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Greenkeeper International

The Saunton surfer

Course manager Murray Long is in his happy place on the North Devon coast

Member Interest

Tom Lowe claims the BIGGA National Championship

From Your Association

Meet John Keenaghan – our new president-elect

Careers

Derrick Johnstone on becoming Foxhills' course manager

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The magazine for BIGGA members Greenkeeper International exists for you, our members. Since 1987 BIGGA has helped thousands in golf greenkeeping to progress their careers, find inspiration and get involved in our varied and vibrant community. This magazine aims to reflect the passions and preoccupations of our members and we'd like you to be involved. Please drop us a line, send us a picture or post on our social media pages.

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Welcome

Everyone at BIGGA was so sad to hear of the passing of our Patron, Sir Michael Bonallack, last month. Sir Michael was a monumental figure in the sport; one of the finest amateur golfers of all time, a formidable administrator and a great supporter of BIGGA and the profession of greenkeeping. He had huge respect for the role that greenkeepers play and would enjoy his annual trip to Harrogate to catch up with old friends and new innovations. He will be sorely missed and we wish his family the sincerest of condolences.

We heard of his passing soon after the conclusion of our National Championship, which was held at the wonderful Saunton. By a huge coincidence, Sir Michael actually first began his golfing journey very near by. It was a privilege to hold the event over the beautiful East and West courses that were presented magnificently by Murray Long and his team. Congratulations to our overall champion, Tom Lowe, who claimed the title very early in his greenkeeping career having made a late career change. It was lovely to spend time at the championship and a full field of players thoroughly enjoyed the golf courses, competition and camaraderie. There was definitely

“ Sir Michael Bonallack was a great supporter for the profession of greenkeeping

a positive vibe on display, despite what has been a challenging year for greenkeeping.

As the golfing season comes to an end, conference season kicks into life. I'm looking forward to getting out to all the BIGGA Conferences held around the Regions as well as having the chance to attend and present at some other golf and turf industry events. The networking and knowledge acquisition on offer are invaluable and I'm hoping to catch up with as many members as possible.

Meanwhile, plans for our main event, BTME, are ramping up. We've had a great start to bookings for the Continue to Learn education programme and all of the exhibition space is very nearly sold.



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

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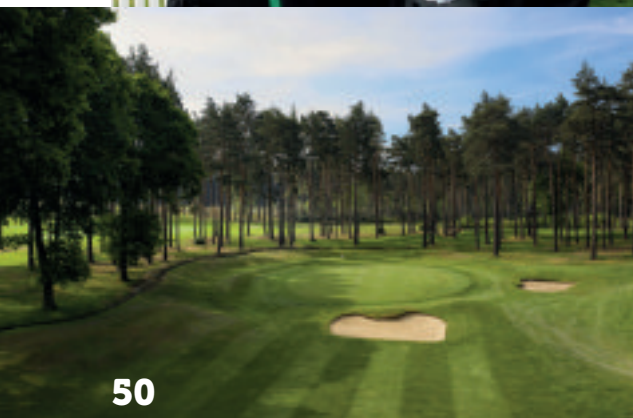
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BIGGA

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We are committed to the continual professional development of our members, working with the leading bodies in golf for the good of the game.

BIGGA's activities are underpinned by the generosity of our industry partners and supporters. BIGGA's various activities, initiatives, learning and development opportunities and member benefits are made possible due to the ongoing commitment shown by these companies, organisations and individual donors. From our supporters all the way up to our premium partners, our thanks go to all of them for their dedication to BIGGA and its members.



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First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- A greenkeeper's best friend – this month we meet Arlo
- All the dates for your diary in our what's on listings



Finlayson bids farewell to the greens after 50 years in the industry

Course manager Brian Finlayson is looking forward to a well-earned retirement after calling time on his 30-year stay at Kilmarnock (Barassie) Golf Club.

The 65-year-old started out in the industry 50 years ago at Alloa Golf Club and has spent the past three decades at the Ayrshire links.

His love for greenkeeping started at an early age, taking up his first role at just 15, and he will retire in December.

"My uncle gave me a Ransomes Certes, a hand mower – it was the most beautiful thing you've ever seen," he said. "We had a big lawn at the back, and I made a putting green. That's where it all started for me."

Since his apprenticeship at Alloa, Finlayson's long career has included spells at Tulliallan, Braehead, Ardeer, Troon Links and Glasgow Gailes.

He has overseen 19 R&A events at Kilmarnock (Barassie), but his highlight

came in 2021 when the course hosted the televised Women's Amateur Open.

He said: "It was great to sit in your own living room and see it on the TV and say, 'That's my golf course they're playing on'. It was quite special."

Finlayson, who has served on committees for SIGGA and BIGGA, added: "The profile of greenkeeping has come such a long way and the presentation of courses now is like an art form." **GI**

“ Help to harness the power of golf to make an important difference – in communities and landscapes all across the world – and recognise that golf, and life, is #BetterWithNature – Roddy Williams, page 14



Fiona Lyttle says goodbye to GTC

After an incredible 23 years' involvement with the Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC), Fiona Lyttle has chosen to leave the organisation.

Fiona first joined the GTC in 2000, first working closely with David Golding, before taking over as the driving force upon his retirement in 2016.

During her tenure, Fiona was integral to the review of the range of greenkeeping qualifications on offer,

including the introduction of the Trailblazer initiative in England.

Her expertise and commitment through this period have contributed towards the development of a best-in-class educational offering for trainee greenkeepers and we are tremendously grateful for all her contributions.

Sami Strutt, BIGGA chief operating officer, said: "I'm sure you'll join us in wishing Fiona all the best for the future and thank her for her

dedication to advancing learning opportunities for greenkeepers."

The GTC exists to ensure greenkeeping qualifications remain fit for purpose and relevant to the golf industry.

We will be urgently seeking to recruit an individual or individuals to support the work of the GTC.

In the interim, please direct GTC enquiries to BIGGA's learning and development executive, Deb Burnett, at deb@bigga.co.uk.

A greenkeeper's best friend – Arlo

Owner: Andy Grabham
Club: Farrington Park



Dog's name: Arlo
Breed: Maltipoo
Age: Two and a half years old
Favourite treat: Gravy bones
Naughtiest moment: He has been known to take the odd golf ball now and again
He is happiest when: He gets to say hello to everyone

What's on this month



Dates for your diary

7 November

BIGGA Conference, South West England & South Wales – The Cooper Associates City Ground, Taunton

BIGGA Scotland L&D Roadshow – Portlethen GC

8 November

BIGGA Conference, South East England – Wentworth GC

BIGGA Scotland L&D Roadshow – Royal Dornoch GC

Royal Dornoch



9 November

BIGGA Yorkshire Section X-Mas Golf Day – Pannal GC

15 November

BIGGA Conference, Central England – Villa Park, Birmingham

16 November

BIGGA Conference, North England and North Wales – Bolton Stadium Hotel, Bolton

22 November

BIGGA Conference, Scotland – Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline

BIGGA South Coast Turkey Trot – Barton-on-Sea GC

29 November

Midlands Turkey Trot – Beau Desert GC

Notice of AGM

17 January 2024

BIGGA Annual General Meeting – Online
The 2024 AGM will be held as an online event to encourage greater participation. All members are invited and those with full membership can vote on matters arising.



Our programme of local and regional events is supported by regional patrons, whose generosity helps create opportunities for BIGGA members.

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Head to the BIGGA website for more information about local activities near you



ICL Continue to Learn Scholars revealed



Phil Collinson speaking to the ICL Scholars

Participants of the eighth ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship have been revealed

Each year, BIGGA Premium Partner ICL Turf & Landscape invites five BIGGA members to attend the education programme at BTME.

The two organisations recognise that the valuable career-development opportunities provided by the multi-day event are not available to every greenkeeper, with the cost of education, travel and accommodation proving an obstacle.

The scholarship seeks to provide a level playing field for ambitious members who would otherwise miss out.

Sam Norman, assistant greenkeeper at Abbey Hill, was thrilled to be selected as one of the scholars.

"I am very grateful to be chosen for this fantastic opportunity as it will allow me to progress and develop my career," he said.

"I see this as a very positive step in my career and one that will help me become a more established greenkeeper.

The ICL Scholars for 2024

- Chris Hale, deputy course manager, Taunton & Pickeridge
- Sam Norman, assistant greenkeeper, Abbey Hill
- Kate Stillwell, course superintendent, West London City 9
- Jason Norwood, greenkeeper, Reay
- Jamie Caswell, Blue Course supervisor, Frilford Heath

I believe having events like this is a great way of networking and seeing old friends, but also a great way to be able to make new friends.

"Everyone is there for one reason and that is to help each other become a better greenkeeper, which is so important for the growth and development of this industry."

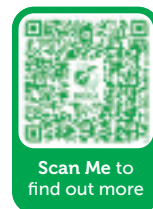
Following a selection process, the ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship provides the five candidates with three nights in a hotel and a comprehensive education package worth approximately £500.

To earn an ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship, BIGGA members must demonstrate a commitment to developing their own professional abilities by engaging with BIGGA's Continuing Professional Development scheme.

Whether through in-person learning, reading this magazine, or by accessing resources on the association's website, BIGGA members have access to thousands of learning opportunities, all aimed at helping improve their professional abilities.

GI

Continue to Learn 2024 Tickets: Eventbrite





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// The IQ dual-clutch F24/R24 gear box was chosen as it makes manoeuvring the tractor around the course whilst operating the equipment so easy. Another feature we really like is the Auto PTO function or the Headland Management System, it is brilliant for when we get to the end of the run with the aerator, we can lift the implement up, the PTO automatically cuts out, we can turn around then lower again and PTO restarts by itself. Brilliant for safety and avoiding damage or excess wear and tear on the implements themselves."

Daniel Spencer, Letchworth Golf Club

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Roddy Williams
joined GEO
Foundation for
Sustainable Golf in
2021 after more than
two decades with the
European Tour and
Ryder Cup

Use our Fostering Nature Scorecard to help do your bit to make golf a true champion of the natural world

We hope that you enjoyed and participated in last month's nature-inspired Sustainable Golf Week. Many greenkeepers and course managers, clubs and organisations shared and celebrated the various ways that golf is helping to protect, restore and promote our community of life on earth.

Nature is woven throughout the very fabric of the game of golf, and many across the sport are integrating the regeneration of landscapes and ecosystems into their principles and practices.

Yet, with the challenges the world faces, more than ever we need to let nature in.

And we hope this week serves to inspire even more as we invite everyone in golf to 'take the honour'. To play a part in driving the regeneration of the natural world. This can be from the smallest to the largest of actions, including:

Protecting the existing habitats and biodiversity on and round our courses and through the products and materials we purchase.

Restoring nature by further naturalising our great golfing landscapes and working with others to support wider ecological networks.

Promoting nature by communicating its importance to staff, members, visitors,

spectators and fans.

The week provided an opportunity to share some perspectives from GEO Foundation, but more importantly it was a time for many others to share their own stories, to champion ideas and support, and inspire further action.

representing an opportunity to contribute to a more nature-friendly golfing experience. Each hole takes you through why it is important, some ideas to protect the places we play and those we don't, explores ways to restore nature and enrich the landscapes,

in time to raise awareness, and we know throughout the industry, particularly among course managers and greenkeepers, that sustainable golf is championed and practised every week and every day. Most of all, we hope you will become a more

Fostering Nature Scorecard
18 ways to protect, restore and promote nature on your course

| | |
|--|--|
| 1. Reflect on the significance of nature locally - locally to globally | 10. Promote nature management |
| 2. Recognise the value of nature in golf | 11. Increase public access and connectivity |
| 3. Re-evaluate staff and what more you think you could do | 12. Create new access routes for key species |
| 4. Re-evaluate what you think your club/course could do | 13. Create an on-site plan in a format that golfers can see |
| 5. Avoid pollution risks | 14. Communicate the needs and benefits of biodiversity |
| 6. Identify key ecological hot-spots and priority species | 15. Engage with nature with staff and others |
| 7. Plan projects to avoid unnecessary damage and disturbance to nature | 16. Share your scores among clubs |
| 8. Get top products, services and consider future impacts on nature | 17. Train your nature partners and key visitors |
| 9. Prioritise other species | 18. Get recognised through dedicated industry awards and certification |

Throughout Sustainable Golf Week, we built a Fostering Nature Scorecard, revealing actionable steps that every golfer, club, or supporter can take to enhance golf's connection with nature and make it truly #BetterWithNature.

The full 18 holes on the scorecard provide a good round of actions, each

promotes the value of nature through society and on the closing few holes suggests some targets.

How many of these can you score on, pick up a few shots or use as something to aspire to and work towards over the next 12 months before the next Sustainable Golf Week?

Sustainable Golf Week is, of course, just a moment

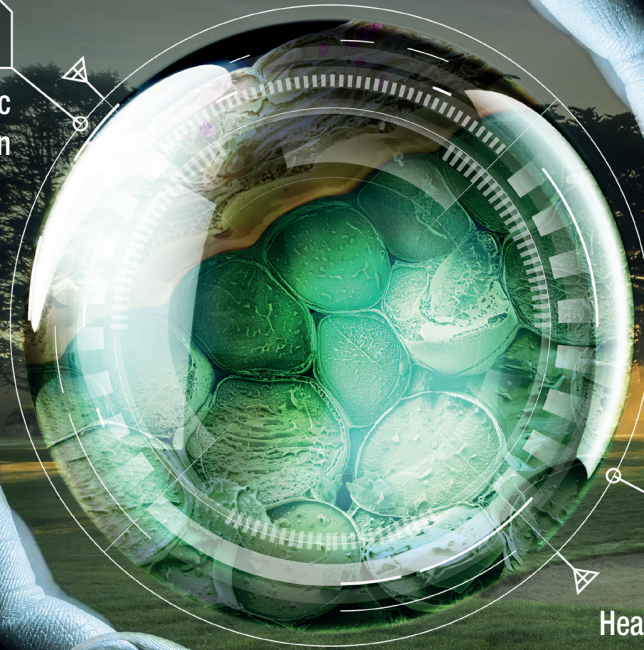
prominent part of the growing community that is proudly driving sustainability further – in and through golf. Help to harness the power of golf to make an important difference – in communities and landscapes all across the world – and recognise that golf, and life, is **#BetterWithNature GI**

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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Andrew Smith reflects on his year as BIGGA president
- Welcome to our newest members



BIGGA Conferences this month – book now

Members still have time to book their spot at one of five BIGGA conferences this month.

The BIGGA regions are hosting their annual conferences this month, providing attendees with access to high-class speakers in a leading venue.

Held every November, the BIGGA conferences represent the largest regional education event for BIGGA members, featuring a day's worth of networking and learning.

All members are invited to attend

in their region of choice, and non-members may also attend to gain an insight into the fantastic opportunities on offer to BIGGA members.

Among the speakers will be BIGGA's own Sami Strutt and Jenny Bledge, who will introduce the First Green Initiative, which is set to turn golf courses into STEM learning classrooms

England Golf's Sustainability Officer Owen James will also be on hand at all conferences to give a presentation

on future-proofing water use.

James Bledge, links manager at Royal Liverpool, will grace the stage at the Northern conference in Bolton to discuss hosting the 151st Open Championship, while Andrew Baptie, Head of Club Services and Governance at Scottish Golf, will present on funding opportunities.

Full details are available online. **GI**



Scan Me to find out more

The BIGGA National Board is comprised of the following members who volunteer their time to support the association: Stuart Ferguson MG, Jack Hetherington, Antony Kirwan, Andrew Laing, Iain Macleod, Lucy Sellick and Richard Whyman
BIGGA President Andy Smith, BIGGA Chairperson Steven Lloyd

FTMI's class of 2023 gather for launch event

The latest crop of Future Turf Managers Initiative delegates undertook two days of activities and training to begin the intensive programme



Each year Jacobsen and BIGGA invite 20 up-and-coming association members to participate in the intensive training programme, which has been credited with developing some of the industry's most influential course managers and head greenkeepers.

First hosted in 2013 as a two-day education event, the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) has expanded, with similar schemes operating in

Spain, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand.

This year's event started at the Ransomes Jacobsen factory, in Ipswich, where delegates played a few rounds on the RJ International golf course, had a welcome meeting and lunch, followed by a factory tour.

There was then an educational session (Management Masterclass) in the training room, led by Vicky Elliott-Potter of EPIC (Elliott-Potter International

Consultancy), before delegates moved to Ufford Park hotel, where they had an evening with the mentors.

Day two began with a training session on Professional Presenting, also led by Vicky. Delegates split into their mentor

“ It is a fantastic initiative to be a part of and BIGGA are very grateful to event supporters, Jacobsen, who enable this career-changing opportunity to take place each year.” – BIGGA Learning & Development Executive Deb Burnett



The delegates

- Jack Ashall, assistant greenkeeper, Knowle
- Will Barnes, deputy head greenkeeper, The Berkshire
- Kevin Butcher, first assistant, Walton Heath
- Dan Fisher, deputy course manager, North Foreland
- Jack Hall, assistant greenkeeper, Northampton
- Oliver Kirk, deputy course manager, Burt St Edmunds
- Stephen Mancini, senior greenkeeper, Prestwick
- Chris Naughton, senior greenkeeper, The Gleneagles Hotel
- George Nock, first assistant, Enville Golf Club
- Scott Patrick, golf supervisor/mechanic, R&A Lethamill
- Aaron Peacock, first assistant, Horsham
- Levi Pethick, deputy course manager, Stoneham
- Sam Richards, first assistant, Sherborne
- Michael Sparke, deputy course manager, King's Hill
- Shane Stannard, deputy course manager, Adleburgh
- Craig Swindells, deputy head greenkeeper, Chipping Sodbury
- Nick Thorley, senior assistant greenkeeper, Saunton
- James Walker, greenkeeper, St Andrews Links Trust
- Jack Wellings, senior greenkeeper, JCB Golf and Country Club
- Bradley White, senior greenkeeper, Wentworth

groups and had to prepare and deliver a presentation to the rest of the group.

The next step for the delegates is online training via Zoom happening in October to early January. Subjects covered include budgeting, mental health, dealing with sales representatives and much more. The final stage of the programme is two intensive days of training in January, during BTME, followed by graduation.

FTMI focuses on personal and professional

development, rather than agronomy-based subjects, and utilises the expertise of leading course managers, dynamic trainers and experts to mentor and educate the next generation of industry leaders.

Candidates are selected based upon an anonymous judging criterion, with the panel gaining an insight into the achievements of each applicant, who must be educationally active on a national and regional level. [GI](#)



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CPD

Continuing Professional Development

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved **CPD Approved status**

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Matthew Wharton MG CGCS, Idle Hour CC

Michael Russell, Ormskirk

Michael Gibbons, Disley

Graham Burnett, Nairn Dunbar

Matt Kitson, Royal Mid-Surrey

Steven Connolly, Ansty Golf Centre

There are no **CPD Milestone** recipients in this period.

Hayling



Nairn Dunbar





BIGGA members set for Sawgrass trip with John Deere volunteer programme

The six BIGGA members who will undertake the trip of a lifetime to TPC Sawgrass for next year's Players Championship have been revealed.

Each year, the PGA Tour headquarters plays host to the unofficial fifth major, where players battle it out for one of the most lucrative prizes in the sport.

With its famous island green and stunning Florida setting, the Stadium Course is considered among the most spectacular golfing challenges on the planet.

And to prepare the course for such a prestigious event, the home greenkeeping team are supported by a multinational group of volunteers, including representatives from each of BIGGA's five regions, along with an additional overseas member.

The chosen six will be flying to Ponte Vedra Beach courtesy of BIGGA Premium Partner John Deere, who will also provide accommodation, food and uniform for the duration of their 10-day stay.

The trip will take place from 9-19 March 2024, and the volunteers will be fully integrated into the TPC Sawgrass agronomy and course maintenance team.

Volunteer David Feeney, deputy head greenkeeper at Prestwick Golf Club, in Scotland, said: "I'd like to say thank you to BIGGA and to John Deere for selecting me to volunteer at TPC Sawgrass for the Players Championship. This is a fantastic opportunity, which I can't wait to take part in. I need to say thank you to [head greenkeeper] David Edmondson and the team at Prestwick Golf Club, including the membership, for their support. And I'd also like to say thank you to my family and friends, and especially to my partner, for their support throughout my career.

"I can't wait to meet all the other volunteers and to have a fantastic time at Sawgrass." GI



JOHN DEERE

The volunteers

South East: Aidan Wright, deputy course manager at Camberley Heath GC

South West: Adam Brackley, head greenkeeper at La Grande Mare GC

Central: Colin Hopper, head greenkeeper at Elsham GC

Northern: Ian Kirwan, course manager at Chorlton-cum-Hardy GC

Scotland: David Feeney, deputy head greenkeeper at Prestwick GC

International: Adam Champion, superintendent at Bears paw GC (Canada)



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| Calum Rodger | APP |
| Lundin | |
| Evan Ross | APP |
| Merchants of Edinburgh | |
| Regan Sinclair | GK |
| Gullane | |
| Braedyn Southby | APP |
| Banchory | |
| Ben Truman McNeill | APP |
| Eyemouth | |
| Scott Cooper | GK |
| Filey | |
| James Douglas | A |
| Waterton Park | |
| David Pinder | HGK |
| Ghyll | |
| Jack Woodworth | GK |
| Pike Hills | |

Central England

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Robin Averill-Hampshire A | |
| Maya Global | |
| Luke Blount | DCM |
| Jake Kelly | GK |
| Omberle | |
| Mitchell James | AGK |
| Woburn G&CC | |
| Nathan Slater | AGK |
| Droitwich | |
| Ethan Walker | APP |
| The Belfry | |
| Peter Baldwin | GK |
| Nicholas Chidwick | GK |
| Michael Foster | AGK |
| Andy Hall | GK |
| Dana Handley | AGK |
| Niall Woodcock | M |
| Prince's | |
| Sam Boyns | GK |
| Leeds Castle | |

Northern

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Scott Cooper | GK |
| Filey | |
| James Douglas | A |
| Waterton Park | |
| David Pinder | HGK |
| Ghyll | |
| Jack Woodworth | GK |
| Pike Hills | |

South East

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Peter Baldwin | GK |
| Nicholas Chidwick | GK |
| Michael Foster | AGK |
| Andy Hall | GK |
| Dana Handley | AGK |
| Niall Woodcock | M |
| Prince's | |
| Sam Boyns | GK |
| Leeds Castle | |

Welcome to our new members

Callum Chisnall DHGK
Tilgate Forest

Harrison Daniels AGK
Birch Grove House Estate

Courtney Fooks S
GBR Technology

Rory Fuller AGK
Sunningdale

Daniel Graver AGK
Woking


Ben Hatton GK
Michael Monaco GK
Chislehurst

Alex Macdonald GK
Moor Park

Harvey Millen APP
Surrey Downs

Dominic Peter AGK
Sherfield Oaks

Matt Tribe GK
The Dyke

 **South West & South Wales**
Peter Alford AGK
High Post

Samuel Baker AGK
Matthew Richards AGK
David Wyborn GK
Bowood Hotel, Spa & Golf Resort

Ben Elson M
George Samu Holland AGK
Thurlestone

David Gillard GK
Marriott St Pierre Hotel & Country Club

Finley Goodhew AGK
The Point at Polzeath

 **International**
Spencer Adams I
FlightLine Golf Inc

Per Rasmussen I
Smorum

Key

| | | | | | |
|-------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------|
| A | Affiliate Member | FA | First Assistant | P | Partner |
| AGK | Assistant Greenkeeper | GK | Greenkeeper | R | Retired Member |
| APP | Apprentice | G | Groundsperson | RP | Regional Patron |
| ATP | Approved Training Provider | HGK | Head Greenkeeper | S | Supporter |
| CA | College Assessor | HG | Head Groundsperson | ST | Student Member |
| CM | Course Manager | I | International Member | SUP | Superintendent |
| DCM | Deputy Course Manager | L | Life Member | | |
| DHGK | Deputy Head Greenkeeper | M | Mechanic | | |

Being BIGGA's president has been an honour



Andrew Smith
President

My year as president has been everything I could have hoped for and more

As we head towards the end of another year, it's a good time to reflect on all the things we've done – our accomplishments, our mistakes and the lessons we've learned along the way.

It has been a unique year for me, as I have had the honour of serving as your president, and it's hard to put into words what a privilege it has been.

When Jim Croxton phoned to tell me I would be taking on the role, I have to admit I was a little bit emotional. It was almost unbelievable that it should be something that I would get the chance to do; I'm just an average guy from Solihull!

My year in post has afforded me some incredible opportunities, including going to Orlando for the GCSAA and to Portugal for the FEGGA Conference, but it all started when I formally took up the role at BTME.

The support and good wishes I received from everybody were incredible and they made me feel immediately humbled



but also determined to make the most of the opportunity and not lose sight of what an honour it is.

Being president gave me an insight into the huge amount of work that goes on, from the board and the staff and everyone at BIGGA, to really elevate greenkeeping and push the industry forward.

A lot of that work happens behind the scenes and may go unnoticed, so it's important for me to acknowledge that it's happening and it's being done for the benefit of us all.

There is another thing that gives me great hope for the future of this industry that I love so much and that is the quality and enthusiasm of the next generation coming through.

I wrote about this in my last column as it's something I feel passionately about, but I have never felt so inspired and so encouraged over the health of our industry as when I attended the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards.

I'm aware that my replacement as president, John Keenaghan, is also

keen to inspire young greenkeepers, and I'm delighted to hear that is a priority for him.

It's something this association takes seriously, and that commitment is underlined by the First Green Initiative, which will reach out to young people across the country and show them that greenkeeping is a viable, desirable career path.

We can all attest to the wonderful opportunities this career can provide, and it's our duty to open those pathways for others to follow. This initiative is something that will help greenkeeping and golf in general to flourish.

I want to close with a word for John, who I know will be feeling as proud as I was when I got the chance to serve as president – enjoy it, as I'm sure you will, because it's just the best thing.

You will find no shortage of support and encouragement from your fellow members, and I'm happy to help in any way I can. **GI**

“I have had the honour of serving as your president, and it's hard to put into words what a privilege it has been”

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Greenkeeper Files

John at the
2013 Open



John Keenaghan

From BTME 2024, John Keenaghan will serve as BIGGA's president
– and he is thrilled at the prospect



John Keenaghan's enthusiasm for greenkeeping and all things golf is infectious. Even spending 20 minutes on the phone with him will brighten your day.

Chipping Sodbury's head greenkeeper is BIGGA's new vice president and will serve a one-year term as president from BTME 2024.

It represents the culmination of a journey that started a little later in life than for many in the industry, but Keenaghan has certainly made up for lost time.

Congratulations on landing the new role – how does it feel?

I'm absolutely delighted and honoured – I just hope I do a good job!

I have been fortunate to have met so many quality greenkeepers in my time as a greenkeeper, which is now more than 30 years, and it will be a privilege for me to serve them in my role as vice president and then president of BIGGA.

This is not only a job to me but a passion and I love talking about greenkeeping and meeting other like-minded people.

“ This is not only a job to me but a passion and I love talking about greenkeeping

How did you get started in greenkeeping?

I didn't start in greenkeeping until my 30s. Before that, I was in the building trade but we had a recession and I was doing odd jobs at Filton Golf Club in Bristol, where I was a member.

The head greenkeeper there was putting down a concrete base for a driving range and asked if I'd like to do it, which I did. As the days passed and I was doing that, I was watching the greenkeepers go about their work and I thought, 'This isn't a bad life'. I quite enjoyed seeing them work.

So, the head greenkeeper, Nick Wilson, asked if I wanted to come in and work on the green staff. It was a big decision because the money wasn't great at the time, so I talked it through with my wife and decided to go for it – I haven't looked back since.

When did you become a member of BIGGA?

I was fortunate that, at the club I



With the team at 2013 Open

joined, all the staff were members and Nick got me signed up and he gave me a great start.

He put me through all the training I needed, sent me to college, I did spraying courses, chainsaw courses – I just took in as much learning as I could in those early days and I’m still doing that now.

Can you sum up the importance of BIGGA and the opportunities it provides?

BIGGA is incredibly important

“ I’d say it’s especially valuable for any young greenkeepers starting out now and I’d encourage them to use the tools BIGGA provides

and it provides huge value to all its members. I’d say it’s especially valuable for any young greenkeepers starting out now and I’d encourage them to use the tools BIGGA provides.

There are so many opportunities you can take advantage of, experiences

you can gain, things you can volunteer for and learn from.

If you see something you want to be involved in, ask your head greenkeeper or your course manager. Don’t miss out on things, don’t deny yourself an opportunity to learn and experience new things.

It’s also a tremendous tool for meeting new people – I go to section events and always meet different people and we share stories and knowledge; it’s invaluable.

Networking is so important and

I find it fascinating to hear how people at different courses deal with certain problems. They’re not always the same problems you might face at your course, but there’s always something to learn from it.

As I said, I’m still learning now

John’s greenkeeping career

1992

Assistant greenkeeper at Filton

1995

Greenkeeper at The Kendleshire

1999

Greenkeeper at The Players

2001

Deputy course manager at the Manor House

2002

Deputy head greenkeeper at Chipping Sodbury

2006

Head greenkeeper at Chipping Sodbury

2023

Vice president at BIGGA

2024

President at BIGGA



John with Scott Reeves at The Open in 2016

and I'm basically three years from retirement. Nobody ever knows it all in this job and there's no such thing as asking a stupid question.

I just hope that if there's one thing I can do in my role as president, it will be to instil some of my passion for greenkeeping in those young people who are starting out.

What are some of the challenges facing greenkeepers and course managers now?

Climate change is a big one and I started to notice some of the impacts probably just before Covid.

We don't seem to have distinct seasons anymore and the weather is a lot more extreme, so that brings up all sorts of challenges – things like water use, chemical use; it's all changing and making people think about how to deal with it.

This is why I love feeding off other greenkeepers because we all have ideas about how to deal with these challenges and it's another opportunity to learn from others.

Does the job still bring you satisfaction?

Absolutely. Don't get me wrong, winters can be tough, particularly here as we're on a clay-based golf course. We're really good in the summer, mind.

But I can honestly say there hasn't been a single day when I've woken up in the morning and thought, 'I don't fancy it today, I'll throw a sickie'.

I'm passionate about what I do and that's what gets me out of bed every morning, no matter the conditions or whatever the day throws at me.

It's been a pleasure to do this job and it still gives me that same satisfaction now.

What have been some of your highlights?

I went to The Players Club and helped construct USGA-spec greens and that was a wonderful experience.

That was such a good learning curve for me and I'm quite into construction as well – that's the sort of thing I love to get involved with, so that was great.

I've been fortunate enough to be part of the support team for BIGGA at various Open Championships and I've volunteered for The Senior Open and did a week at Porthcawl in 2017.

I was back there this year on the support team for Ian Kinley and those are the things that keep you striving to improve your own course, when you see these top-class courses up close.

One final thing – you often wear your collar up, why is that?

(Laughs) Now there's a stupid question! I don't know. It's something I've always done for some reason.

I get called Elvis at my own golf club. Everybody knows me for wearing my collar up.

Thinking back, maybe I got sunburned really badly on the back of my neck one year and ever since then I've put the collar up.

We were thinking about introducing a new line into the BIGGA range – the JK range.

I do fold it down when I've got a shirt and tie on! **GI**

'BIGGA's support team was there for me when I needed them most'

From legal advice to counselling support, BIGGA offers a range of services to its members



When Dave was facing false allegations at the golf club where he worked as a greenkeeper, he turned to BIGGA for help.

He was relieved to find the organisation was there for him and grateful for the support and advice he received to guide him through what was a difficult time in his life.

"It was two years ago when, in my role as a greenkeeper, I found myself in a horrific situation; I was the subject of false and damaging allegations.

"I was in desperate need of professional advice but found the golf club at which I worked had nothing set up; no services to help someone in my position.

"I was aware that BIGGA did offer such services and quickly reached out to the organisation, first contacting the HR helpline. I spoke with them many times over a period of several months and found them always willing to listen.

"They offered professional and timely advice, guiding me through a process I would not have been able to navigate alone.

"With no representation available within the golf industry, which I feel is something that ought to be addressed, I also contacted the BIGGA legal helpline.

"I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude for the help and support they provided – they were simply magnificent, always willing to listen, and full of valuable advice.

"Though I sometimes spoke to different people within

the team, there was never any confusion, and nor did I have to keep repeating myself. Everything was logged and everyone I spoke to knew what stage the issue was at and was able to offer the most suitable advice to lead things towards a resolution.

"I felt listened to, understood, and was never made to feel that I was taking up too much of anyone's time. It was clear they were there to help me and would provide that help to the best of their ability.

"Another service that I would urge people to use, particularly if they do not have family or friends around them, is the counselling hotline.

"Anybody who is struggling with their mental health should reach out at the next opportunity. Do not delay.

"Take my word for it when I say that anyone's mental health can suffer, and it can happen very quickly. It really is astonishing how things can unravel and snowball out of control.

"It can happen to anyone, but nobody should ever be embarrassed if it should happen to them.

"Mine is a cautionary tale and I would hope that nobody finds themselves in a similar situation, but my story is proof that it can happen.

"Thankfully, the whole BIGGA support team were fabulous throughout my ordeal and played a pivotal role in proving my innocence."



“ I felt listened to, understood, and was never made to feel that I was taking up too much of anyone's time”



“ They were simply magnificent, always willing to listen, and full of valuable advice”

Legal Advice Line

When you have a legal problem, it can be a highly stressful time. It may be difficult to know who you can talk to and the cost of getting the advice you need can be expensive. BIGGA members have access to legal expenses insurance by Perkins Slade, offering a helpline that can advise on a wide range of legal services.

The legal advice line is provided by Law Express, who pride themselves on delivering quality legal advice. All calls are handled by qualified solicitors who can give advice on a range of issues, including employment law, family law and property law.

Law Express operates a call-back service to ensure that you are speaking to the right legal adviser. This helpline service is available to BIGGA members and their immediate family as part of the Legal Assistance insurance package.

Counselling Helpline

BIGGA recognises that mental health and stress are a concern for many in the greenkeeping profession. To help you address any issue that you may be facing, BIGGA offers a counselling helpline.

This is a confidential, professional telephone counselling service that can help you proactively manage stress at work by providing immediate emotional support, advice and practical information. The helpline is available to all BIGGA members and their families. This service can help with a range of problems, from practical everyday matters to sensitive or emotional issues.

Specialists can help members deal with personal relationship problems; problems with colleagues in the workplace; and other issues affecting their general wellbeing. Counsellors and information specialists are also trained to help members with practical problems.



HR Services

BIGGA has teamed up with HR Services Scotland to provide every greenkeeper member with access to free help and advice to make your workplace a more professional and positive environment. A team of qualified advisers will be on hand to assist BIGGA members with any HR problems that arise, with instant advice just a phone call away.

Any HR issue can be discussed with a dedicated team of advisers at no additional cost to you – it's all included in your BIGGA membership.

The advisers can help from the very early stages through to the conclusion of the matter, and unlimited telephone and email advice is available for each case. The helplines are available at any time and the service is completely confidential; no contact will be made with your employer. GI



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find out more

BIGGA mourns loss of Sir Michael Bonallack

Everyone at BIGGA was saddened to learn of the passing of our patron, Sir Michael Bonallack, on Tuesday 26 September.

Sir Michael was a huge supporter of greenkeepers throughout his life and became BIGGA's second president in 1999. Following a change in governance he then became patron in 2016, continuing in the role until his death aged 88.

A regular visitor to the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition, until poor health prevented his attendance, Sir Michael would often join BIGGA members on stage at the association's Welcome Celebration, taking a personal interest in their achievements.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "Sir Michael was a great friend to the association, and I am incredibly thankful that he gave so much of his time to serve as an association official for so long.

"He was hugely supportive of the role greenkeepers play in the health of the sport and had an appreciation for BIGGA's ambition to promote greenkeeping around the world.

"He was also one of life's great guys, a lovely man who was passionate about the game, and so it was poignant that on the day we concluded our annual championship at Saunton Golf Club, so close to where he first played the game, that we lost one of the sport's greatest ever personalities.

"He will be sorely missed, and our thoughts are with his friends and family at this time."

Regarded as Britain's greatest post-war amateur golfer, Sir Michael was a five-time Amateur Champion, five-time English Amateur Champion and a four-time Brabazon Trophy winner. **GI**

“He will be sorely missed, and our thoughts are with his friends and family at this time**”**



Sir Michael: A lifelong friend of greenkeepers

In this edited excerpt from a 2012 interview for Greenkeeper International, Sir Michael's admiration for greenkeepers shone through as he reflected on becoming the first winner of the BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award.

Visit Sir Michael Bonallack's home, near St Andrews, and you can spend a few moments taking in the vast array of photographs that adorn the walls.

Like many who have been fortunate to meet and even play with some of the top players and legends of the game, there are pictures of Sir Michael in the company with all sorts of notables, including several Open champions.

However, unlike the rest of us who have been lucky enough to have had our picture taken in the company of celebrities, in Sir Michael's case it is just as likely that those very stars have the same image on their walls. The fact is that they are just as anxious to have their picture taken with him as we would be with them.

His golfing hero as a youngster was Bobby Jones, widely regarded to be the greatest amateur ever to play the game. However, the man who had clinched the original Grand Slam in 1930 was not all that he seemed to the young Essex golfer. Bobby Jones had a shock in store.

"I always thought he was English. It wasn't until my mid-teens that I suddenly realised that he was American," said Sir Michael, who had the honour of sitting beside the great man at the traditional Amateurs' Dinner held during The Masters.

Sir Michael is delighted to have become the first recipient of the BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award, adding: "I'm very honoured to have been given this award because when I grew up, I was always friends with the greenkeeper.

"We had a great man at Thorpe Hall called Jock Glass who used to chase us around the course if we hadn't raked a bunker or put a divot back. It has to be remembered that the golf course is the biggest asset a club has, and the greenkeeper is the person responsible for looking after it."

“The golf course is the biggest asset a club has, and the greenkeeper is the person responsible for looking after it”

Sir Michael's amazing amateur career

- **Boys' Amateur Championship**
(1952)
- **Berkshire Trophy**
(1957, 1965, 1968, 1970, 1971)
- **Sunningdale Foursomes**
(1959)
- **Amateur Championship**
(1961, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970)
- **English Amateur**
(1962, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1968)
- **Brabazon Trophy**
(1964, 1968, 1969 T1, 1971)
- **Lytham Trophy**
(1965, 1972)



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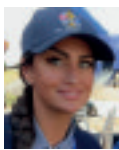
Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

- Murray Long on the career path that led him to Saunton
- All the results from the BIGGA National Championship



The Belfry's Nilsson added to the girl power of Ryder Cup greenkeeping team



Anna Nilsson, deputy head greenkeeper of The Brabazon course at The Belfry Hotel & Resort, reflects on her

trip to the Ryder Cup in Italy.

I was honoured to be asked to be part of the support team for the Ryder Cup, particularly given that I work at the tournament's spiritual home, The Belfry, which has hosted more than any other venue in the world.

There was an added element of pride for me as a woman to be supporting Marco Simone's superintendent, Lara Arias. It was very much a case of girl power.

I was also involved in helping prepare the course for the Italian Open, so I got to know it very well

The whole set-up was different to normal tournaments, with people cleaning ditches, streams and lakes, and filling sand in bunkers during the week of the Ryder Cup.

I got involved in a bit of everything, from mowing to working on the bunkers – it was a busy time but everyone worked hard and supported each other.

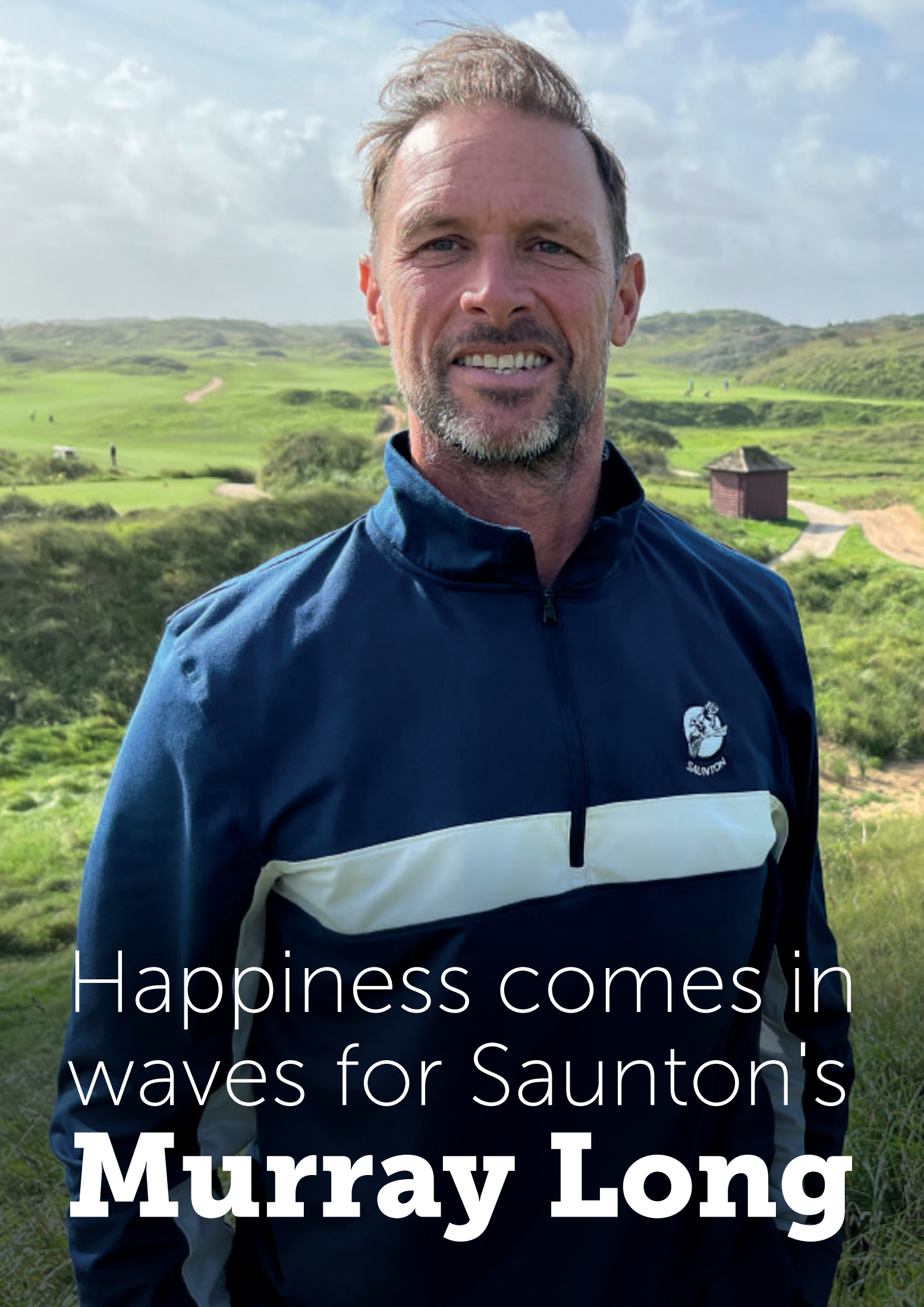
It's funny because we always get told to lower the green speed at The Belfry, when we want them faster. At the Ryder Cup, the speed was slower, but I agreed with that approach there.

The greens at Marco Simone are very undulating and utilising bunkers for pin positions makes it harder. You can't have undulating greens and high speeds, so I agreed with that approach

- although I still want free rein to pick up the speed at The Brabazon.

I did learn one valuable lesson: never have a tournament without goodies and chocolate. Thanks to our suppliers and sponsors, we've never had to endure that, but now I know just how appreciated it is after the resort director of The Belfry flew down and brought chocolate – I wouldn't have made it through the week without it.

As for life at The Belfry, we have some exciting things lined up, with ongoing development of the hotel and golf course. We were recently GEO Certified thanks to the work of Jamie Wade, so we are stepping up our game in every way. It's a privilege to be a part of it. **GI**



Happiness comes in waves for Saunton's
Murray Long

Saunton's course manager has found his spiritual home on the North Devon coast, with 36 holes of pure links golf beside the Atlantic Ocean

A world surfing reserve stretches for almost 20 miles along the coast of North Devon. It is the only one in the UK and one of only 12 worldwide. Stand on the sands at Saunton early in the evening and it's likely you'll see Murray Long, course manager at Saunton, trying to catch some waves atop his board.

"It's the one place that gives me total tranquility," says Murray. "That's my escape, my meditation, if you like. Just being in the water in general really has that effect on me. I've learned it's important to take time to relax. You need to find a place where you get that and being in the water, especially on the surfboard, is mine."

Autumn is considered the best time of year to surf in Devon as strong westerly swells and relatively warm weather and water mean conditions are at their peak. Participants in the BIGGA National Championship during September could hear from across the dunes the constant roar of waves and the Atlantic Ocean clearly has a large role to play in shaping Saunton Golf Club's rugged West and East courses.

It's a far cry from Berkshire's leafy suburbs, where Murray spent much of his career in charge of greenkeeping operations at Sunningdale, but it's a change he's relishing.

"That connection to the ocean is definitely a big thing," says Murray. "It's different when you get close to London or any big city, but there's such a lovely community here. In the group I play golf with, there are two or three who surf and it's a very outdoor place, so everyone is really aware of environmental impact. Living here, you're with like-minded people who want to do the right things."

“ The water is the one place that gives me total tranquility

Yet Murray began his career straight from school at Chesham & Ley Hill, a nine-hole venue in Buckinghamshire far from the coast and just outside the M25.

"This is going to sound silly," he says. "But my granddad absolutely loved his lawn and he would go up and down with a mower, getting the lawn straight. I'd just be sitting there as a little kid and I must have taken something in from that. He never got to see me as a greenkeeper, but that must have had an influence on me."

After just six months he moved on to Ellesborough, where he worked under Master Greenkeeper Seve Schmitz and David Goodchild, who was deputy and later became course manager. Then came a year's spell at Berkhamsted, before moving on to Coombe Hill in Kingston upon Thames.

Left: Murray Long at Saunton



Despite joining as an assistant greenkeeper, by age 24 Murray was head greenkeeper and he spent a decade in charge of the club. During that spell, the team won an award from Golf Monthly for a bunker renovation project and in 2003 Murray became Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year.

"I was at BTME in 2004 and the Sunningdale job had just come up," says Murray. "When these big jobs come up, we like to talk about them. Coombe Hill had been brilliant, absolutely fantastic. The course had come on loads, we'd done loads of projects and had great support from members, all the things you are lucky to have as a young course manager. It was brilliant but I thought, well I'll just go for the Sunningdale job, and I applied on the last day and

“ The one thing I love about being here is it is really traditional greenkeeping

sent my application while I was at Harrogate.”

During 10 years at Sunningdale, Murray sought to improve the reputation of the New course so it would sit alongside the Old in reputation and standing. Working with the architect Martin Hawtree he undertook woodland and heathland management and redesigned the 18th on the New and 3rd and 10th on the Old. His third child, Charlie, was born in the house at Sunningdale 18 years to the day

before Murray hosted BIGGA at Saunton. And yet, childhood holidays on the coast had left a lasting impression that meant he was keen to pursue a quieter pace of life.

"After 10 years I wanted a change and the ocean was calling a little bit," says Murray. "Sunningdale was great because it opened a lot of doors and you meet lots of people, but I decided I wanted to have more freedom in my working life, so I moved to Poole in Dorset and did seven years of advisory work."

Advisory – or consultancy – work in the greenkeeping business can be a touchy subject, but Murray says he saw his role as supporting, rather than undermining, the existing greenkeeping team at any venue he worked alongside.

He explains: "I saw it completely as a support mechanism and I would try and make the person feel I wasn't there to undermine them. My goal was to help them based upon the experience I'd had as a course manager.

"Everyone is different and I never had a prescriptive, 'This is how you should run a golf course, follow my plan'. Saunton is a different links course to Royal North Devon across the estuary and even though we're only a couple of miles away, we're completely different. I'd just try to find common ground with the greenkeepers and find solutions that work for each person and their venue."

A surfing holiday to North Devon's beaches in 2020 led to Murray visiting Saunton, where he knew previous course manager Ray Day had retired after 40 years. As the advisory business had expanded, Murray had supported clubs in the recruitment of staff and he thought a visit with general



Above: Murray on the 1st tee of the West Course

The history of Saunton

Saunton Golf Club was formed in May 1897, originally as a nine-hole course but extended to 18 by 1908. By the early 1920s, following a redesign by Herbert Fowler, the course was gaining a reputation as one of the finest links in England. The second course was added in 1935, again designed by Fowler.

During the Second World War, the area was occupied by the military and used as a training ground ahead of the D-Day landings at Utah and Omaha beach. Evidence of this still exists in the landscape today, with officer's barracks located where today's practice putting green is and evidence of tank tracks through the 8th fairway of the West course. Metal detectors have found dog tags and identity bracelets, while further down the Braunton Burrows (as the dunes system that stretches south to the mouth of the River Taw is named) there remain concrete structures that were used as mock landing craft by soldiers to practice storming the beaches of Normandy.

Such a storied history lends itself to marketing, particularly for the American audience who may visit Saunton in their ancestor's footsteps, and the ambition is that this will work hand in hand with developments out on the course.

manager Jon Sutherland may bring some business his way.

"We had a good walk round and I really liked Jon," says Murray. "I thought about it a little while and then suggested to him, what if I do it?"

When applying for the Sunningdale role, over a period of three months Murray was put through numeracy and personality tests, talks with the agronomists and multiple presentations in front of management committees. When it came to landing the Saunton job, the process was a little quicker.

"I was so lucky," Murray says. "The one thing for me here is that after all those years of looking at it, I thought this place is just a gem. In the same way that when I went to Sunningdale, the New was not regarded anywhere near the Old, but now they're both level, I see the East and West at Saunton as the same. I just think they've got huge potential and that's why I'm here."

Saunton Golf Club is entering into a higher tier stewardship agreement with Natural England that will enable the team to remove areas of invasive scrub. This will reveal a hectare's worth of sand, restoring to life dunes that were previously suffocated by vegetation and adding visual impact to the golf courses.

"The one thing I love about being here is it is really traditional greenkeeping," says Murray. "The heavier the soil, the more it grows and the more you've got to try and cut it, but also the less chance you can actually get out and cut because of the environment and things like rain. It's really difficult on heavy sites, but when you go to a links you can

“ We try not to do anything unnatural to this area. That’s such a pure form of greenkeeping

have a deluge and the greens don’t look anywhere near flooding, because you’re on 20 metres of sand.

“Everyone is trying to create a natural environment, but the more unnatural the land the golf course is built upon and the more you have to select grass species, the more you’re trying to create an artificial environment. We are on a completely natural environment and we try not to do anything that’s unnatural to this area. I just think that’s such a pure form of greenkeeping. I love it.”

However, the natural links setting does present other challenges, such as the prevalence of dollar spot, which is in evidence on various greens approaches. Surrounded by high dunes and hills, cloud can settle across the links and act like a warm, moist greenhouse that incubates dollar spot. Golfers then play the course and transport it to other areas on their shoes, so it quickly becomes rampant.

“We don’t like to spray fungicides,” says Murray. “You’re trying to manage golfer expectations, but we know that if you went out there now, the areas where we have the most dollar spot are the areas that hold the most water. We’ve done extensive work to greens and fairways, but the aprons are high in organic matter and we need to manage those. Once we get to a stage where we’ve reduced that to nothing, we’ll phase down fungicide use. We try and do that with everything to be as sustainable as we can.” **GI**

Making sustainability a priority

With life in this part of the country so connected to the outdoors, it’s no surprise that sustainability is high on the agenda. Rather than importing sand at £78 a tonne plus transport costs, native aggregates are now used for topdressing and bunkers. Rather than disposing of old revetting from bunkers, these are now screened and reused for things such as divoting. This has contributed to Saunton being recognised as a finalist in the Golf Environment Awards in 2020 and winning both the Green Apple Environment Awards, which the team was invited to accept at the Houses of Parliament, and the Going Green Award at the Community Sport and Recreation Awards.

“For the club, it’s an amazing thing, and for the community to recognise that we’re doing the right thing is amazing,” said Murray. “But as long as I know I’m doing the right job I’m not really worried about awards.”

It’s a pretty laid-back perspective but with a career spent operating at an extraordinarily high level, you get the sense that with Murray Long, and not unlike his beloved North Devon coastline, there’s plenty more going on below the surface than you may spot at first glance. This expertise developed Coombe Hill and even improved Sunningdale’s famous courses - and now it’s reshaping what’s possible at Saunton.



The putting green in front of Saunton’s clubhouse



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Winner Lowe is flying high at Saunton

Woodhall Spa's Tom Lowe certainly knew his way around the Devon course

Despite now living and working in Lincolnshire, Tom Lowe was on familiar fairways throughout the BIGGA National Championship, having originally hailed from the region and enjoyed many rounds at Saunton.

It is course knowledge that he used to his benefit as the coffee-shop-owner-turned-greenkeeper got the best of the rest of the field to become BIGGA National Champion 2023.

"I'm absolutely ecstatic, I don't really know what to say," says Lowe. "If I'm honest, I felt the tension a little bit coming down the stretch. Ryan and I had a little battle on the back nine, bit of nip and tuck, but fortunately I got the win. I don't think I've got any words; I'm blown away."

Just two years ago, Lowe wouldn't have been eligible to take part in the

event as he wasn't even greenkeeping – he owned a coffee shop. A relocation to Lincolnshire saw him looking for a new career direction, and an apprentice greenkeeper role at Woodhall Spa caught his eye.

"I absolutely love it," says Lowe. "I love working outside and love working as part of a team, it's a dream."

Before moving, Lowe lived close to Saunton and so has played the course many times over the past 20 years. That undoubtedly will have helped give the scratch golfer the edge over some stern competition.

He said: "Over the years I've seen most parts of the course, including parts you definitely don't want to go in, and I've got a few bramble scrapes today to prove that."

"I was blown away by the condition today. The greens are fantastic, the

layout hasn't changed much but a few key changes have definitely improved it as well."

This was Lowe's first appearance at a BIGGA National Championship, and he said it's something he's been looking forward to since becoming a greenkeeper.

"It's fantastic," he said. "I've really wanted to come to the National for the last couple of years, but work commitments meant I wasn't able. There's camaraderie and everyone's a bit competitive of course, but you meet some interesting people, and you can discuss what you do at your course and why they do things differently. I'm still learning so I'm trying to broaden my horizons, learn from everyone and soak it all in. When you come to a piece of land like this, you can see what's possible." **GI**



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“ I don't think I've got any words; I'm blown away

BIGGA National Championship results

Overall

BIGGA National Championship Challenge Trophy

- 1st Tom Lowe, Woodhall Spa
- 2nd Ryan Bone, The Wisley
- 3rd Joshua Caffyn, Barton-on-Sea
- 4th Robert Boxall, Liphook
- 5th Tom Stanley, Wath

BIGGA National Championship Challenge Cup

- 1st Ryan Bone, The Wisley, 75pts
- 2nd Richard Ponsford, Clevedon, 70pts

BIGGA National Championship Regional Cup

Ryan Bone, The Wisley; Anthony Duffield, Ham Manor; James Lynch, West Sussex, Ali Gessous, Roehampton

Affiliate

Derek Cunliffe, Origin Amenity Solutions

Round One

- Division 1 (<5 handicap) Ryan Bone, The Wisley, 38pts
- Division 2 (6-12 handicap) Eddy Oliver, Liphook, 32pts
- Division 3 (13< handicap) Richard Ponsford, Clevedon, 34 pts
- Nearest the pin prizes Tony Thacker, Oly Browning (x2), Danny Stock, John Simmonds

Round Two

- Division 1 (<5 handicap) AJ Loveday, Romford, 32pts
- Division 2 (6-12 handicap) Jonathan Evans, Ramsdale Park Golf Centre, 35pts
- Division 3 (13< handicap) David Warner, Woking, 40pts
- Nearest the pin prizes Mark Jarrett, Danny Carter, Dan Branson



Clockwise from top left: 1.Richard Ponsford putting out on the East Course's 18th hole while Mark Blacknell and Cambell Murdoch watch on 2.Stuart Diamond tees off on the East Course's 1st hole under the watchful eyes of Samuel Waite and Simon Ashford 3.The Saunton greenkeeping team also hosted the Brabazon Trophy in 2022 4.Shaking hands after the opening round

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Careers

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- My New Job: Derrick Johnstone on taking the reins at Foxhills
- All the latest greenkeeper role vacancies



Beck joins ICL as new technical area sales manager for Scotland

ICL has appointed former greenkeeper Ryan Beck as its new technical area sales manager in Scotland.

Beck boasts a wealth of experience in the turf industry, having started out as a greenkeeper at Broomieknowe, in Bonnyrigg.

He then moved to The Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers at Muirfield and later became head

greenkeeper at Melville, just outside Edinburgh.

Having since transitioned to the trade side of the industry with Fleet Line Markers and then Aitkens, Beck is now ready to embrace a fresh challenge with ICL.

"I am excited to be joining such a high-profile company and market leader in ICL," he said.

"I look forward to meeting customers and relish the opportunities that this role offers."

In his new role, Beck will doubtless bump into some old colleagues as he is responsible for overseeing sales activities, building and maintaining relationships with clients, and providing expert guidance on ICL's range of innovative turf solutions. **GI**



With a team of 23, my role has changed hugely

– Derrick Johnstone, Foxhills golf course and estate manager

Latest job vacancies

Head Greenkeeper

Ardfin



Ardfin, on the Isle of Jura, are looking for an outstanding individual to work as a Head Greenkeeper.

Key duties include motivating, directing and training greenstaff to ensure the highest possible standards are achieved daily. Candidates should be qualified up to SVQ Level 3 or above, hold the PA1, PA2 and PA6 spraying qualifications, have good I.T skills plus a full UK driving licence.

The Package includes a tied house, salary of £40K based on an average 40-hour week, annual work-related bonus, BIGGA membership and golfing privileges (Other greenkeeping roles also available with shared rental accommodation provided).

Please email CV and covering letter to greens@ardfin.com
Closing date 30th November 2023

Deputy Head Greenkeeper

Foyle Golf Centre



Foyle Golf Centre has an excellent opportunity for an experienced greenkeeper to join our team as Deputy Head Greenkeeper.

Duties include team leadership, mowing, spraying using knapsack, quad and tractor boom sprayer, and aeration and sanding using tractor mounted implements.

Candidates should have a minimum 4 years greenkeeping experience, Level 3 Certificate in Sports Turf Management, Spraying Certificates PA1, PA2 and PA6 plus a good knowledge of safe working practices. They must be competent in machinery maintenance and set up, and hold both a Chainsaw certificate and full driving licence. Salary: £25,000 pa

To apply please email your CV and cover letter to Robert Gallagher: mail@foylegolfcentre.co.uk

Landscape & Industrial Sales Manager

ICL



We are seeking a high-calibre Landscape & Industrial Sales Manager, covering the UK & Ireland.

We offer a competitive salary plus bonus, company car, 26 days annual leave, contributory pension scheme and subsidised private medical and dental insurance.

The ideal candidate should possess exemplary technical and sales skills with a proven background within the Landscape & Industrial sector. You will be highly motivated and relish the opportunity to grow new business and deliver first-class customer support, whilst also working as part of a team. Flexibility in work schedule and occasional travel away from home will be necessary.

Please email a résumé and cover letter to Jean Van Vuuren: jean.vanvuuren@icl-group.com
Closing date: 24th November 2023.

Assistant Greenkeeper

Royal Porthcawl Golf Club



Royal Porthcawl Golf Club is looking to recruit an experienced, ambitious and driven Assistant Greenkeeper.

Reporting to the Course Manager, you will be part of the team responsible for delivering a golf course to the highest standards. The ideal candidate will have a minimum of 3 years' greenkeeping experience, NVQ level 2 or equivalent, Spraying certificates PA1, PA2 & PA6. They should be enthusiastic with the ability to work as part of a successful team, have good communication skills and an understanding of the game of golf. Benefits include excellent rates of remuneration, the opportunity to gain further qualifications and training, Major Tournament experience, BIGGA membership and uniform.

Applicants should send a full C.V. and covering letter by e-mail to: ian.kinley@royalporthcawl.com
Closing date: 17th November 2023

Head Greenkeeper

The Golf & Country Club
Schönenberg, Switzerland



The Golf & Country Club Schönenberg, located 20 km from the centre of Zürich, is seeking a Head Greenkeeper.

The ideal candidate will have completed training as a Head Greenkeeper with a minimum of 5 years' practical experience, and hold a valid driver's license.

Responsibilities include leading an experienced and motivated Greenkeeping team, material management including procurement and equipment selection, maintenance of the machinery fleet and submission of investment plans.

This is a full-time position with benefits including a competitive salary, opportunities for further education and accommodation.

To apply please send your CV and cover letter to: Yves Grand (Club Manager) Golf & Country Club Schönenberg, Müsli 6, 8824 Schönenberg or email: y.grand@gccs.ch

Qualified Greenkeepers

Southport & Ainsdale Golf Club



Southport & Ainsdale Golf Club is looking to add TWO experienced and ambitious Qualified Greenkeepers to the team. Southport & Ainsdale has hosted many competitions, including the Ryder Cup. This year we have co-hosted the R&A Amateur Championships and England Golfs County Finals.

The position is based on a 40-hour week with the requirement to work weekends on a rota basis and which overtime is paid. Preferred Requirements are a minimum NVQ level 2 and Pa1.2 and 6a spraying certificates.

Benefits include excellent rates of pay, Major Tournament experience, uniform, access to training, Bigga Membership and 24-day Holiday Entitlement plus Bank Holidays.

Please send CV and letter to coursemanager@sandagolf.co.uk
Closing date 11th November 2023

From trainee vacancies to senior management roles, new greenkeeping job opportunities are added daily to BIGGA's online recruitment pages. Our website receives 1.6m page views per year and 55% of those are to our careers pages. Visit bigga.org.uk/careers to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position. Call 01347 833 800 or email info@bigga.co.uk

Head Greenkeeper

Nippenburg Golf Course



The Nippenburg Golf Course in Germany is looking to employ a Head Greenkeeper

We offer assistance in finding a place to live, daily catering facilities on site plus the possibility of continuous training. Candidates should have Certified head greenskeeper or other equivalent qualification, sound knowledge of sprinkler management systems plus cost awareness and goal orientation. Tasks include preparation of maintenance plans including fertilization schedules, responsibility for the machinery, recognition and treatment of turf diseases. Your own car is required, as there are no public transport connections.

Please send CV and cover letter with salary requirements to: Frau Else Weishaupt at bewerbung@golfnippenburg.de

Greenkeeper Mechanic

Nippenburg Golf Course



The Nippenburg Golf Course in Germany is looking to employ a Greenkeeper Mechanic

This is a full time role with competitive salary, with daily catering facilities on site and the possibility of ongoing further training. Candidates should have completed training in greenkeeping, landscaping, horticulture, mechanics or partial qualification as a groundsman. They should have knowledge in handling machines, such as mowing and course maintenance vehicles, and also have a willingness to work weekends and holidays. Tasks include equipment maintenance, seeding the lawn, laying sod, fertilizing, watering, scarifying, aerifying and sanding plus assistance with construction and repair work on the golf course. Your own car is required.

To apply email: bewerbung@golfnippenburg.de

Assistant Greenkeeper

Royal County Down Golf Club



The Royal County Down Golf Club is seeking to employ a full-time Assistant Greenkeeper.

Candidates should have previous experience as a greenkeeper (preferred), with a minimum NVQ Level 2 or equivalent in Sports Turf Maintenance, the ability to carry out multiple tasks, a flexible approach to working hours regarding weekend rotas and start times depending on the time of the year and be competent with machinery. The successful candidate in this dynamic role should be an excellent communicator, enjoy working as part of a team, be a multitasker and have a positive "can do" and practical attitude. Please refer to www.royalcountyclubdown.org for full details

Please send your CV to recruitment@royalcountyclubdown.org
Closing Date for application is Friday 19th November 2023

Irrigation Technician

Royal County Down Golf Club



The Royal County Down Golf Club is seeking to employ an Irrigation Technician.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate previous experience as a greenkeeper (preferred) with a minimum NVQ Level 2 or equivalent in Sports Turf Maintenance, the ability to carry out multiple tasks required as part of the irrigation technicians' skill set, be competent with machinery, perform preventative maintenance and repairs on all irrigation equipment, and order and maintain inventory of parts. The successful candidate in this dynamic role should be an excellent communicator, have good organisation and time management skills, show great attention to detail, be a multitasker, have a positive "can do" and practical attitude, and be IT literate.

Please send your CV to recruitment@royalcountyclubdown.org

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Derrick Johnstone

Derrick Johnstone has seen and done a lot in his three decades in the industry.

Having spent 13 years at Wentworth managing courses for prestigious events, he was more recently at East Berkshire Golf Club.

Having now taken up a role at Foxhills, he is enjoying a new lease of life at one of Surrey's premier clubs.

Tell us about your new role

I am the golf course and estate manager at Foxhills. That means I'm in charge of both 18-hole championship courses, the nine-hole par-3 Manor course, driving range, short game area, and the whole 440-acre estate and gardens. With a team of 23, my role has changed hugely in the last four months.

What do you hope to achieve in the role?

I am hoping to create an excellent working environment,

courses of the highest standards and happy members and visitors who can't wait to come back for more. I'm also looking to make more friends, colleagues and contacts after joining a new club.

“ I work at wonderful venue and it's a really special place

How does it fit into your career path?

Over the last few years, I have dreamed about working at a larger venue like Foxhills. I have been looking for a bigger challenge by taking on more responsibility and managing more people.

What skills have you found vital to your job?

There are three key things that are important in this job: organisation, robustness and a good work ethic.



The Longcross course at Foxhills

The golf course and estate manager at Foxhills, Surrey, has previously worked at Wentworth and is embracing his latest challenge

Derrick on applying for a new job

Describe the recruitment process for your role

I had a video call with the director of golf and then did a presentation for the general manager, director of golf and the incoming director of golf. I also had an interview with the owner and finance director. On top of that, Foxhills did a secret shopper visit to East Berkshire – an important reminder to keep your own course in good shape.

What were your new employers looking for?

That's a tricky question, but I believe being honest, organised, confident, knowledgeable and personable were high on the list.

What do you think set you apart from other candidates?

I've always endeavoured to maintain a good reputation and be someone who makes a positive impression. In my five previous jobs, I've always left on good terms and can count on glowing references from my former employers and indeed the members.

What advice would you give to fellow members applying for a new job?

Do your research on the club, play the course and walk it as many times as you can before you go for the interview.

You need to make sure you want to work there before you get the job. Some people say to apply for any job to get interview experience, but I don't believe in this – that just wastes people's time. If you really want a job, you will push yourself to be the best you can be to get the position.

Be confident, but not over confident.

What is the best thing about your new job?

I work at a wonderful venue and it's a really special place. I enjoy getting out on the course to play and have been trying my best to keep in shape by using the other first-class fitness facilities that Foxhills has to offer.

What do you wish you'd known at the start of your career?

I wish I had travelled abroad to work when I was younger, to Europe or America – or even further afield, like Asia.

What has been your best career break?

I think every time you get a new job is your biggest break at that time in your career, so becoming golf course and estate manager at Foxhills is my biggest to date.

What would you like to be doing in 10 years' time?

Working at Foxhills, playing golf and spending time with my friends and family. However, the dream is to retire and live in Portugal. **GI**

“Over the last few years, I have dreamed about working at a larger venue like Foxhills





Hazeltine's Tritabaugh primed for Continue to Learn 2024

Hazeltine National's course superintendent Chris Tritabaugh is among the stellar line-up of speakers at Continue to Learn 2024

Chris Tritabaugh will be presenting on day one of the conference in Harrogate next January as he shares the 10 rules he uses to lead his team and keep a good balance between work and life.

In his 16 years as a golf course superintendent, Chris has worked hard to develop and fine-tune a simplistic method of greenkeeping, predominantly aimed at promoting and managing bentgrass playing surfaces.

These simple and economical methods were on display to the world when Hazeltine hosted the 2016 Ryder Cup.

Tritabaugh's own approach towards

greenkeeping ties in perfectly with the ethos of Continue to Learn.

"Be curious and ambitious," he says when asked what advice he would give to others in the industry. "One should always want to know why something is the way it is.

"A person should always be striving for something. If you're a student, strive for an internship. An intern, aim to be a great assistant, then as an assistant aim to become a superintendent.

"That's a basic outline, and not everyone may want to become a superintendent, but at the same time, one should never stop striving for something beyond their current

situation."

Tritabaugh also has a passion for leadership and operates a workplace culture that is focused on providing multi-generational employees with an enjoyable, stimulating and inspirational experience.

As well as being the stage for the 41st Ryder Cup, Hazeltine has hosted the KPMG Women's PGA Championship during Tritabaugh's tenure.

In the coming years, it will host the 2024 US Amateur Championship and in 2029 will become the first American club to stage a second Ryder Cup. **GI**

Learning outcomes:

- Be more present, at work and at home
- Turn criticism into motivation
- Leadership methods to get the most from the entire team
- Improve your mental and physical health and your golf course



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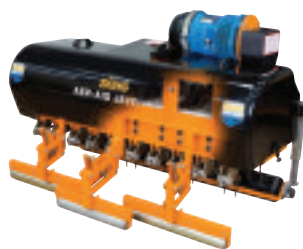
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The importance of auditing irrigation systems to ensure effective operation



Water is a precious commodity, and it is our responsibility as designers and turf managers to ensure it is used wisely and sustainably, says Adrian Mortram, managing director at Adrian Mortram Associates.

Our changing climate is putting pressure on how we use water in turf management and as a society in general. As turf managers, we understand the importance of water and how precious it is for the management of our playing surfaces, and we are constantly striving to ensure it is used conservatively.

Careful and considerate use of water on our golf courses will ensure we

promote the finer native grasses and encourage a healthy sward. Water management is, however, only a small part of ensuring our golf courses are managed sustainably and holistically.

Auditing is a way of ensuring that an irrigation system is operating sustainably and in an efficient and effective manner. Gone are the days of ubiquitously applying water to areas not requiring irrigation. Our designs are much more target-specific, focusing on smaller areas and allowing for greater control of where and how much water is applied.

Regular auditing of an irrigation system, ideally monthly, is essential to ensure it is operating efficiently and effectively. Auditing provides a benchmark to be able to monitor

changes in an irrigation system and plan for servicing and upgrading.

Irrigation systems are unfortunately out of sight and therefore often out of mind. Our temperate climate, whereby irrigation is not essential every day, can lead to less resource being allocated to irrigation systems.

We are seeing an increase in dedicated irrigation technicians whose role is to ensure irrigation systems are audited, serviced and maintained. It is certainly advisable to have such expertise in-house to protect your primary asset.


Adrian will be speaking at Continue to Learn in 2024. [GI](#)



Scan Me to find out more

Biocontrols for an integrated future

Syngenta R&D has highlighted how biocontrols can add an effective integrated approach alongside exciting new chemistry options, to get the best overall results



Nature holds many of the keys to inspire turf management products of the future, either synthesised by chemistry or as direct biocontrols

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Recent announcements of regulatory approval for new chemistry for turf management, including Ascernity fungicide for golf tees and greens, Acelepryn for leatherjacket and chafer control in sports turf and Overtake herbicide in amenity turf, for example, have provided valuable additions to the greenkeepers' toolbox.

At the same time, there has been a real focus and investment in

the research and development of biological products and particularly their role in integrated strategies to get more consistent and reliable

Read this for:

- What are biocontrols?
- ITM strategies
- Leatherjacket results

results - often with the opportunity to use fewer conventional chemical inputs.

Together, the use of biocontrols in conjunction with conventional chemical products can offer more effective integrated strategies.

Biocontrols for turf management can be broadly defined as products based on naturally occurring materials that are used for biotic stress management in controlling fungal and bacterial

diseases, insect pests, nematodes and weeds.

Modes of action

Biocontrol agents use various modes of action to control plant diseases and pests. There are biocontrol agents that work by directly killing pests, similar to conventional chemical pesticides. These biocontrol agents are often referred to as microbial pesticides or biopesticides. They contain living microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi or viruses that can infect and kill pests. However, unlike conventional pesticides, they are often more specific in their target and have a lower impact on non-target organisms and the environment.

Some biocontrol agents can compete with plant pathogens or pests for resources such as nutrients, space and water, reducing their ability to grow and reproduce.

Other biocontrols, such as parasitic wasps or entomopathogenic nematodes, can parasitize and kill plant pests. There are also biocontrols that do not have a direct impact on the fungal pathogen, but they often have a physiological effect on the plant that can enable or elicit a natural response that allows the plant to be more resilient to the disease attack and mitigate effects.

Research has shown biocontrols offer real value to improve plant health and enhance integrated strategies, especially in the areas of improving utilisation of resources, including water and nutrients inputs, as well as strengthening disease and pest-control programmes.

That makes them extremely valuable as a boost where new or existing chemistry has restrictions imposed on the number of applications available or limited areas where they can be used. They are also a useful tool in resistance management strategies for the chemistry that is available.

Targeted effects

Importantly, many of the biocontrols are highly host-specific and can be targeted at particular issues, without any wider impacts.

The challenges identified by R&D programmes and practical use in golf course situations are the lower levels of efficacy generally achieved, compared to what would normally be expected with conventional chemistry.



Beneficial nematodes have proven to enhance the reliability and overall results of leatherjacket control strategies

Results may be sufficient in some instances, but typically biologicals have been seen to give less consistent performance in practice.

Biologicals can often be very effective in the lab when applied direct to the target pest – providing 100% control. But since biologicals tend to be adversely impacted by a wide range of environmental factors during application and utilisation by plant, the results in practice can be far less consistent. Many of those issues have historically been associated with the relatively short shelf life of many biological products, compatibility of mixing products and storage and application.

Biocontrols offer real value to improve plant health

Leatherjacket results

Extensive Syngenta research with NemaTrident beneficial nematodes, for example, demonstrated across a series of trials that the biocontrol nematodes achieved an average 45% reduction in leatherjacket larvae, from an average 35 larvae per m² in untreated areas. Within the spread, the control ranged from 75% in one trial, to 13% reduction in another.

By comparison, treatment in the same trials using Acelepryn insecticide alone gave consistently higher levels of control, compared to the nematodes.

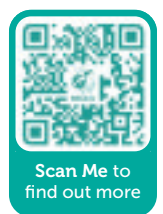
When the two products were used together in an integrated approach, however, a further step change in efficacy resulted in an average of 90% control of leatherjacket larvae.

The trials have helped to identify techniques to optimise the performance of biologicals in an integrated approach. Documented research with Acelepryn in the US has indicated that when the insecticide paralyzes soil pest grubs, they are more susceptible to infestation by nematodes – which is especially important to help target larger larvae.

Furthermore, the work reported the optimum timing for Acelepryn treatment at the end of October to coincide with insect activity, with NemaTrident applied at a rate of 2.5 billion nematodes per hectare within seven days of the insecticide – while soil temperatures were still sufficiently warm and moist for nematode activity.

Syngenta's experience with an R&D approach to effective integrated control strategies, utilising biocontrols and conventional chemistry together, has highlighted the potential for emerging innovations that will influence turf health and resilience in the future. **GI**

Dr Eric Chen will present 'A roadmap to the future of biocontrols' at the BIGGA Turf Managers Conference during BTME in January



Author: Dr Eric Chen, Syngenta technical manager & biocontrols specialist, EAME

Apprentice CORNER

Repair methods used on turf surfaces



Tools required for turf lifting. Edging iron, turf box and blade, board and lifting iron. Image courtesy of www.BMSGolf.com

Hand lifting

The hand lifting of turf may be required for many reasons e.g. to remove bumps and hollows, to remove turf contaminated by oil spillage from machines or simply to allow access to a burst irrigation pipe etc. It can be done by hand, as described, or by machine (turf cutter).

To ensure a quality finish, the following method is best employed:

1. Using a board to act as a pattern, cut the affected area into sections each of 30cm wide.
2. Next, turn the board 90 degrees and turn it over twice and cut along the outside edge. This will produce turves 30cm by 60cm. Having turves that are all of an equal size will make for an easier and neater repair.
3. Lift the sectioned turf using a turf iron. Try to lift all the turves to the same thickness and ensure they remain in one piece on lifting. If turf is contaminated or damaged then dispose of and obtain new turf from a nursery.
4. To help get a good finish, the turves can be boxed off. This means putting them into a special tray and then sliding a blade over the bottom of the turves to remove excess soil. This process ensures all the turves are the same thickness making them easy to re-lay.
5. Before you replace the turf, ensure the soil in the affected area is forked over, firmed, raked to a fine tilth and levelled. This will ensure the turf takes well when replaced.
6. Place the existing or new turf back into the affected area and check the turf is flush and level with the surrounding area. This can be done by laying the board across the repaired area. Any hollows will show along the edge of the board and the board will rock on any high spots. Note: If the area is on a slope, then you should follow the existing ground contours. It is important that the turf is flush to avoid mowing problems.
7. Clean the surrounding turf and ensure no stones are left on the surface which might lead to mower damage.

Plugging/patching

For small areas in need of repair or the removal of patches of weed grass etc., a method known as plugging or patching is employed. Various implements are available to do this, ranging from those with four sides, each of which are hammered into the soil, to implements that cut hexagonal shapes from the turf. These implements are pushed into the soil to collect a core that is withdrawn with the implement. This then leaves a clean-cut hole, which is replaced by a fresh core cut from elsewhere such as a turf nursery. Some greenkeepers use a hole changer for this task. This is fine for small local spots of damage but for larger areas, a plugger is much more efficient.



Figure 1 – Shows two different sized turf doctors. Note: The depth of core. This deep core means repairs are firm enough for players to walk/run over without the repairs coming loose. The deep roots mean the area soon establishes.



Figure 2 – Shows a worn area that has been repaired using a turf doctor; the repaired areas have been highlighted to make them more visible.



Figure 3 – Shows a hexagon turf doctor, this cuts the damaged turf areas and collects them in a stack. The damaged turf is disposed of and a similar number of new turves are cut from elsewhere (turf nursery) and these are slotted back into holes to replace the damaged turf. Image courtesy of Better Methods Europe Ltd www.BMSgolf.com



Seed slotter and seed spiker

These tools are used to create a suitable surface onto which seed can be placed.

Overseeding

Sometimes, it is not possible to use turf as a method of repair. For example, a golf green that is worn over the entire surface would be impossible to returf as it would interfere with play for too long and cost a great deal of money. In such situations, a process known as overseeding is a much better approach. Overseeding involves spreading seed over a worn area; this seed then grows to help establish a good cover of grass. Unlike turf which can be used as a method of repair during the winter, overseeding can only be carried out when the turf is actively growing (i.e. from March to October) and is not very successful when used over the winter months. The methods used when overseeding depend on the size of the area to be treated and the amount of wear on the area. In some situations, the seed is thrown onto the surface of the turf and then worked with an application of top dressing. The other way is to use some kind of tool or machine to create a tilth or slits into which seed can be placed. Seed that is placed in contact with the soil in this way has a better chance of growing and will always give better results.



Seed slotter being used on a fine turf area

Note: The slots left in the surface where seed can be sprinkled over the affected area and then lightly covered with a top dressing. The seed can germinate in the slots safe from harm.



Murrayshall redefines the Scottish golf resort experience with Jacobsen

Carving your own identity in Scotland's famed golfing tapestry is no easy task, but at Murrayshall Country Estate, their new approach is getting noticed.

Gary Silcock's arrival as General Manager in September 2020 brought with it the idea for a new unique selling point: present a US PGA-championship-style course in Perthshire. Achieving this would entail harnessing the spectacular views of the Highlands and combining them with a golfing challenge not available anywhere else in Scotland.

To date, the progress has been

impressive. Murrayshall was placed 34th in National Club Golfer's Top 100 Golf Resorts in GB&I 2023 while Golf World reviewed: "If Gleneagles isn't in your budget, you would be well advised to look here."

Being mentioned alongside one of Scotland's leading golf resorts is a strong mark of progress, and Gary is familiar with what's required to elevate a club to that level. Gleneagles is listed among his former

prominent leadership roles, alongside La Manga Club and The Belfry, with his greenkeeping-conscious management style now paying dividends at Murrayshall.

The aim of bringing the US style to the 18-hole championship course has taken equal measures planning and execution. A seven-figure Jacobsen fleet deal with Murrayshall owners, Stellar Asset Management, saw machinery provided to all three clubs



Jacobsen at work at Murrayshall

“We cut the greens to make them pop when you’re looking over the course. Jacobsen and the Eclipse have a reputation for the best cut on the greens, so that was a major part of it.”



Jacobsen AR530 mower

in the Stellar portfolio and for Gary, giving the greenkeeping team the tools they wanted now will guarantee results in the future.

“Simply put, we want the quality of our product to continue flourishing, and that is why we went with Jacobsen,” Gary explains. “The machinery plays a part in us moving up the rankings, and we’ve only achieved that because of the ability of the greenkeeping staff and the equipment we’ve invested in for them.”

“We focused on Jacobsen, and that was the winning result because the machines fit the product, the quality of cut and the backup service for us with Fairways and the clubs down south with TH White. The service was an essential part of the decision-making.”

“Darrin Urquhart, our course manager, knows what we’re trying to create with the rough lengths and surrounds, and the mowers are crucial in that journey.”

“We cut the greens in a way to make them pop and stand out when you’re looking over the course. Jacobsen and the Eclipse have a reputation for

the best cut on the greens, so that was a major part of it.

“In terms of why we invested in machinery now, it’s at the forefront because developing and changing a course takes a lot of planning and work. You have to put that in first to see the rewards later.”

“The plan is for us to be a top 25 golf resort in the UK, so we’re moving in that direction with the investment. We’ll start to see that in the coming years with the new spa, leisure club and lodges. When all of that is ready, the golf course will be where we want it to be.”

The Murrayshall Estate is home to both the Murrayshall and Lynedoch golf courses. Architect Hamilton J Stutt sympathetically used the natural contours to shape the 18-hole Murrayshall championship course as it meanders through 365 acres of tree-lined fairways, undulating parkland and several natural burns, which are used to protect the large greens.

With the plan taking shape, attention to detail is now the difference maker. All of the bunkers have been put back to white sand, there are no collars, so

you play straight from rough to green, and the routing of the course has been tailored with the topography to take advantage of the beautiful views while taking players gently uphill.

In June 2023, those players were from the Faldo Elite Series, which helped launch careers including Rory McIlroy, Danny Willett and former Ladies Scottish Open Champion Carly Booth. As the only Scottish course chosen to host the event, it is another recognition of the elevated quality.

What comes next following the submission of the £30m masterplan, including a hotel extension, new spa facilities, lodges and a solar project, will be a significant step forward.

Every aspect of the Murrayshall experience will reflect the outstanding natural beauty that surrounds it and, in doing so, will attract guests, golfers and tournaments the world over to a truly unique Scottish golf resort. **GI**



Managing Microdochium Patch with Bio-Control Fungicides: A Sustainable Approach.

Golf course maintenance presents a unique set of challenges, and one of the most common headaches for greenkeepers is the occurrence of Microdochium patch. This unsightly turfgrass disease can wreak havoc on golf course aesthetics and playability, especially during cool and wet weather. Traditionally, greenkeepers have turned to chemical fungicides to combat this issue, but there's a more sustainable and environmentally friendly approach that's gaining traction: bio-control fungicides.

Understanding Microdochium Patch

Microdochium patch is characterised by the appearance of orange/brown damp patches that can, in certain conditions, also develop white/pinkish mycelium on the turfgrass surface, often forming circular patches. It thrives in cool, damp conditions and can damage the grass, making it less suitable for golfers. The need for effective management is clear, but the environmental impact of traditional chemical fungicides has raised concerns in recent years.

Challenges with Traditional Fungicides

Firstly, traditional fungicides are not the devil and should continue to play a role in an effective integrated pest management (IPM) for disease management. However, as environmental legislation not only

reduces our choice in fungicides, it also lowers the efficacy of many new fungicides. Therefore, we must look to adopt all technologies in our fight against this devastating turf disease.

While chemical fungicides have been the go-to solution for Microdochium patch management, they come with their share of problems. These chemicals can have adverse effects on the environment, including non-target organisms, water quality and the potential for resistance development in the pathogen.

Overall, this calls for a more holistic and sustainable approach to disease management that ensures the long-term health of the golf course ecosystem by utilising all the effective tools at our disposal.

Bio-Control Fungicides

Bio-control fungicides, such as Harmonix Turf Defense, the first and only registered bio-control fungicide for turfgrass, offer a promising alternative. Unlike traditional chemicals, bio-control agents are living organisms, such as beneficial microorganisms (bacteria), that help suppress turfgrass diseases. These agents work in harmony with the natural environment, making them a sustainable choice for greenkeepers.

Harmonix Turf Defense for Microdochium Patch

Several bio-control agents have shown promise in managing

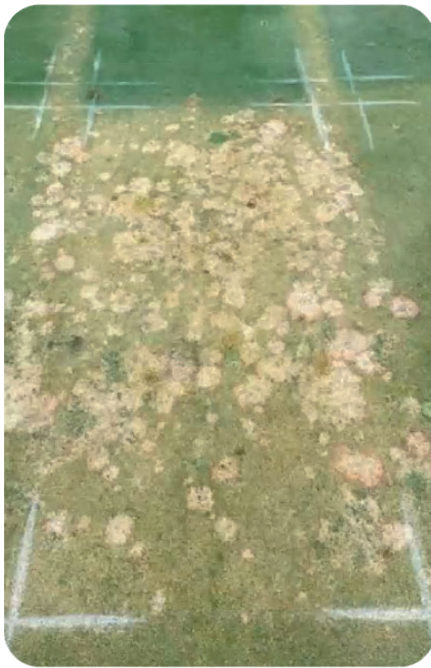
Microdochium patch. So far, only one has been registered as an effective solution in the UK. Harmonix Turf Defense utilises a patented strain of *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* (QST 713), which produce antifungal compounds that inhibit the growth of the disease-causing fungus. These compounds are produced during production and are in the bottle, so do not rely on specific application instructions, it is applied in the same way as other plant protection products. Bio-control agents offer a more environmentally friendly way to keep Microdochium patch at bay.

Application and Integration

To effectively utilise bio-control fungicides, greenkeepers should consider factors like timing, dosage and compatibility with other turf management practices.

An IPM approach is crucial, combining cultural practices, such as moisture control, drainage and balanced nutrition, alongside bio-control agents. By promoting overall turf health and performance, you create conditions less conducive to Microdochium patch.

Overall, greenkeepers should use bio-controls, not as a direct replacement for traditional fungicides but as a tool to reduce overall usage of them and to further enhance the effectiveness of their disease management IPM programme.



No HTD
Untreated Control

HARMONIX[®]
Turf Defense
14-day intervals only

HARMONIX[®]
Turf Defense
HTD alternated with Fungicide (IPM)

Trial update

Trials conducted at Throws Farm Turf Technology Centre (Origin Amenity Solutions) in 2022/23 showed that by incorporating Harmonix Turf Defense in between fungicide applications, traditional fungicides could be halved (from six to three) with no significant difference in disease incidence compared to plots using fungicides alone (six applications).

The pictures above were taken in March 2023 and show a high level of disease in the untreated control (one plot within a fully replicated trial). The middle picture shows the reduction in disease when using Harmonix Turf Defense alone every 14 days. The picture on the right shows the IPM using Harmonix Turf Defense alongside fungicides at intervals calculated using growth potential (3 x Harmonix Turf Defense – 3 x Fungicides).



If you would like to hear more about these trials, scan this QR code to watch our webinar.

Benefits of Bio-Control Fungicides

The advantages of bio-control fungicides are manifold. Not only do they reduce the environmental impact

associated with chemical fungicides, but they also promote the long-term sustainability of the golf course. With improved turf performance and reduced chemical inputs, greenkeepers can achieve a balance between playability and ecological responsibility.

Challenges and Considerations

It is important to acknowledge that bio-control fungicides may not provide a one-size-fits-all solution. Their effectiveness can vary depending on factors like environmental conditions and turfgrass species. Greenkeepers should be prepared to monitor their results and adapt their approach as needed based on their own specific disease management goals.

Conclusion

As greenkeepers strive to maintain golf courses that are both naturally beautiful and sustainable, bio-control

fungicides are emerging as a valuable tool in the fight against Microdochium patch. By reducing the environmental impact of disease management and promoting overall turf health, these eco-friendly agents are a win-win for golf courses and the environment alike. It's time to embrace a greener, more sustainable approach to turfgrass disease control. **GI**

Additional Resources



Visit our Harmonix Turf Defense landing page: <https://www.uk.envu.com/turf-management/harmonix-turf-defense>



Sign up to our Newsletter: <https://www.uk.envu.com/newsletter>

Winter is coming!

Nutritional inputs to suppress *Monographella nivalis*

As we head into the Autumn/Winter season, a major challenge turfgrass managers must deal with is... *Fusarium* patch, *Microdochium* patch, Fuzz, some of the commonly used names for a highly problematic turfgrass pathogen.

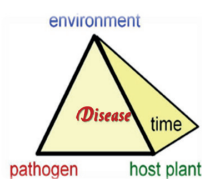
Until recently the causal organism was named *Microdochium nivale* but is now renamed *Monographella nivalis*! It is a very widespread and damaging pathogen infecting most cool season turfgrass species, primarily occurring under moist conditions below 18° C, with optimum occurrence between 0° and 6° C.

Controlling *Monographella nivalis* (*Microdochium nivale*) infection

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques are best employed to control infection. Fungicide use is the last step in the IPM process but with their ever-decreasing availability, non-pesticidal disease management techniques are increasingly being used.

Non-pesticidal disease management

A key component of non-pesticidal disease management is the use of the 'Disease Pyramid'. This is used to identify and influence the factors which combine to determine the level of disease incidence and severity. There are four interacting factors:



Pathogen - *Monographella nivalis* is ever present in your soils, thatch layer, and general environment, and there is little we can do about it.

Host Plant - The sward composition in your site has a significant impact on the level of disease incidence, so it makes sense, if possible, to consider species conversion, or to increase the percentage composition of the less susceptible species at your site.

Environmental conditions - Environmental factors have a significant impact on the rate of *Monographella* infection and turf



managers can carry out several cultural practices to significantly reduce disease pressure. All steps should be taken to remove dew, maintaining a dry surface during times conducive to disease will slow the infection process.

Regular light weight rolling has a combined effect of removing dew, maintaining playing quality and, as research has shown, can significantly reduce *Monographella* infection.

Time - The time factor of the Disease Pyramid involves slowing the infection rate of the pathogen and at the same time priming the turfgrass defences.

Plants, including turfgrasses, have evolved complex defense mechanisms to protect themselves

from pathogens. Elicitation of infection produces rapid short-term responses aimed at containing the infection, producing antimicrobial, and signaling compounds, such as salicylic acid, which can lead to Systemic Acquired Resistance ensuring the plant is more resistant to future infections. These defences can be primed prior to infection using defence activators.

This is where a program of targeted nutrition can play a significant role in disease control.

Plant Food Company, Inc. research

Research trials in Ireland carried out between October 2020 and March 2021 assessed nutritional programs of Plant Food Company products. Several programs were tested, and while all proved successful in suppressing *Monographella nivalis* and enhancing turfgrass quality, two programs stood out in their significant suppression of disease and their enhancement of turfgrass quality.

These comprise:

- (1) PolyPhosphite 30® with Green Blade™ a Copper based long-lasting turf colorant and
- (2) PolyPhosphite 30® combined with Green-T® Micro Pack, a chelated micronutrient package utilizing EDTA (Ethylenediaminetetraacetate) chelation chemistry containing



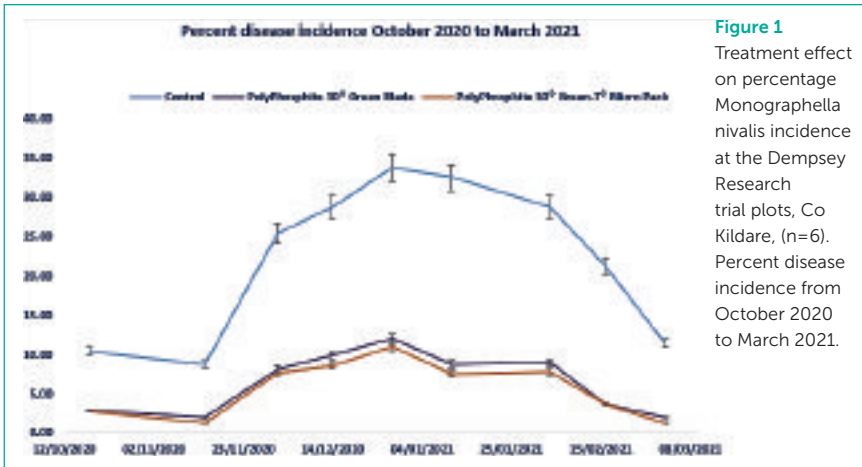


Figure 1 Treatment effect on percentage *Monographella nivalis* incidence at the Dempsey Research trial plots, Co Kildare, (n=6). Percent disease incidence from October 2020 to March 2021.

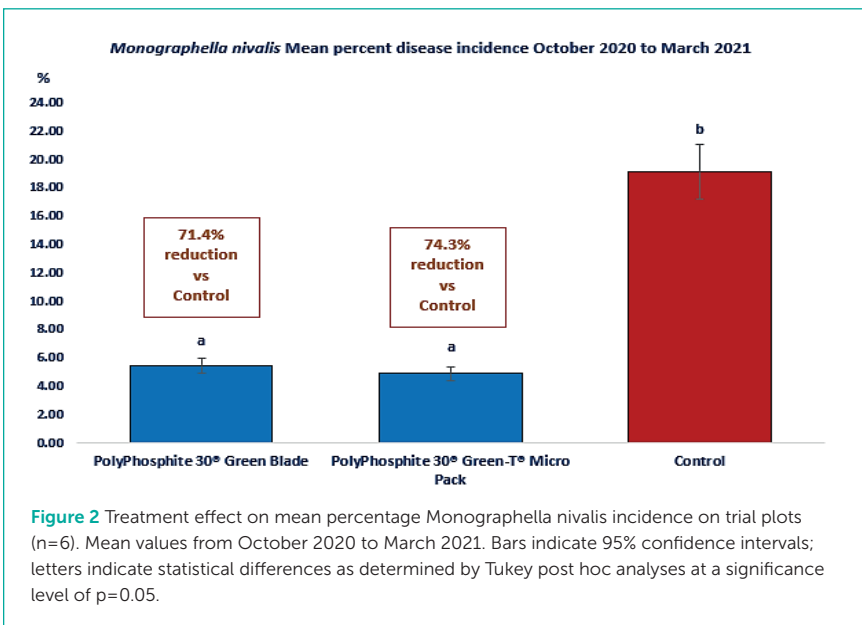


Figure 2 Treatment effect on mean percentage *Monographella nivalis* incidence on trial plots (n=6). Mean values from October 2020 to March 2021. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals; letters indicate statistical differences as determined by Tukey post hoc analyses at a significance level of $p=0.05$.

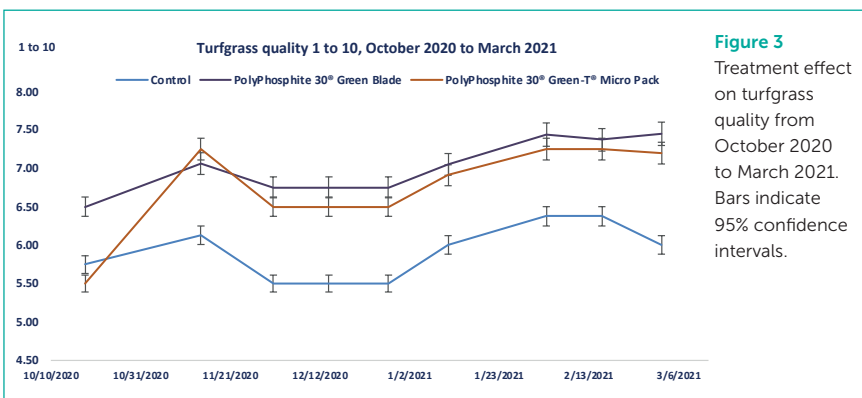


Figure 3 Treatment effect on turfgrass quality from October 2020 to March 2021. Bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Magnesium, Boron, Copper, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, Zinc.

Both these treatment programs, which were applied at 28-day intervals from October 2020 to March 2021, and **consistently** suppressed *Monographella nivalis* incidence compared to untreated controls, as can be seen in Figure 1.

The mean level of *Monographella nivalis* incidence is shown in Figure 2. Compared to untreated controls, the PolyPhosphite 30®/Green Blade™ treatment suppressed disease by 71.4% and the PolyPhosphite 30®/Green-T® Micro Pack treatment by 74.3

Treatments effect on turfgrass quality

Apart from controlling disease incidence, it is vital to ensure the overall quality of turfgrass surfaces are not adversely affected by any treatments. During the 2020/2021 trials, the treatments highlighted above consistently, and significantly led to enhancement of turfgrass quality, this is shown in Figure 3.

Key points:

- *Monographella nivalis* is a widespread and damaging pathogen infecting most cool season turfgrass species.
- Disease control is best implemented by means of IPM and using the Disease Pyramid to influence the factors conducive to infection.
- Numerous cultural practices, such as dew control and rolling can be employed to reduce infection.
- Significant suppression of *Monographella nivalis* is possible using nutritional programs which not only prime defence responses but will also ensure the turfgrass has the resources to produce the necessary compounds to fight off infection.

Author: Dr John Dempsey began greenkeeping in the 1980's and was Superintendent of Ireland's oldest golf course –The Royal Curragh from 1993 to 2019. He has always had a keen interest in sports turf education and has undertaken courses beginning with basic greenkeeping at the Botanic gardens in Dublin to a 1st class Honours Degree in Turfgrass science at Myerscough College in the UK. He completed his PhD in Turfgrass pathology in 2016 with the Centre for Research in Biosciences at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

John has conducted independent research on turfgrass disease management for over 10 years, covering extensively the subject *Microdochium nivale* infection of turfgrasses, turfgrass responses to infection and the effect of phosphite treatments on disease suppression, turfgrass growth and quality. He has presented the results of his research at numerous conferences and seminars in Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Norway, USA, Canada, Sweden and at Continue to Learn in Harrogate.

Mow your way to sustainable success



Dr Simon Watson works in the R&A Sustainable Agronomy Service as Senior Agronomist

With higher temperatures at this time of the year than we were previously used to, we ought to consider new strategies to look after our courses in the longer term

Mowing. It's the most rudimentary yet arguably the most important of greenkeeping tasks when it comes to managing fine turf for the production and presentation of elite playing surfaces.

In its most basic form, the objective of mowing is to cut the leaf blade to a uniform length and present the turf. Experience gained over the years has taught us that the mower can be used to manipulate the sward in other ways as well. In fine turf, the mower is useful to affect different playing surface qualities. Lowering cutting height and increasing cutting frequency will encourage the grass plant to tiller, thereby increasing sward density. This is useful when producing a uniform hard-wearing teeing surface, for example. On putting greens, mowing frequency and low height of cut are taken to the extreme in the quest to produce consistent, smooth, firm surfaces.

Cutting a plant at two to five millimetres on a regular basis is inevitably a destructive operation. Mowing places tremendous physiological stress on the turf. Root development, the turf's ability to store

carbohydrate and its tolerance of biotic and abiotic stresses are all compromised by the constant action of the mower at low heights of cut. However, the good news is that turf grasses are wonderfully resilient plants. During good growing conditions, turfgrasses respond to regular close mowing well. Turf quality, playability and hopefully the golfing experience are all elevated. However, cut too low and too frequently at a

“The mower is our friend. But take it too far at the wrong time, and it will quickly become a foe”

time when the plant can't respond, and turf health will quickly decline and, with it, playing quality. This is why fine turf is generally cut lower and more frequently during the growing season and higher but less frequently during the autumn and winter months.

With the changing climate delivering warmer temperatures late into the autumn, it is easy to forget that the other factors, such as light, are in decline and become limiting to grass growth in the later

months of the year. Add to that a late season or rescheduled competition, and it is easy to see how the pressure builds to maintain an intense mowing regime at a time when it would typically be relaxed. An operation that is physiologically damaging during a period of the year when grass growth is in decline can leave the turf weak and vulnerable going into the winter months. It is important to think ahead and consider that a strong

plant going into winter is more likely to come out of winter stronger.

In preparing putting surfaces at this potentially difficult time, other options can be explored that do not necessitate reducing cutting height. Double cutting proves a useful tactic in this regard. We

are also learning that adjusting clip rate could be beneficial. Some clubs are focused on manipulating sward composition on greens in favour of what are widely considered more sustainable grass species – encouraging bent grass, for example. In this instance, one of the strategies to encourage bent grass will be to keep routine cutting height at around three and a half to four millimetres. Maintaining these relatively higher heights of cut on greens gives the opportunity to employ a more consistent height of cut year-round, and, more importantly, maintaining playing surface quality while minimising stress to the turf.

Mowing is a fundamental greenkeeping operation. Properly set up and using a regime that is synchronised with grass growth, the mower is our friend. But take it too far at the wrong time, and it will quickly become a foe. **GI**



Our monthly column from The R&A's Sustainable Golf team shares news and insights on agronomy and sustainability themes. For more information on The R&A's Sustainable Agronomy Service please contact sustainablegolf@randa.org

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