfield turf areas.

The polyhalite ensures all macro nutrients are delivered in one application, and rates are flexible due to the small granule size.

It's been a fascinating experience as I'd never before considered the sheer scale of the technical and human operation required to produce this substance which then goes into fertiliser.

From this weird, arid environment comes the building blocks for the fine turf we see on fairways, tees, surrounds, approaches and lawns.

All things considered though I'm happier to view the North Yorkshire coastline from a more traditional vantage point above ground.