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# Greenkeeper International



**Jack  
McMillan  
MBE**

1932-2025

**"I'm most  
comfortable  
when I'm among  
greenkeepers"**

**From Your  
Association**

Recapping the highlights of an action-packed week at BTME

**BIGGA  
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March 2025



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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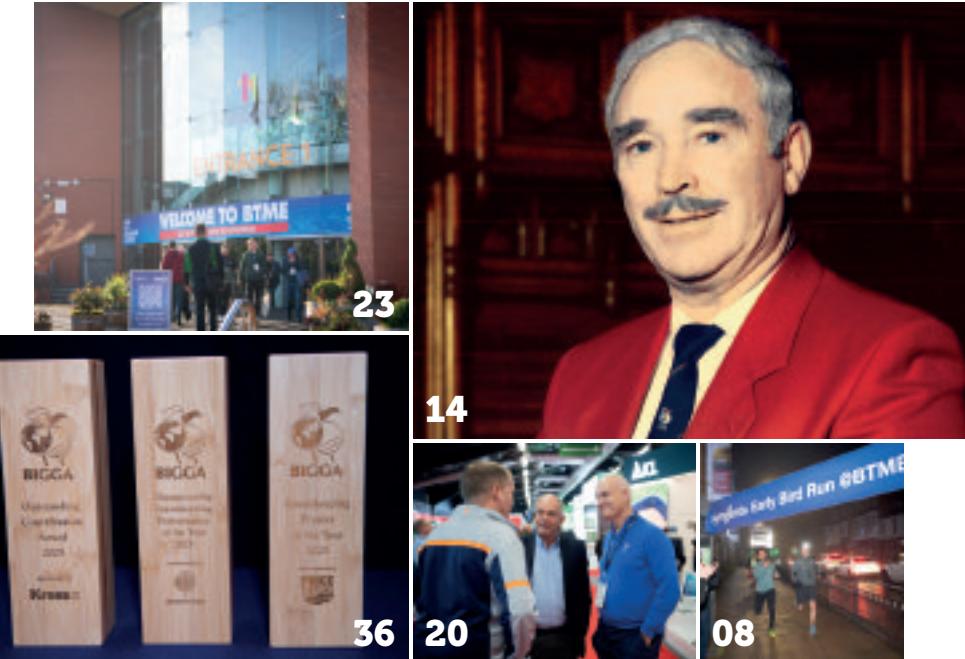
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**BIGGA**

**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 on a national and regional level are underpinned by the generosity of our industry partners and supporters.

BIGGA's various member benefits, learning and development opportunities and other activities are made possible due to the ongoing commitment shown by these companies, organisations and individual donors. From our supporters through to our national patrons and partners, our thanks go to them all for their dedication to BIGGA and its members.



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# First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund gets boost from 5K Early Bird Run at BTME
- BIGGA members among the finalists for England Golf Awards 2025



## Winners announced as awards celebrate 30 years of golf and the environment

The 30th Golf Environment Awards (GEAs) saw winners crowned in six categories when it was hosted by STRI Group during BTME.

The awards, which saw a record number of applications in 2024, celebrate industry professionals who are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the environment.

All winners received a £750 grant to help fund further ecological and environmental projects at their clubs, a visit from an agronomic consultant, entry to the Foundation Award in Amenity Horticulture Course, BIGGA membership for the Conservation Champion award winner and promotional materials to display across digital platforms.

### Operation Pollinator Award: Goring and Streatley Golf Club

For golf clubs who consistently deliver outstanding ecological habitat creation and management.

### Ecological Project of the Year: Formby Ladies Golf Club

For golf clubs who have implemented a successful ecological project, with clear objectives and targets that contribute to a better environment.

### Conservation Champion of the Year: Andy Reason, North Hants Golf Club

For individuals contributing to environmental and ecological management and its positive impact on the landscape and biodiversity.

### Sustainable Project of the Year: Bowring Park and Golf Course

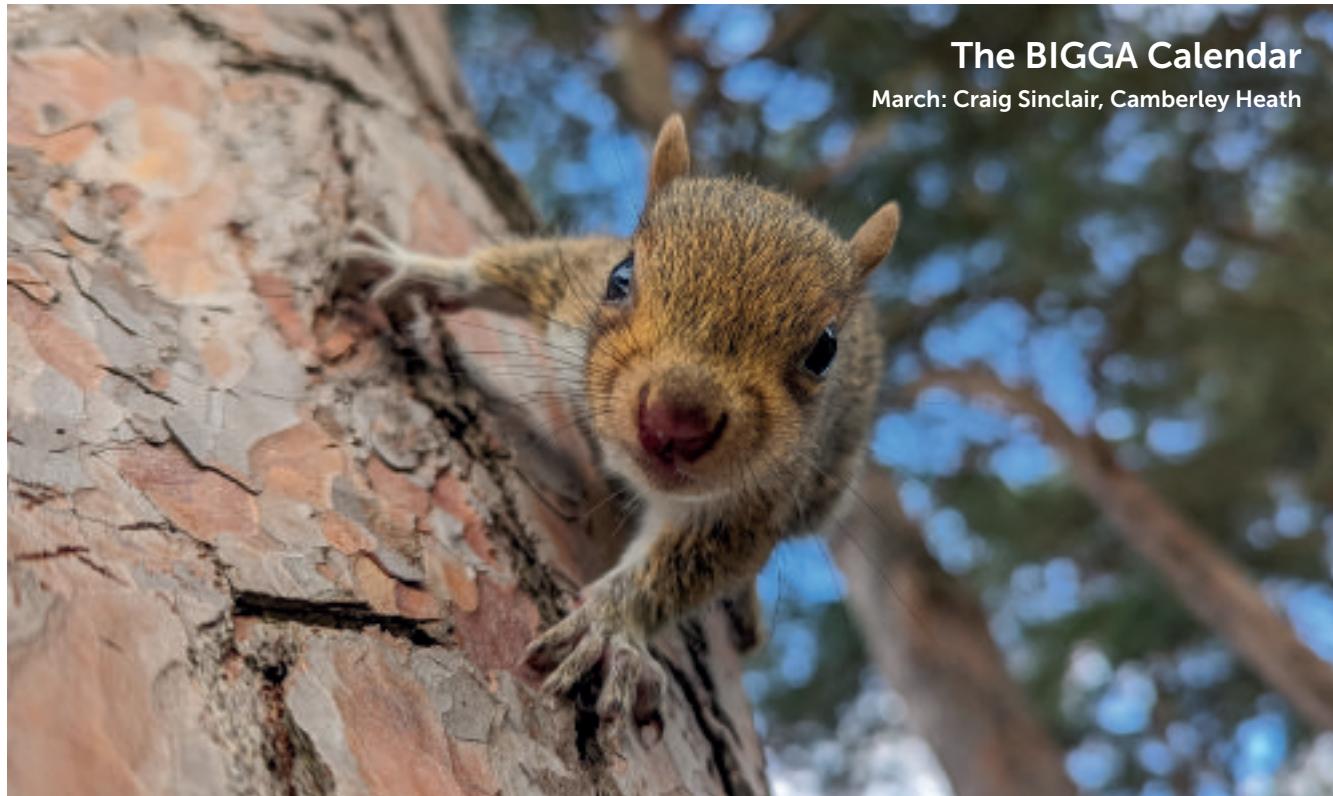
For successful sustainable golf club projects with clear objectives and targets that contribute to a more sustainable environment.

### International Environmental Golf Course: Camiral Golf & Wellness

For non-UK clubs showing efficient management of nature conservation, turfgrass, waste and water.

### UK Environmental Golf Course of the Year: Royal Mid-Surrey

For UK golf clubs leading the way in sustainability across nature conservation, turfgrass management and waste and water management. **GI**



## The BIGGA Calendar

March: Craig Sinclair, Camberley Heath

# Greenkeepers on the run in Harrogate!



More than 50 greenkeepers took part in the Syngenta 5K Early Bird Run at BTME, raising hundreds of pounds for the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund.

The event was cancelled in 2024 as Storm Jocelyn brought winds of up to 60mph to Harrogate.

But the Yorkshire weather was kinder this year and an impressive number laced up their running shoes to pound the pavements in the early hours.

Syngenta pledged £10 to the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund for every runner taking part.

Intended to encourage everybody to benefit from the health enhancements and stress relief of regular exercise, especially through the dark winter months, the Syngenta Early Bird Run has become one of the main events at BTME.

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton was there to see the runners set off from outside Harrogate Convention Centre.

"I am grateful to Syngenta for continuing to support the BTME 5K Run in aid of our Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund," he said.

"The run provides a wonderful opportunity during an intense week to clear minds, gain fresh air and exercise and raise money for an excellent cause.

"It's always a joy to see so many people up early to enjoy the camaraderie of the run."

He added: "We know that exercise, especially with other people, is an excellent method of combatting the stresses and strains of modern life." **GI**





## What's on this month

### Dates for your diary

**4 March**

BIGGA Highlands of Scotland Members Gathering - Cabot Highlands, Castle Stuart

**12 March**

BIGGA SE Region Irrigation Workshop – JK Irrigation, Edenbridge

**20 March**

Midlands Turf Club – TAG Allscott Depot, Telford

**26 March**

GCMA Advanced Management Certificate: Employment Law – Oxford

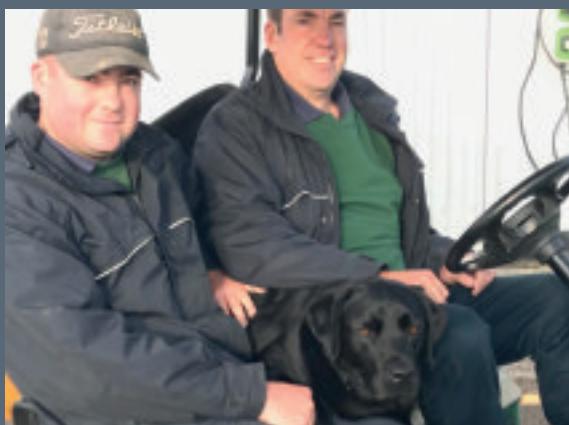
BIGGA SE Region Irrigation Workshop – JK Irrigation, Edenbridge

**27 March**

BIGGA North East of Scotland Members Gathering – Deeside Golf Club



## A greenkeeper's best friend – Barney



Owner: Dave Hutchinson

Course: Heysham Golf Club

Breed: Labrador retriever

Age: 9 years old

Favourite treat: Sausage

Favourite spot on the course: Riding on any utility vehicle

Naughtiest moment: Once ran off with Lady Captain's ball

My dog is happiest: At brew time getting nibbles off the lads



## BIGGA Regional Patrons 2025

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



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





## FINALISTS Announced

#EGAwards2025

# Strong BIGGA contingent among England Golf Awards finalists



The finalists for the England Golf Awards 2025 have been revealed, and a host of BIGGA members have been recognised.

Taking place in Manchester on 2 April, the awards will crown 12 winners who have all gone above and beyond over the past 12 months to help elevate the profile of golf.

There are BIGGA members working at each of the nominees for Club of the Year, with Abbeydale, Potters Resorts Five Lakes, and Shirley in the running for the honour.

Martin Hayward is the course manager at Abbeydale and he is proud of the greenkeeping team's contribution to putting the Yorkshire venue in the spotlight.

"When the opportunity came along to move to Abbeydale, I knew it was the perfect position for me," he said. "When I met with Greens Director John Longbottom and General Manager Nigel Perry, I could see they were a forward-thinking club and wanted to move as fast as possible to improve the course.

"Answers to my suggestions for improvement were always, 'How can we make this happen for our members?', rather than a, 'No', which I think is fantastic and the best way to keep the club evolving.

"Long may it continue, as we have a great golf course, fantastic staff in all departments and members who appreciate the work that goes on for continual improvements."

Each of the four finalists for Tournament Venue of the Year also have BIGGA members on the staff.

The commitment of North Hants to ecofriendly practices has won them a nomination in the Sustainability Project of the Year category.

In what is a club-wide effort towards sustainability, the greenkeeping team plays a key role, with daily course data collection ensuring a measured and efficient use of water, fungicides and pesticides.

There has also been an overall reduction of fossil fuel usage within the department, with a drive towards the use of electric and battery powered machinery. **GI**

### Nominated clubs with BIGGA members

#### Club of the Year sponsored by Marsh

- Abbeydale Golf Club (Yorkshire)
- Potters Resorts Five Lakes Golf Club (Essex)
- Shirley Golf Club (Warwickshire)

#### Respect in Golf Award sponsored by Citation

- Woolley Park Golf Club (Yorkshire)

#### Sustainability Project of the Year

- North Hants Golf Club (Hampshire)

#### Tournament Venue of the Year sponsored by Your Golf Travel

- Ormskirk (Lancashire) – Carris Trophy
- Stover Golf Club (Devon) – English Women's County Finals
- Tandridge Golf Club (Surrey) – English Girls' U16/U14 Stroke Play Championship
- West Sussex (Sussex) – Reid Trophy

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# From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- Tributes are paid to Jack McMillan MBE – a titan of our industry
- We reveal what you thought of this year's Continue to Learn programme



## Could you be the next Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year?

Entries for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards 2025 are now open, with the National Finals to be held at Rudding Park in September.

The process affords ambitious BIGGA members the opportunity meet and compete with the best greenkeeping students in the UK for one of two prestigious titles. The annual awards are committed to offering greenkeepers of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels a chance to excel.

Once-in-a-lifetime opportunities

to further their careers and network with influential industry leaders await the winners of both the Student Greenkeeper of the Year and Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year honours.

Daniel Parker, greenkeeper at Knighton Heath, Bournemouth, claimed the Young award in 2024 and urged others to put themselves in the frame. "I would say to just go for it," he said. "Throughout each part of the process you gain experience in doing interviews and meeting new people. The more

interviews you can do the more comfortable you will be in the future.

"You get the opportunity to meet new people in the final who will be from all over the country and at different levels of courses."

Entries close on 11 April, with interviews between 12-16 and 19-23 May, while the National Finals will take place from 9-11 September in Harrogate. **GI**



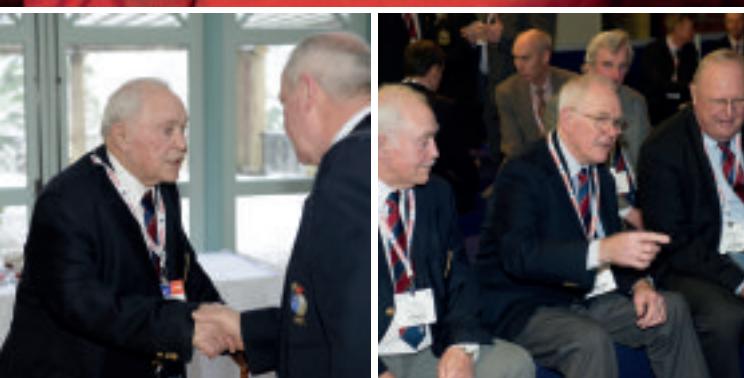
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The BIGGA National Board is comprised of the following members who volunteer their time to support the association:  
Kevin Fish, Antony Kirwan, Andrew Laing, Gordon McKie, Lucy Sellick, Andy Smith and Jez Ward  
BIGGA President Ronnie Myles, BIGGA Chairperson Steven Lloyd

# The end of an era – farewell to a great champion of our industry

Remembering Jack McMillan, who has passed away at the age of 92





With a neatly trimmed moustache, a military precision instilled when serving in the Scots Guards and the unwavering support of his wife, Rita, Jack McMillan built a legacy that extends far beyond the five sons who joined him in the greenkeeping industry.

Those who knew him well described Jack as a canny Scot, unflappable and philosophical but with both feet planted firmly on the ground. Across a career spanning seven decades, he was forthright in his belief that better education would advance the greenkeeping profession and, crucially, he was willing to do something about it.

Born in 1932, Jack was too young to serve in World War Two but contributed to the war effort by working part-time on a farm near his home in Newton Mearns, near Glasgow. That set him up well for a career in greenkeeping and he joined East Renfrewshire Golf Club when he left school in 1946.

**“ We were used to hard work and had an affinity with the land”**

Speaking in 2008, Jack said: “That first year, 1946-47, was one of the severest winters I’ve ever known. We were under snow for four months but, like a lot of the kids who worked on farms, we were used to hard work and had an affinity with the land. I found out I was comfortable with that and loved the golf course.”

Although there was a team of five to maintain the moorland course, greenkeeping practices were basic. A 16-inch push mower was used on greens and tees and all steep banks were hand cut with scythes set by the local blacksmith. Bunkers were only raked on a Saturday morning and water for hot drinks was collected from a stream.

In a 1986 article for *Greenkeeper*, Jack recalled those early days, saying: “It was accepted that most of the work required a certain amount of sweat and toil. Manual labour was more plentiful and jobs were filled by convenience without particular regard for qualifications beyond the need for physical stamina. Our knowledge was acquired by observation, asking questions, listening and gleaning what information we could from older and more experienced men. Job improvement evolved largely through ingenuity and the need for less laborious methods – there was little opportunity for educational improvement.”

In 1950 Jack was called up for National Service and joined the Scots Guards, where he served in Cyprus and Egypt. He enlisted for a further three years and served as a physical training instructor, even becoming the 1st Battalion’s light heavyweight boxing champion.

**Clockwise from top left:** Jack with the Walker Cup; Jack in 1988; Jack, Walter Woods and Sir Michael Bonallack in 2012; Jack and Rita McMillan at the BTME Past President’s Lunch in 2020; Jack at Buckingham Palace receiving his MBE; Jack in Scots Guards uniform; Jack at BTME 2015

Jack returned to civilian life in 1954, rejoining East Renfrewshire before becoming an estate worker in Ayrshire. Five years later he became head greenkeeper at Elderslie in Paisley.

Speaking to Laurence Pithie MG for Greenkeeper International in 2022 on the occasion of his 90th birthday, Jack said: "One of my first memories from there is attending a greens committee meeting, but being told by the captain that I would have to sit outside the room on the veranda and to remain there to answer any questions that may arise. Needless to say, I did not take too kindly to sitting on a cold veranda and I went home. All future greens meetings included my full participation!"

Having served with distinction in the Army, Jack wasn't going to stand being treated as a second-class citizen and throughout his career he strove to ensure that none of his peers would have to suffer the same ignominy.

In 1964, Jack moved to Cardross, where he spent 10 years before moving to Bush Hill Park in North London in 1974. The move meant uprooting Rita and his six children, but it proved a key moment in Jack's career. Four years later he moved to Effingham in Surrey and after another two years, aged 48, he was invited to apply for the top role at Sunningdale, replacing Hugh McGilvray. Jack later recalled that although the greens chairperson had hardly understood a word he had said during the interview, he also believed Jack was the right person for the job.

During his time at Sunningdale, Jack prepared the course for six European Opens, the Walker Cup, the Brabazon Trophy and the Golf Vase. Speaking in 2008 of that period, Jack said: "The philosophy in those days was that presentation wasn't as important as it is now. What was all important was playing conditions on tees, fairways, greens. The objective was good firm tees, good firm fairways and good firm greens. Everything else was incidental."

Jack had been a member of the Scottish and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (SIGGA) since the 1960s but took an increasingly-active role when he moved south. He served on the London and Surrey sections of the British Golf Greenkeepers Association (BGINA) but grew frustrated at the lack of educational opportunities. Forthright and willing to

**“ The objective was good firm tees, good firm fairways and good firm greens”**

act on his beliefs, Jack played a key role in the formation of the short-lived English and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (EIGGA), serving as its first president in 1983.

However, three fragmented associations were not conducive to building a stronger greenkeeping industry and in 1987 the EIGGA, BGINA and SIGGA amalgamated to form BIGGA. Walter Woods was elected the first chairperson with Jack as deputy, taking up the senior role a year later.

As far back as 1988, Jack spoke of his belief that if the industry was to thrive, golf courses should return to the practices of the past with fewer inputs, raised heights of cut and less frequent mowing. With sustainability at the forefront of our thoughts today, Jack was ahead of his time.

In a 1990 article for Greenkeeping Management, Jack also wrote about the stress that greenkeepers were placed under



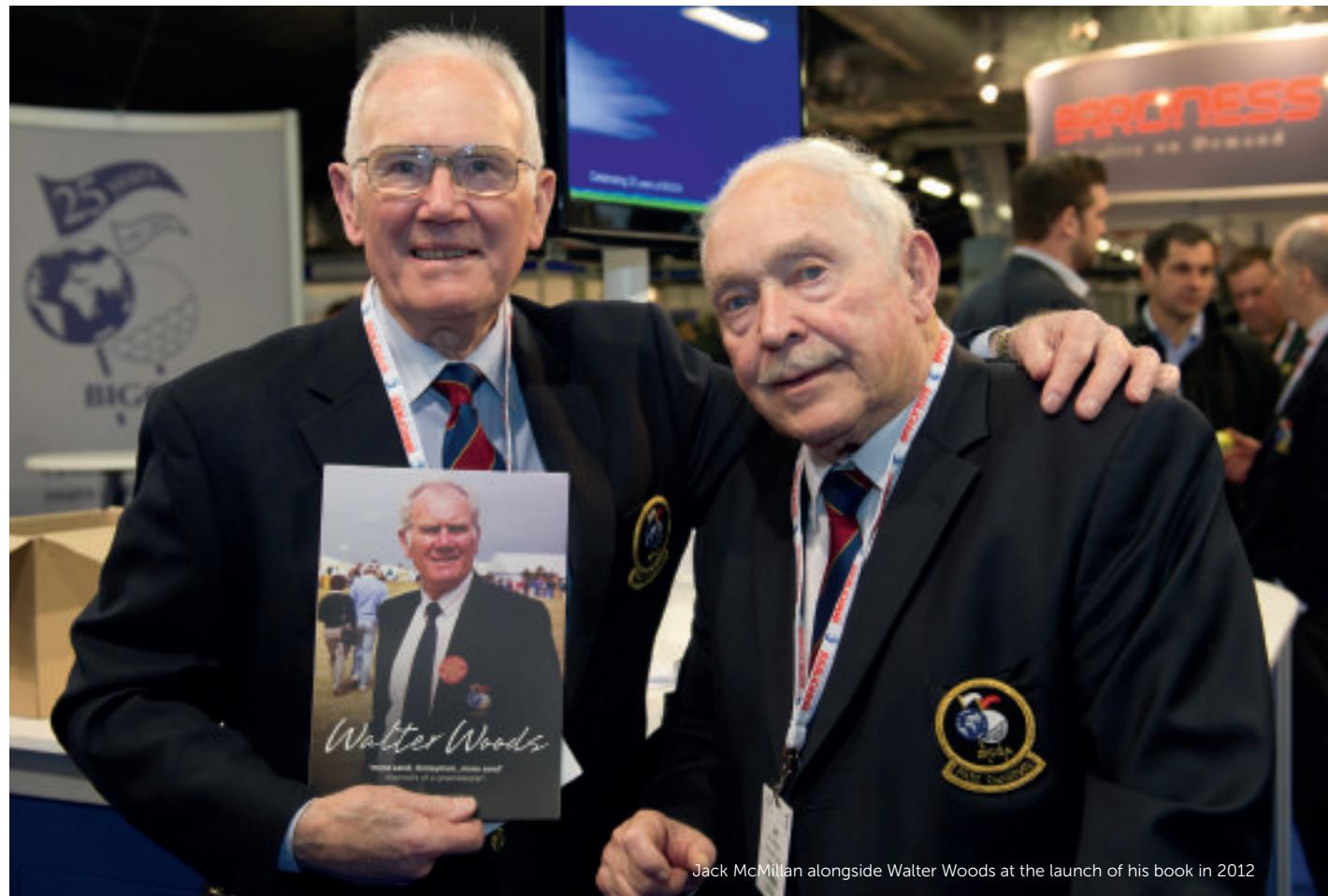
Above: Jack and Rita McMillan

by golfers who couldn't understand why increased levels of play, particularly during the winter, inevitably led to poorer playing conditions. He was particularly scathing of those who caused trouble when greenkeepers attempted to repair this damage through practices such as aeration.

Jack wrote: "Might I suggest that every club choose a green and apply the programme the membership would like – no aeration, no topdress, plenty of water in drought, plant cover scoured off to find pace and bags of fertiliser to make it green. This green could be called the 'members' green'. By the end of this year, we would have one green in every club that would be a disaster area. Hopefully then members might just appreciate what their greenkeepers do for them. I am fed up listening to young greenkeepers who are being given a life of hell for doing a good job."

While Jack was pleased that greenkeeping had moved away from the backbreaking work of his youth, he was saddened that the physical strain had been replaced by mental stress. With greenkeepers across the country struggling under the weight of growing expectations, the annual gathering at BTME was a welcome respite. Jack often said he was most comfortable in the company of other greenkeepers and he would attend BTME long after his retirement.

"Who could explain the communication [greenkeepers] find at Harrogate?" Jack wrote in 1997. "There we see the greenkeeper at his best. He is among his peers, they share a common bond one with the other, they are comfortable



Jack McMillan alongside Walter Woods at the launch of his book in 2012

and the pressure of work is for a brief period left behind. I am sure they all come away from Harrogate having enjoyed each other's company with their batteries charged and ready for another challenging year ahead."

That love for the industry was passed on to his children, with all of his sons and several grandchildren following him into greenkeeping. Jack estimated that over 40 of his former staff members became course managers and in 2008 both he and Walter Woods received lifetime achievement awards.

But his proudest moment came in 1993, when Jack received an MBE from the Queen at Buckingham Palace in recognition of his lifelong commitment to advancing the greenkeeping profession. He later commented that Rita knew about it for six months before he did, but that if someone had told him back in 1946 that he'd receive an MBE for services to the golf course industry, he would never have believed it.

Rita's own agronomic knowledge is renowned across the industry and in 1983, John Campbell wrote of the couple: "Jack has shared all his trials and tribulations in greenkeeping with his bonny, understanding wife Rita, who is a first-class cook and in whose capable hands the destiny of the McMillan family has been directed with maternal shrewdness, kindness and compassion."

Rita would stay with him right until the end and was with Jack when he died on Monday 17 February 2025. Jack is survived by four sons, 15 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by daughter Heather and son Ian. **GI**

Please send your tributes to [karl@bigga.co.uk](mailto:karl@bigga.co.uk)

## 'A fantastic gentleman' – Jim Croxton pays tribute

Jack was a giant in the industry and in BIGGA. He was hugely influential in the formation of the association and in raising the profile of greenkeepers. He was also a fantastic gentleman, seemingly always accompanied by his remarkable wife, Rita. In the days before BIGGA, all the work done for greenkeeper associations was voluntary and these members – with their wives also often playing an active role – gave huge amounts of their time to ensure the profession was appropriately represented. We owe them a debt of gratitude we can never repay.

For my part, spending time with our founding fathers – Jack, Walter Woods BEM, George Brown and Cecil George, among many others – was one of the great honours of my career. They all retained a love for the association long after their retirements and I vividly remember the feeling of pride and nerves when I took to the AGM stage and saw these giants of the industry looking on. Jack's passing marks the end of an era for BIGGA and our love and condolences go out to all his family.



INSPIRE THE  
NEXT GENERATION

# First Green is taking off – everyone should get on board

The First Green initiative continues to build momentum, leaving Workforce Project Manager Jenny Bledge full of optimism for the year ahead

At this year's BTME, I took to the stage at Continue to Learn Extra to present on First Green. Greenkeepers, course managers and other industry professionals packed into a seminar room eager to learn more about how to introduce the next generation to careers in greenkeeping.

It was brilliant to see such high engagement. Many attendees stayed behind to discuss how to take the first steps towards hosting their own First Green event in 2025.

A highlight of the seminar was being joined by a panel of previous First Green hosts sharing their experiences of

**“There is a lot of enthusiasm for bringing First Green to more clubs”**

running events. Their insights – what worked well, what they learned and how they engaged with schools – were invaluable. I hope this helped those considering hosting for the first time by showing how achievable and rewarding these events can be.

First Green has already made an incredible impact

**10 events held**

**Over 300 young people involved**

**Over 40 BIGGA members engaged**

since launching, with over 300 young people experiencing hands-on learning and real workplace experiences at golf courses across the country.

Through these interactive field trips, students engage with greenkeeping, mechanics, golf course operations and golf, all while developing essential STEM skills. This not only strengthens links between clubs and their local communities but is also a step forward in helping to address workforce challenges in the industry.

As the second highest attended Continue to Learn Extra seminar during BTME this year, it is clear to me that there is a lot of enthusiasm for bringing First Green to more clubs.

The programme is designed to be easy to implement, with full support from BIGGA, making it an accessible and rewarding way for clubs to inspire young people. If your club is considering hosting, now is the perfect time to start planning – all resources are available on the BIGGA website.

I'm hugely optimistic that 2025 will see a huge number of First Green events across the UK and Ireland. Let's make this the year that more clubs than ever open their doors, engage with their communities and introduce young people to the exciting opportunities in greenkeeping. **GI**

## About First Green

First Green is an innovative environmental science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education outreach programme using golf courses as hands-on learning labs. The initiative aims to introduce young people to the career opportunities available in golf and showcase the skills required for these roles. In doing so, First Green hopes to inspire the next generation of greenkeepers.



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# Your appetite for education is incredible



Gordon McKie

National Board Director, Scotland &amp; NI

The annual trip to Harrogate was enough to fuel my sense of optimism about the future of our industry

It was a pleasure to be back in Harrogate for BTME in January and see so many familiar faces, as well as some new ones enjoying their first visit to what is a fantastic event. Since its inaugural year in 1989, I have made the trip to Yorkshire for around 20 editions and in that time it has continued to grow in stature.

While the vast trade show, which this year welcomed 157 exhibitors, is a definite draw, the thing I am most proud of is the incredible educational offering.

The Continue to Learn programme rightly has a world-class reputation and stands as one of the most influential annual events in the golf and greenkeeping calendar.

To see the entire programme practically sell out underlines the huge appetite for education within this industry and speaks volumes to the passion you have for professional development.

That there is such a widespread desire among greenkeepers to learn more and to hone your skills fills me with hope for the future.

We have made it one



**“ I was heartened to note a genuine sense of optimism around the halls in Harrogate”**

of our core objectives at BIGGA to elevate the profession by providing precisely the kind of opportunities that many of you took advantage of at BTME and your golf clubs will doubtless see the benefits.

I was heartened to note a genuine sense of optimism around the halls in Harrogate. Though we all face challenges – some specific to our own clubs, others more pervasive – there is a strong belief that

we are as well equipped to deal with them as we ever have been.

Among the positives from the past year or so has been the growth of the First Green initiative, which has now engaged hundreds of young people across the UK and introduced them to the idea of greenkeeping as a career path.

We have hosted an event at St Andrews and will be doing so again soon. I would encourage you to

get involved if you can – it is a wonderful experience to witness the enthusiasm of youth and see how much the children enjoy being given the opportunity to learn in an environment that, in most cases, is entirely new to them.

Nurturing the next generation of potential greenkeepers is a vitally important task. We have an opportunity to put our profession on the map and really showcase what it's all about. **GI**



With  
Jim Croxton, CEO

# A refined strategy for a brighter future

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton discusses the organisation's new vision, which he is confident will elevate both the association and the profession of greenkeeping

At BTME, we announced a newly refined strategy that will further advance the ambitions of the association.

Our overall goals remain to improve the health of the profession and the lives of our members. The recent comprehensive membership survey, alongside extensive consultation, has helped us refocus our strategy ensuring BIGGA remains a strong and influential voice, effectively representing its members on an international scale and supporting them in their professional development.

I wanted to take this opportunity to expand further on the three strategic pillars that we have identified as being fundamental to our purpose and future goals.

While these areas of focus are not new, thanks to your feedback and insights we now have a greater understanding of how best to deliver on them.

Forearmed with that knowledge, we can

move forward with this three-pronged approach confident that it will serve the interests of our members and therefore the golf industry as a whole.

The first ambition is to broaden our membership. We have a strong, healthy membership but are under-represented in certain demographics. We will refine our membership categories and overall offering so that we can welcome greenkeepers from clubs of all sizes, with no barriers to entry.

It is critical that we are an association that represents greenkeepers at all levels and all stages of their career.

That speaks to the basis of the second pillar, which is increasing the level of engagement with BIGGA activities.

We are immensely proud of the wide variety of initiatives we already support, whether it be FTMI, Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year, the BIGGA Delegation with Bernhard and Company, or any number of other





## The strategy in brief

These three strategic pillars will inform the work we do as an association for the benefit of our members and the profession of greenkeeping as a whole:

- Increasing membership numbers as a unified greenkeeping community is better able to positively influence the sport of golf.
- Increasing engagement in BIGGA activity and evolving the membership offering to ensure all members, at every stage of their career, can get involved, become better educated and informed and progress through their careers.
- Advancing BIGGA's advocacy efforts to positively influence the governance structure within golf facilities, ensuring greenkeepers are recognised as critical to the success of the sport.



**“ This is about fostering a culture where greenkeepers are valued and their expertise is recognised”**

available opportunities.

However, we are conscious of the need to broaden the scope of this offering to cater to an even greater proportion of our members, whatever stage of their career they are at. There is a tremendous amount of work going on behind the scenes on our education pathway to ensure we are providing opportunities for more of you to get involved.

The final pillar is to positively influence how our members are appreciated by the golf industry. We know that greenkeepers are critical to the health of the sport of golf and we are working with all the key industry stakeholders to make sure that message is heard across the board.

This is about fostering

a culture where greenkeepers are valued and their expertise is recognised. We want everyone to buy into that – from committee members and club managers to industry figureheads and golf club members.

Greenkeeping teams who are motivated, supported and appropriately rewarded for their work produce exceptional playing surfaces and the game thrives. It is a virtuous cycle.

In setting these goals we are striving to create a step change and establish BIGGA as a truly great organisation. With your help we will get there.

**GI**



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# BTME 2025 in review

The resounding success of BTME 2025 proved that it remains a cornerstone of the golf and turf management calendar

## 1,220

Record number of places pre-booked on the Continue to Learn programme

## 99%

The Continue to Learn programme was 99% sold out

## 1.56

The average number of days that visitors stayed

## 10%

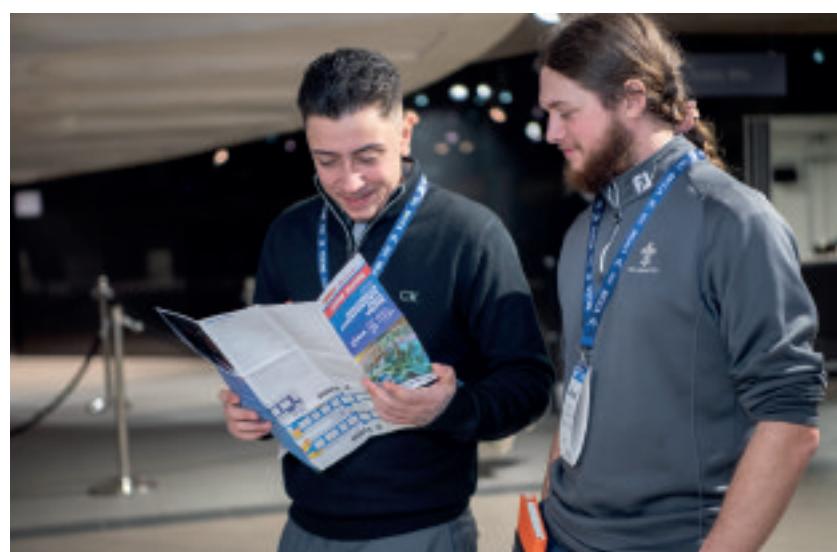
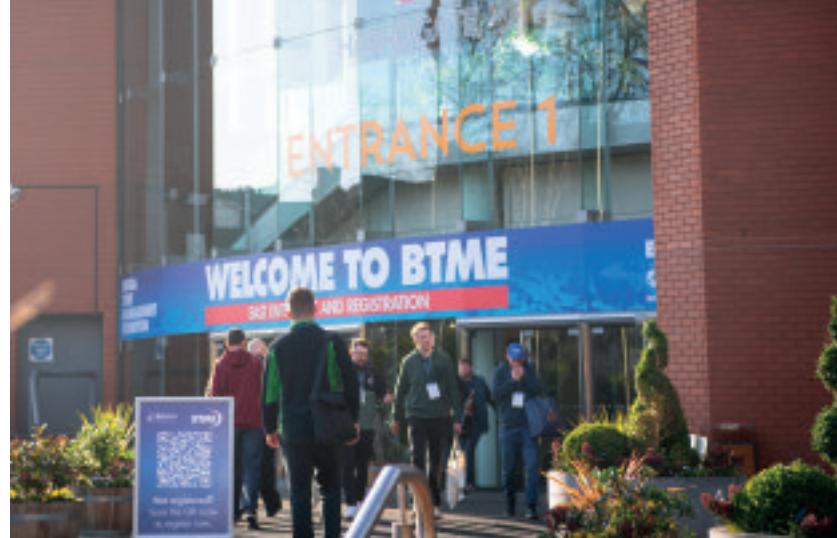
One in 10 visitors were from overseas

## 4,204

Number of visitors attending

## 157

Number of exhibitors – an 8% increase on 2024



# Continue to Learn

The popularity of Continue to Learn solidifies its importance in the training and development of the greenkeeping and wider turf management community

The Continue to Learn programme was 99 per cent sold out with 1,220 places pre-booked across the Classes and Conferences schedule.

Here's what you had to say about the world-class education offering.



**John Stewart,  
Minchinhampton**

We brought five guys up this year to give them the opportunity to learn, to interact with people, meet other course managers, talk to other greenkeepers and see how other people do things. Getting opportunities to speak to some of these experts in their field is really rare because they're not all going to come out to your golf courses. They're very willing to help.





**Ian Nichols,  
Orsett**

I would say to any greenkeepers to come along to Continue to Learn. You're going to learn so many different things, not just about dealing with grass - it's something that's going to help you outside of your working career and also help you in your personal life as well.



**Richard McCann,  
The iCan Academy**  
Leaders plant seeds, they encourage, they nurture. My

message for everybody is that we've all got more potential than we'll ever use. But for those who are in leadership positions, it's almost a responsibility to leave a legacy and bring out the best of our people, of our teams, and plant those seeds that will one day grow and flourish in ways that they might not appreciate.



**Andrew Anderson,  
Ranfurlie**

For some time, I've known about BIGGA, BTME and Continue to Learn and I'm fortunate I've been able to be a part of that and come and support it. The subjects and the seminars that I've seen have been quite broad, from developing yourself as a manager to resource gathering and resilience, and into AI as well. It's quite a vast array of topics and subjects that are all quite interesting.





Premier All-Weather Surfaces for Golf  
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# Monster Putt with Huxley Golf raises funds for BIGGA Benevolent Fund

Monster Putt proved a popular addition at the BIGGA stand this year as a host of hopefuls tried their luck and raised £567 for the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund in the process.

Huxley Golf kindly provided a 38ft x 4ft modular putting green and it proved too much to resist for many of you, with a steady stream of would-be winners paying £1 for three attempts.

A total of 48 people sunk a putt and walked away with either a baseball cap or beanie hat.

There were also three

main prizes up for grabs for the daily winners and a bumper reward for the weekly victor.

Tuesday's daily winner was Gareth Hannaby, of Carden Park, while Fraser Cochrane was Wednesday's pick of the bunch. Both took home a £25 Amazon voucher.

But it was Montrose Golf Links' Paul Teviotdale who claimed the best prize, his overall weekly win earning him a three-day Continue to Learn voucher for BTME 2026.

We would also like to thank Snainton Golf for lending us the putters. **GI**



## About the Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund

The Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund is the official charity of BIGGA. The fund exists to assist current or past members and their dependants, to provide financial support and practical help during difficult times.

# BTME is a year-round effort

It may just be a three-day show, supplemented by four days of world-class education, but hosting BTME is a year-round effort intended to support and raise the profile of the greenkeeping industry.

With 6,000 members, we wanted to answer the question – 'why does BIGGA do it?'

To find out, please scan the QR code to watch a video we filmed at BTME 2025 that explains all. With thanks to the BIGGA team members who participated, Gareth Jones and the creative team at SIRA Studios. **GI**





## YOU ARE HERE

20

IGGA

Each year, the  
are given to s

# Revealed: The exhibitors who won your vote for best BTME stand

Each year, the BIGGA stand awards are given to stands at BTME who have impressed our visitors and association members.

Votes are gathered via the BIGGA app across three categories covering small, medium and large exhibition stands. With 157 exhibitors at this year's show, the competition was fierce. After totting up your votes, three deserving winners were crowned. GI



## Best Large Exhibition Stand: Hunter/KAR UK

KAR UK is the largest UK wholesaler of irrigation equipment, with Hunter one of the leading manufacturers from which it sources. Wesley Henshaw, golf sales manager at KAR UK, said: "Thank you for this award. It's been a great BTME and we're looking forward to coming back next year."



### Best Medium Exhibition Stand: Tillers Turf

Tillers Turf is a leading grower and supplier of Golf, Landscape and Wildflower turf. Richard Owens, golf and technical manager, said: "On behalf of Tillers Turf I just want to thank BIGGA and all the organisers on another fantastic BTME. It's been a great show, been really busy. We're incredibly proud to win Best Medium Stand. It's a lot of work by a lot of people behind the scenes to bring this together, so once again I'm feeling really proud and I wish all at BIGGA a fantastic 2025."



## Best Small Exhibition Stand: Xylem

Xylem is a leader in developing innovative water solutions through smart technology.

Mike McDonnell, marketing development manager, said: "We're very pleased to win the BTME 2025 Best Small Exhibition Stand. It's been an amazing show, we're looking forward to next year."



L-R - Jake Boardman, Tim Leat, Sam Ewing, Damien Coleman, Wayne Aris, Alistair Morrison, James Hampson, Chris Meacock (John Deere)

## TPC Sawgrass volunteers meet at BTME

The seven BIGGA members selected for the John Deere TPC Sawgrass Volunteer Programme met at BTME ahead of the trip of a lifetime.

Each year, the PGA Tour headquarters plays host to The Players Championship, where a top-class field battles 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 what is considered the sport's unofficial fifth major, the home greenkeeping team are supported by

a multi-national group of volunteers, including representatives from each of BIGGA's five regions, along with two international members.

Timothy Leat from Rich River Golf Club in Australia, is part of this year's contingent and, after meeting the rest of the Sawgrass volunteers, he is looking forward to the experience.

"I'm very excited to get over to the US and be part of the team, working together with other greenkeepers from around the world," he said. "I'm very thankful to BIGGA and John Deere for selecting me. That process was something I really enjoyed.

"We've got five young apprentices on our staff and I really wanted to show

### TPC Sawgrass Volunteers 2025

- Scotland & Northern Ireland: Alistair Morrison, Durness Golf Club
- Northern: James Hampson, Llanymynech Golf Club
- Central England: Jake Boardman, Frilford Heath Golf Club
- South West & South Wales: Sam Ewing, Crane Valley Golf Club
- South East: Wayne Aris, Langley Park Golf Club
- International: Damien Coleman, Galway Bay Golf Resort, Ireland
- International: Timothy Leat, Rich River Golf Club, Australia

them that there's a big, wide world of greenkeeping out there and there's definitely opportunities if you put yourself out there."

The chosen seven 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 stay in America in March.

While in Florida, the greenkeepers are fully immersed into the TPC Sawgrass agronomy team, joining more than 100 turf professionals from across the globe and gaining experience of elite championship agronomy that they can bring back to their home venues. **GI**

## Lee Park course manager wins ClearWater prize

John McMullen won the prize draw for a ClearWater system at BTME.

L-R - Ronnie Myles, Matthew Mears of Acumen Waste Services and Jim Croxton





# ‘This will go a long way towards helping me advance my career’

## – ICL Scholars thrive at BTME 2025

The ICL Continue to Learn Scholarship once again underlined its enormous value after the latest five participants reaped the benefits of the initiative.

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.

**“I had an absolutely incredible time at BTME”**

Aaron Allibon was among this year’s cohort and the Orsett first assistant derived a huge benefit from it.

“I had an absolutely incredible time at BTME,” he said. “Being a part of the ICL Scholarship allowed me to pick and tailor the amazing education on offer to suit me best, helping me develop different areas of my skill set.

“I came away from the experience having met new people and with a wider range of knowledge, which will only benefit my golf course moving forward.”

David Cooper, deputy head greenkeeper at Downfield, added: “I learned so much from the educational events I attended. This will go a long way towards helping me advance my career in the industry.

“Many thanks to BIGGA and especially ICL for their hospitality and making this amazing opportunity happen.”

The ICL Scholarship provides an education package worth £500 and enables BIGGA members who may otherwise be unable to attend Continue to Learn and BTME to participate.

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**



### The ICL Scholars class of 2025

- Aaron Allibon, first assistant, Orsett
- Bradley Taylor, greenkeeper, Beau Desert
- David Cooper, deputy head greenkeeper, Downfield
- Ruth Etches, greenkeeper, Trentham
- Ryan Leicester, deputy course manager, Warrington



# Celebrating 20 years of The R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship

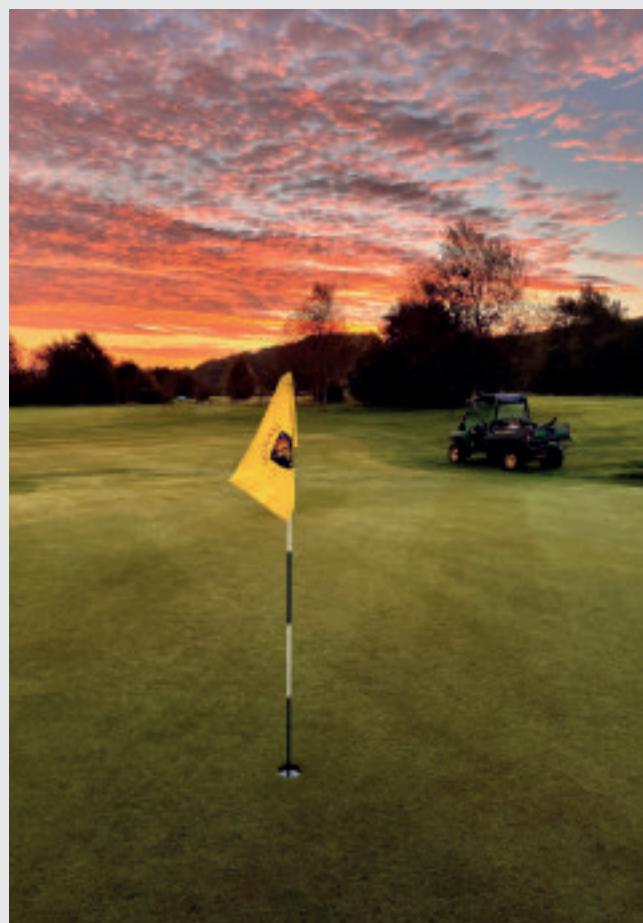
A celebratory dinner hosted by Andrew Cotter marked the 20th anniversary of The R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship programme at BTME.

The programme provides career opportunities to greenkeepers, especially women and young people, around the world, supporting the development of their sustainability skills and enhancing their experience. There are now more

than 450 scholars working globally.

Among the attendees at the dinner in Harrogate were three Australian scholars, who enjoyed a trip to BTME before heading to St Andrews for a study tour.

As well as celebrating two decades since its launch, the event looked ahead to an exciting future for the scholarship and the profession of greenkeeping. **GI**



## Outlane greenkeeper wins Indigrow photo competition

Chris O'Connor of Outlane Golf Club took home a GoPro 360 after winning the Indigrow photo competition.

The event ran throughout 2024 and was open to all greenkeepers, groundspersons and turf managers across the globe.

The brief was simple: The image should depict the photographer's place of work and highlight some aspect of the duties they carry out.

With monthly winners chosen by Indigrow's head office team, Chris' evocative picture of the low-lying sun casting an orange hue over the Yorkshire course was the best snap in October.

That put his effort up against the other 11 monthly winners in a public vote, and Chris' photo got the nod. **GI**

# Guest speakers deliver at TETO annual seminar

The annual seminar of the Turf Equipment Technicians Organisation (TETO) took place at BTME as attendees enjoyed a wonderful line-up of guest speakers.

The Queen's Suite at Harrogate Convention Centre hosted a packed audience as Ian Sumpter, Kevin Scarce and Tom Stidder delivered industry insights, practical tips and advice, and took questions.

Following an afternoon of top-tier education, there was an opportunity for networking during a drinks reception kindly sponsored by Campey Turfcare.

TETO exists to improve recognition, opportunity, communication and education across the industry while creating valuable support networks.

The organisation hopes to inspire the next generation of turf equipment technicians and create pathways into a profession that is integral to the golf industry.



What started as a small WhatsApp group between a few key figures – notably Matt Axtton, James Wilkinson and Chris Minton – has snowballed into something with well over 200 participants, including representatives from leading manufacturers.

That group provides practical help and advice, peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities, while TETO also holds in-person meetings for its members to discuss the group's aims and future plans. **GI**



## A global greenkeeper gathering

Greenkeepers from all over the world gathered for a meeting of BIGGA's international members.

CEO Jim Croxton joined Chairperson Steve Lloyd and President Ronnie Myles in welcoming a group who had travelled many thousands of miles between them to be there.

BIGGA Head of Membership Scott Reeves convened the meeting as part of his drive to review and improve the association's offering to all members.

"It had become clear to me that greenkeepers in other countries also wanted to gain the most from their membership and contribute to BIGGA's ongoing success," he said.

"This was a very positive meeting that set a great tone for BIGGA's work in the year ahead."

Several topics were discussed, falling broadly into two main areas:

- A call for BIGGA resources and opportunities to be tailored to international members where possible
- Ways in which members in the international category can play a more influential role in BIGGA's work

Scott has appointed Central England Region Membership Services Manager Steve Dudley-Brown to be the ongoing point of contact for international members and he will coordinate opportunities for them to assemble periodically in a virtual setting to discuss issues and network.

Steve Lloyd also offered to investigate ways international members can contribute to the work of the National Board. **GI**



# 'A massive boost to my career' – FTMI graduates set to reap the rewards

The FTMI class of 2024 concluded their journeys in Harrogate as they each collected their certificates and reflected on just how far they have come.

The Future Turf Managers Initiative is centred on management and leadership skills and focuses on personal and professional development, providing the tools for graduates to move up the career ladder.

**“It’s been a really great experience”**

And seeing the graduates, who represent some of the brightest and best burgeoning talent in the industry, gather to mark the culmination of a process designed to help them pursue their career aspirations is certainly a highlight of BTME.

Dan Martin, irrigation manager at London Golf Club, was among the latest cohort and he is confident the programme will have a lasting impact on his career.

“It’s been a really great experience, with a good mix of

online and in-person learning,” he said. “I’d like to say a huge thanks to all of our tutors and mentors.

“The lessons that we’ve gained out of it and the new skills and experiences we’ve had are going to massively help boost my career going forwards as a prospective turf manager.”

He added of his fellow graduates: “You start off as a group of 20 greenkeepers, and no one really knows each other, and by the end of those five months you feel like you’ve almost gained a second family.”

Vicky Elliott-Potter is the leadership trainer for FTMI and she urged ambitious turfcare professionals to get involved.

“FTMI is now bigger and better than ever before,” she said. “I would encourage anybody who is a deputy course manager or under that to apply for FTMI.”

“If you’ve got ambitions to be a future course manager or head greenkeeper or superintendent internationally in the greenkeeping industry, put your name in the hat.”

“I really hope to see you next September.”

Applications for the FTMI class of 2025 open 1 May. **GI**

## THE CLASS OF 2024

Miles Burnett, deputy head greenkeeper, Stonehaven  
 Mark Downing, deputy head greenkeeper, Launceston  
 Edoardo Fauro, assistant golf course superintendent, Cabot Saint Lucia  
 Stuart Fergusson, first assistant, Trump Turnberry  
 Ryan Fiander, deputy head greenkeeper, Lees Hall  
 Haydn Gray, first assistant, Royal Cinque Ports  
 Stevie-Jon Hood, first assistant, Crownwood Club  
 James Hyman, first assistant, The Berkshire  
 Dan Martin, irrigation manager, London  
 James Massey, deputy course manager, The Wilmslow  
 Matt McCreadie, greenkeeper, Tadmarton Heath  
 Gary Morrison, deputy course manager, Bruntsfield Links  
 Sam Norman, first assistant, Abbey Hill Golf Centre  
 Peter Pattenden, senior greenkeeper, Carden Park  
 Daniel Robson, first assistant, Castle Eden  
 Andrew Sellars, senior greenkeeper, The Grove  
 Charlie Sorrell, first assistant, Seaford  
 Mark Viner, deputy head greenkeeper, Ogbourne Downs  
 Gary Wilson, senior greenkeeper, Western Gailes

### What is FTMI?

Each year, Jacobsen and BIGGA invite 20 up-and-coming association members to participate in the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) – an intensive training programme that 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, FTMI has since expanded around the world, with similar schemes now operating in Spain, Portugal, Australia and New Zealand.

FTMI has been designed to provide practical tools and guidance to help candidates to pursue their career aspirations. Working with professional trainers, mentors, Jacobsen and BIGGA staff, graduates gain a clear understanding of what the future holds and a realistic overview of the expectations that come with the role of manager.

FTMI takes place at Ransomes Jacobsen's headquarters in Ipswich, online education sessions and two days of education at BTME.

Candidates are selected based on an anonymous judging criterion, with the panel gaining an insight into the achievements of each application, who must be educationally active on a national and regional level.



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# Member Interest

Where we meet your fellow turf professionals and share their stories

- The BIGGA Awards celebrate the exceptional work of greenkeepers across the country and beyond. Meet the 2025 winners in this special section



## 'Fighting to get back to square one' – vandals wreak havoc at Thorndon Park

Thorndon Park Course Manager David Byron was left "feeling sick" after vandals on quad bikes caused more than £100,000 worth of damage to the course.

The incident happened on a Sunday in January when David was at BTME, with three people driving on to the course on two machines and leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.

Initially told the 16th green had borne the brunt, David was shocked find out the full extent of the damage.

"They came over through our 17th tee on quad bikes and decided to go absolutely loopy and tore up six of the greens and load of tees and caused a bit of damage on the fairways.

"I couldn't believe it. It's just all that hard work that you put in and then

you see that level of damage. It just leaves you feeling sick," he said.

A neighbour caught the act on film when the perpetrators were on the 6th green and David believes his presence caused them to flee. The video was provided to the police for further investigation.

The arduous repair work began swiftly and even before David had returned from Harrogate, his team and a group of volunteers had cleared away the lumps of soil ahead of a downpour. Although the course was shut on the Monday, it reopened the following day, and by Thursday all 18 holes were in play.

Work to repair the greens was hampered by the weather but David and his team made full use of every

window of opportunity to get things back on track.

He said: "I was aiming for one green every three days. It's taken longer because of the weather, but when you break down the actual hours we've spent on each one, it's probably three-and-a-half days per green."

It has been a time of frustration, but David is looking ahead with optimism.

"You're upset to start with and there's an element of shock, but then you put your logical head on and say, 'Right, this is what we've got to achieve and this is how we do it,'" he said. "It feels like we're fighting to get back to square one, but if we can get back there then we can move forward – and we're looking forward to getting to that point." **GI**



# Kress<sup>®</sup>

# The BIGGA Celebration

The BIGGA Celebration welcomed BTME attendees to gather in the grand surroundings of Harrogate's Royal Hall to recognise the achievements of greenkeepers across the country and beyond.

Hosted by Sky Sports presenter Sarah Stirk and in association with Kress, the event provided an opportunity to celebrate everything that is good about the greenkeeping industry.

The BIGGA awards shine a light on the exceptional work of greenkeepers at all different levels, and the 2025 winners encapsulated that perfectly.

Each of the three headline categories crowned clubs, teams and individuals with fascinating stories to tell.

Many congratulations to all the winners and indeed the nominees, who were worthy and gracious finalists. **GI**



Scan the QR  
code to watch  
the BIGGA  
Celebration



GGA  
RATION  
25

ss



Outstanding Contribution  
Award with **Kress** 

# Stephen Bernhard



The Outstanding Achievement award is presented to a BIGGA member or members who have made an outstanding contribution above and beyond their normal working life. This can be for charity, for the betterment of the greenkeeping profession or association or generally for society.

**Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO:** "Stephen Bernhard has been an inspirational character in our industry for decades and, via his generous support, in particular of the BIGGA Delegation to the United States but also many other supportive acts, he has made positive contributions to countless careers in greenkeeping. His enthusiasm for greenkeeping and the wider sports turf and horticultural sectors have been undimmed with the passing of time and he has always sought to innovate and challenge where appropriate. Time spent with Stephen is always thought-provoking and I'm thrilled that we are able to recognise his outstanding contribution to our industry in this way."



## Stephen Bernhard described himself as "deeply honoured" to receive the Outstanding Contribution Award

**The founder of Bernhard and Company, Stephen's impact on the greenkeeping industry has been profound.**

With his steadfast commitment to education and professional development, he has provided countless opportunities for greenkeepers to achieve new heights, not least through his support of the BIGGA Delegation to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show and the establishment of the Bernhard Academy in 2019.

"I'm deeply, deeply honoured to have been given this surprise award," he said. "I can't imagine what you've been thinking about – you must be running short of appropriate candidates. I'm deeply honoured and surprised and thrilled."

Throughout his career, Stephen has subscribed to the belief that stronger and better-educated greenkeepers would benefit everyone associated with our industry.

Recent investment in the Bernhard Academy shows that time has not diminished this ambition, and his passion for the industry remains undimmed.

"It's a wonderful industry," he said. "BIGGA has done such a lot for all the members and for the industry at large, and I'm thrilled to play my part.

"It's been a very interesting, very long journey, a lot of fun, tremendous fun – opportunities that you can't imagine. It's a great, great industry to be in.

"I want to thank all of you most sincerely for

the honour you've bestowed upon me."

Steven Nixon was working as a greenkeeper when Stephen persuaded him to join Bernhard and Company. Having since ascended to the position of managing director, he owes a debt of gratitude to his friend and mentor.

**It's a wonderful industry"**

"Stephen gave me an opportunity back in 2000 when I was a greenkeeper at a little golf club in Sheffield," Steven explained. "I met him one Saturday morning and he tried to persuade me to work for him – I wasn't keen to be honest; I heard he was a hard man to work for!

"Stephen being Stephen, he wouldn't take no for an answer. I joined the team and he gave me the chance to go and live and work in America.

"I've gone right through the ranks and am now managing director, so for a guy who's been a greenkeeper with no business degree or education, the support and the faith that he put in me is incredible.

"He allowed me to make my mistakes but gave me confidence and kept pushing me on, and I'll forever be indebted to him for that.

"He's been an amazing boss, mentor and most importantly, a good friend." GI

Caption



Caption

### The origins of Bernhard and Company

Stephen Bernhard worked in his father Jeffrey's turf nursery and landscaping business from a young age. He expanded the export division of his father's business and created several other companies before purchasing Atterton and Ellis in Suffolk and renaming it Bernhard and Company in 1972. Throughout its history, Bernhard and Company has built a reputation for providing a range of innovative sharpening tools alongside educational support for greenkeepers and groundspeople. Working alongside Jacobsen, they developed a non-contact blade sharpening programme and became a leading name in spin grinding in the United States in the 1980s with its renowned Anglemaster and Express Dual machines. This culminated in Bernhard and Company becoming the first UK company to exhibit at the GCSAA's annual trade show.

Basil Brush revealed the winner of the Greenkeeping Project of the Year award, but it was Parkstone Course Manager Grant Peters who showed fox-like savvy in the way he handled the club's 1st tee and putting green redesign

Spanning four years of meticulous planning and overcoming challenges such as rising costs, COVID delays and adverse winter weather, the project transformed the club's entrance into a visually stunning and highly functional space. The completed work exemplifies excellence in sustainable and innovative course design.

Fittingly, the news of Parkstone's win was delivered via video message from the famous fox, with Grant having used the same medium to keep members up to speed on developments – a move that, alas, has not brought him the level of stardom enjoyed by Basil.

"We kept everyone up-to-date every Friday with a video," said Grant. "It was quite a lot of work, but a picture paints a thousand words.

**“I don't want to rest on this and there's still more we can do”**

"We were averaging about 400 hits, which is great, but I don't think I'm going to be able to retire and become a YouTube star!"

Key achievements include levelling the putting green and seamlessly integrating the area with Parkstone's renowned heathland aesthetic.

A collaborative in-house effort, aided by course shaper Shane Ringwood, involved constructing new practice nets, paths and drainage systems while incorporating transplanted heather for an environmentally harmonious finish.

For Grant, the award was a meaningful acknowledgement of a job well done at the end of a project that has been celebrated by members and visitors alike as a benchmark in greenkeeping innovation, enhancing both functionality and visual appeal.

"We spent so long working on what we believed to be an amazing in-house project, and this recognition is just the icing on the cake," he said.

"I think it's really important for work like this to be recognised in this way and it's an award that means a lot to the club and our members.

"Our ex-captain is a builder and he built the



The Greenkeeping Project of the Year award recognises those greenkeeping teams who have undertaken a specific project, completed within the past year. However, projects can be long term and may include course construction, renovation or rebuild. They particularly award innovative thinking and commitment to the project by the home greenkeeping team.

Greenkeeping Project of the Year with



# PARKSTONE GOLF CLUB

GREENKEEPING PROJECT OF THE YEAR  
WITH PRICE TURFCARE



starter's hut and the practice nets, so it was a big club effort, and this award is recognition for everyone's hard work."

Having invested so much time and effort into bringing this project to fruition, you might think Grant would be looking to steer clear of any major undertakings for a while – but you'd be wrong.

Speaking the week after BTME, he said: "I'm standing on the 18th green and we've got a quarter of it lifted. We have two cherry pickers in doing the driving range nets, and we're also doing some heathland work – and this is a quiet year for us!" **GI**

#### **General Manager James Fuller:**

"The planning that Grant Peters put into this project was astonishing. This covered the time frame, the budget, use of staff – and do not forget that while this was all happening, we were also producing and presenting a Top 100 golf course for members and their guests. I am proud to have supported a first-class team, under the guidance of a first-class course manager, to produce a vision that has been five years in the planning."

#### Project outline

- Strip and store putting green turf
- Remove rhododendron and scrub to the right of the tee
- Strip work site, level putting green, grade banks, raise tee
- Build tee and green to USGA spec
- Relay existing putting green turf for fast establishment and continuity to all 18 greens
- Lay 700m<sup>2</sup> of heather transplanted from Arne nature reserve
- Construction of new bespoke in-house practice nets



## Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year with



# Morlais Castle



The team at Morlais Castle could not contain their delight after being called on to the stage as winners of the prestigious Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year award

Despite having a greenkeeping crew of just three, the Merthyr Tydfil venue provided an immaculate stage for the Welsh Team Championship.

The judges selected them as winners ahead of the other, more established finalists from Woburn and Burnham & Berrow due to their commitment to including the local community in the hosting of the event.

Head Greenkeeper Stewart Freeman collected the award alongside his wife, Tessa, who also helped with greenkeeping tasks during the championship.

"It's an amazing honour for the club," said Stewart. "The team spirit has been a big part of it."

"I've had 40 years in greenkeeping and when I came here I thought I'd try to use that to help put us on the map."

The club heaped praise on the team in a congratulatory

message on Facebook.

"The presentation of the course in 2024 was beyond exceptional," it read. "The work put in by Stewart, Gabriel [Thomas], Peter [Bailey] and Tessa [Freeman] has been nothing short of remarkable."

"We are beyond proud as a club to receive this award as recognition for all the effort put in by our greens staff."

"A special thank you to all the volunteers who assisted the green staff in the build-up to the Welsh Team Championship, the evenings spent filling divots, cleaning benches, etc have certainly paid off."

"There is no golf club like Morlais Castle Golf Club when it comes to support. As a club we would like to congratulate our amazing greenkeeping staff on receiving this award, you are all a credit to Morlais Castle Golf Club." **GI**

Morlais Castle

#### What the judges said

"Their achievements far exceeded the expected limitations of a three-strong team working to an extremely limited budget. Their creativity in sourcing funding to support their maintenance regime and their enthusiasm to engage the local community really put the Welsh venue on the golfing map and provided an inspiration to the local community, with the club and its greenkeepers at the centre of it all."



Welsh Team Championship

Celebrations as Morlais Castle are announced as the winners



### Small team, big heart

The task of producing a championship-standard course with just three full-time greenkeeping staff is a tough one indeed, but Morlais Castle saw it as an opportunity and not a problem.

With significant improvements having been made to the course and club infrastructure over the preceding years, the South Wales venue was more than ready.

Stewart Freeman, who joined the club in 2018 and became head greenkeeper in 2020, offered an insight into the work required to ensure the stage was set for 32 qualifying teams from across Wales to descend on his course.

"Preparation specifically targeted at the Welsh Team Championship started in January 2024," he said.

"We had new paths built by a contractor, though much of this work was delayed from 2023 due to bad weather and not restarted until May 2024.

"This was ongoing until the week before the competition. As a result, we were taking down soil stones and seeding right up until week before. This meant some of the area was inevitably GUR.

"We also built new tees specifically for the championship, which then had to be turfed and cut by hand regularly."

Stewart continued: "General maintenance continued as usual, but we were also faced with damage to greens which we had to repair shortly before the tournament. Course signage was cleaned and replaced where necessary."

**The Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year** award recognises that the success of any tournament depends upon the expertise and dedication of the greenkeeping team. From the lowest club championship through to golf's professional tours – all are only made possible due to the work of greenkeepers who go above and beyond to present the finest playing surfaces possible.



"In the final weeks leading to the championships, we divoted tees and removed unsafe trees in between keeping on top of cutting the course.

"This was challenging with only three greenkeepers and we were grateful that my wife came in to help divot, move markers, edge bunkers and change holes."

He added: "We also coordinated club volunteers in repairing divots on fairways, planting and maintaining flower beds."

# MARK MERRITT WILLIAM MORRIS IAN PEMBERTON DALE ROBERTSON RICHARD WHITMAN DEREK WILSON

Life Members



NINELL  
MERRITT  
ERTON  
ERTSON  
WHYMAN  
LSON



**Life Membership:**

## **BIGGA's GREATEST HONOUR**

The dedication of six  
BIGGA members was  
recognised at BTME

Life Membership was bestowed  
upon the six deserving recipients.

The distinction is awarded at  
the discretion of the Board of  
Management to any full member  
whose contribution to the association  
or profession has merited such  
recognition.

This latest cohort to receive BIGGA's  
greatest honour have between them  
dedicated centuries to the industry  
and not only witnessed vast changes  
and improvements in that time but  
been pivotal in bringing them about.

2025 Life Members Richard Whyman, Ian  
Pemberton, Billy Merritt, Mark Mennell and  
BIGGA President Ronnie Myles

**“ I thank BIGGA for all the support over the years”**

**Mark Mennell**

Mark recently retired from Fulford Golf Club after 50 years' service, 30 of which were as head greenkeeper. A strong supporter of BIGGA throughout his career, Mark hosted many events including the National Championships, and always encouraged his team to be involved and to progress. Many of his former colleagues have gone on to significant careers in the industry, including Adam Newton, now a senior championship agronomist for The R&A.

Mark takes with him an astonishing record of greenkeeping life at Fulford. The first entry relating to the club, in a diary his mother bought him for his 15th birthday, states simply, "Started at Fulford Golf Club. £16 a week wage. Loving it so far"

Mark added: "There's never been a day when I've not wanted to get on my bike and come to work, I have loved it."

**Ian Pemberton**

Ian has been described as the heartbeat of the Cleveland Section for decades, sometimes running the show single-handedly. Ian gave many years of loyal service to Cleveland Golf Club until his time there ended in 2024.

"This job is a vocation," he said. "I've worked with some great lads who bought into my philosophy of making our golf courses great. It's been a blast and I thank BIGGA for all the support over the years."

Ian has always been generous with his time, acting as a sounding board for aspiring greenkeepers, and only too willing to share his wisdom. Never one to shy away from taking a leading role, Ian also developed a reputation as somewhat of a comedian, with a ready supply of jokes to lighten the mood on any occasion.

**Richard Whyman**

Richard has been involved with BIGGA throughout his career, holding almost every role at Section, Region and National level culminating with him serving as association chairman in 2006. More recently he served for four years again on the National Board as guardian.

Always a champion of traditional greenkeeping, he has enjoyed an exceptional links career first at Bude & North Cornwall and latterly at Burnham & Berrow, where he was responsible for significant course improvements and upgrades and oversaw National and R&A events. "My heart has always been in the association and always will be," he said.

A boyhood Leeds fan, Richard – whose son Andrew is himself a course manager – can gladly claim to have enjoyed more success in his career than he has witnessed at Elland Road over the years.

**“ My heart has always been in the association and always will be”**

**Billy Merritt**

Billy has been in greenkeeping all his life and throughout his career has been a fervent supporter of BIGGA. He has held various roles within the North West Section, including treasurer, for decades and been a regular fixture in the Open Support Team, which has proven to be one of the great joys of his working life.

"I've done 24 Opens in total and it has really been the highlight of my greenkeeping career," said Billy, who is a keen cross-country runner and has been known to run from The Open venues back to the BIGGA accommodation. "It's great to go out there with some of the best players in the world – I've even got one of Tiger Woods' golf balls."

**Dale Robertson**

Dale has been a mainstay of the North of Scotland Section, serving as Section Secretary for 10 years. He has and continues to support and attend every event within the Section. While course manager at Newmachar, he always ensured his team were members of and engaged with BIGGA. Dale was a member of the Scottish Region Board and is now involved with the Scottish Region Legacy Group.

He has worked tirelessly to promote the association and the greenkeeping industry, having been involved for over 40 years and worked around the country. A highly respected figure, Dale has provided mentorship and guidance to his fellow members throughout his distinguished career.

**Derek Wilson**

Derek has served Irvine Bogside Golf Club for 50 years and remains there to this day. Throughout that time, he has been a stalwart of the South West of Scotland (formerly Ayrshire) Section, serving as secretary and chairman, and also served on the Scottish board for many years.

He has and continues to attend every event that is held within the South West of Scotland area and will encourage others to do likewise. As Course Manager of Irvine Golf Club, Derek ensured that team members were offered the opportunity of joining BIGGA and supported their participation and engagement in opportunities and events provided by the association.

He has worked tirelessly to promote the association and the greenkeeping industry, having been involved for over 50 years. **GI**



## Sprayer Operator of the Year Award:

# Peter Pattenden



Carden Park's Peter Pattenden added another prestigious award to his collection after being named the Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year (ASOOTY).

Peter, who was crowned the 2022 Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year, saw off strong competition from fellow finalists Sarah Phillips of Complete Weed Control and Mark Sippitt of TopGrass UK.

Sponsored by ICL and Syngenta and managed by the Amenity Forum, the ASOOTY awards seek to share top tips and advice that will raise the standards of spray application across the amenity industry.

Although no stranger to collecting prizes, Peter was particularly proud to hear his name read out in Harrogate.

"This one means so, so much," he said. "It's something that takes so much work, so much practice to really narrow in on.

"It's all the extra stuff I've done after work, all the extra reading and researching, and to know that it's paying off and everything's moving the right direction means everything."

Peter was among the latest FTMI cohort, with his fellow graduates affording him a rapturous applause as he accepted his award. He had not been shy in disclosing to them his career ambitions.

"I said in the classroom, I'm going to shoot for the moon and land amongst the stars," he said.

"That's my goal and that's what I'm going to do – keep pushing myself as far as I can and see where it takes me."

The ASOOTY judges praised Peter's commitment to complete a comprehensive checklist of mechanical and practical points before every application, including calibration of the sprayer and assessment of the specific requirements for any products being used.

"Although only a relatively young age, Peter ably demonstrated a deep understanding of the principles of sprayer mechanics and operation, along with the implication of how any changes could impact on application," said Syngenta Technical Manager Sean Loakes.

"He also showed an excellent awareness of the environmental aspects of good sprayer operation that

will mitigate any impact of off-target spray drift or over-application.

"His commitment and attention to achieving accurate application was exemplary and makes him a great role model for other sprayer operators to learn from."

The judges also highlighted how Peter had embraced new technologies in a move towards precision application to ensure more of the products hit the intended target, as well as adopting digital tools including sprayer set up advice, turf management apps and application record keeping.

ICL Landscape & Industrial Business Development Manager Lewis Blois added: "We were once again hugely impressed with all the finalists' dedication to ensuring every application is made as effectively as possible.

"They all take exceptional care, as well as immense pride that they have made a real difference with a job well done.

"This year the awards have recognised the range of spray application techniques and the differing skills involved across the amenity sector. It will provide a unique and vitally important resource for all involved in spray application."

Presenting the award at BTME, Ian Graham, chairman of the Amenity Forum, said: "The skills required to competently apply professional plant protection products are often overlooked. Along with the formal training and accreditation process, there is the experience that takes years to acquire.

"Winners of this award have elevated the application process to an art, be that with a knapsack or a boom sprayer, to help create great playing surfaces all year round, managing amenity areas efficiently and cost effectively, along with maintaining immaculate lawns for customers," he added.

"The Amenity Forum is delighted to work with ICL and Syngenta as the sponsors of this award and would like to congratulate Peter for upholding the highest of professional standards." **GI**

# Celebrating success



Alongside the BIGGA Awards showpiece, a number of other success stories were acknowledged in front of an appreciative crowd.

Graduates of the Future Turf Managers Initiative (FTMI) were welcomed on stage, Otter Creek's Brent Downs received his certificate as the 90th Master Greenkeeper, and all those who achieved CPD milestones in 2024 were recognised.

Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Jack Vowell and Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Daniel Parker made an appearance, while BIGGA Photographic Competition prize-winner Joe Simpson was also honoured, marking a hat-trick of victories for the Ipswich greenkeeper.

The Belfry's Anna Nilsson got her moment in the spotlight after receiving the BIGGA-sponsored Women in Turfcare category at the Women in Golf Awards, while Ronnie Myles was also formally introduced as BIGGA's new president, succeeding John Keenaghan. **GI**

2



# BRENT DOWNS

## Greenkeeper #90

3



1. BIGGA Members recognised for achieving CPD Milestones in 2024
2. BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton
3. Otter Creek's Brent Downs (right) receives his Master Greenkeeper certificate
4. BIGGA Photographic Competition winner Joe Simpson (left)
5. Sarah Stirk (right) meets Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Jack Vowell (middle) and Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Daniel Parker (left)

4



5



# Latest job vacancies

## Course Manager/Golf Club Director

Carlisle Golf Club, Cumbria



Due to retirement, Carlisle Golf Club are pleased to announce the exciting opportunity for the position of Course Manager/Director. Carlisle Golf Club is a parkland golf course situated on the edge of the beautiful Lake District, originally founded in 1908, and designed by Theodore Moon. The course has held Open Championship Regional Qualifying rounds on 7 occasions as well as numerous PGA, EGU and County Championship events. It is widely regarded as one of the best inland courses in the North of England. The club have made considerable investment in recent years including a full bunker restoration, drainage and a commitment to a machinery replacement programme

The club is looking for a highly motivated Course Manager, who will also be an Executive Director with a seat on the Golf Club Board. You will be directly involved in all aspects of the development and management of the golf course along with all other golf club related matters.

This is a full-time position, and salary will be commensurate with the significance of this role within the organisation.

To apply for this role please email [manager@carlislegolfclub.org](mailto:manager@carlislegolfclub.org) with a covering letter explaining your interest in the role, along with an up-to-date CV.

[www.carlislegolfclub.org](http://www.carlislegolfclub.org)

Closing date for applications Monday 31st March 2025

## First Assistant Greenkeeper

Chipstead Golf Club, Surrey



We are seeking an experienced and highly motivated individual to join our team at Chipstead Golf Club. The successful candidate will work alongside our Course Manager in maintaining the golf course to a high standard, including mowing banks, rough and semi-rough, surrounds and approaches, tees, greens and fairways.

You must have an NVQ Level 2 and have a basic knowledge of health and safety regulations. PA1, 2 & 6 certificates are desirable. You will need to work weekends and bank holidays on a rota system and be a team player with a keen eye for detail.

£28,000-£30,000 per annum

We offer BIGGA membership, golf privileges, full uniform, education and training opportunities.

Please send a full CV and covering letter to:

[Hayley.Petrie@eic.co.uk](mailto:Hayley.Petrie@eic.co.uk)

Closing date for applications: Friday 14th March 2025.

## Assistant Greenkeeper

JCB Golf & Country Club, Staffordshire



JCB Golf and Country Club are looking to recruit multiple Assistant Greenkeepers as we look to significantly expand our team ahead of LIV Golf UK by JCB 2025.

The successful applicants will be responsible for carrying out golf course maintenance duties, as directed. Work involves a variety of duties to manage and maintain the golf course, ensuring that it is always presented in the best possible condition for our members and guests.

This is your chance to join a company in JCB, that values expertise, not only in rewards but also in real employee care. Salary: Competitive – with Benefits

To apply for this position: Please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [golf.admin@jcb.com](mailto:golf.admin@jcb.com)

Closing date: Friday 7th March

## Course Manager

Drayton Park Golf Club Tamworth, Staffordshire



Drayton Park Golf Club is a private members' club nestled in the heart of Staffordshire, renowned for its beautifully maintained course. Established in 1897, this James Braid classic is seeking a passionate, skilled and motivated Course Manager to lead our greenkeeping team.

As the Course Manager, you will ensure our golf course is maintained to the highest standards, providing an excellent playing environment. Reporting to the Course Director, you'll oversee daily operations, lead the greenkeeping team and drive course improvement projects.

### How to Apply

If you're passionate about delivering high standards and ready to take on an exciting challenge, we'd love to hear from you.

Please email covering letter and CV to Course Director

Richard Hunt at [recruitment@draytonparkgc.co.uk](mailto:recruitment@draytonparkgc.co.uk)

Applications close Friday 7th March 2025.

## Grounds Assistant

JCB Golf & Country Club, Staffordshire



JCB Golf and Country Club are looking to recruit a Grounds Assistant as we look to significantly expand our team ahead of LIV Golf UK by JCB 2025.

The successful applicant will be responsible for landscaped property surrounds, woodland and planting areas. Work involves a variety of duties to manage and maintain the golf course grounds, ensuring that it is always presented in the best possible condition for our members and guests.

This is your chance to join a company in JCB, that values expertise, not only in rewards but also in real employee care. Salary: Competitive – with Benefits

To apply for this position: Please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [golf.admin@jcb.com](mailto:golf.admin@jcb.com)

Closing date: Friday 7th March

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](http://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](mailto:info@bigga.co.uk)

## Grounds Supervisor

**JCB Golf & Country Club, Staffordshire**

JCB Golf and Country Club are looking to recruit a Grounds Supervisor as we look to significantly expand our team ahead of LIV Golf UK by JCB 2025.

The successful applicant will be responsible for landscaped property surrounds, planting areas, whilst supervising Grounds Assistants. Work involves a variety of duties to manage and maintain the golf course grounds, ensuring that it is always presented in the best possible condition for our members and guests.

This is your chance to join a company in JCB, that values expertise, not only in rewards but also in real employee care. Salary: Competitive – with Benefits

**To apply for this position: Please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [golf.admin@jcb.com](mailto:golf.admin@jcb.com)**

**Closing date: Friday 7th March**



## Senior Greenkeeper

**JCB Golf & Country Club, Staffordshire**

JCB Golf and Country Club are looking to recruit a Senior Greenkeeper as we look to significantly expand our team ahead of LIV Golf UK by JCB 2025.

The successful applicant will be responsible for carrying out golf course maintenance duties, whilst supervising other greenkeepers. Work involves a variety of duties to manage and maintain the golf course, ensuring that it is always presented in the best possible condition for our members and guests. This is your chance to join a company in JCB, that values expertise, not only in rewards but also in real employee care. Salary: Competitive – with Benefits

**To apply for this position: Please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [golf.admin@jcb.com](mailto:golf.admin@jcb.com)**

**Closing date: Friday 7th March**



## Senior Greenkeeper In-Training

**JCB Golf & Country Club, Staffordshire**

JCB Golf and Country Club are looking to recruit a Senior Greenkeeper In-Training as we look to significantly expand our team ahead of LIV Golf UK by JCB 2025.

The successful applicant will be responsible for carrying out golf course maintenance, shadowing Senior Greenkeepers. Work involves a variety of duties to manage and maintain the golf course, ensuring that it is always presented in the best possible condition for our members and guests.

This is your chance to join a company in JCB, that values expertise, not only in rewards but also in real employee care. Salary: Competitive – with Benefits

**To apply for this position: Please send a copy of your CV and cover letter to [golf.admin@jcb.com](mailto:golf.admin@jcb.com)**

**Closing date: Friday 7th March**



## Qualified Greenkeeper

**Machynys Peninsula Golf & Country Club, MACHYNYS Wales**

Machynys Peninsula Golf & Country Club is a Nicklaus designed modern links Championship course based in South Wales. We are seeking to recruit a Qualified Greenkeeper with the following attributes:

A minimum of NVQ level 2 in Sports Turf and Management or equivalent; a minimum of 2 years' experience as an Assistant Greenkeeper; be competent in the use of a wide variety of machinery; must have a positive work ethic.

This is a wonderful opportunity to work on a Nicklaus Design Championship Course.

A competitive salary plus overtime depending on qualifications and experience.

For full details applicants should apply via e-mail to Marcus Weaver (Course Manager)

[Marcus.weaver@machynys.com](mailto:Marcus.weaver@machynys.com)

**Closing date for applications: Friday 14th March 2025**



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# Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge



**Course Manager Callum Goodhind discusses the biggest project in Wilmslow's history as it nears completion**

When I first joined Wilmslow just over a year ago, we had a major project on our hands - the biggest in the club's history, with the irrigation system requiring a complete overhaul. This month we're coming to the end of that project.

I arrived in time to be involved in the tender process for the contractor and the system we would go for. We settled on Irrigation Control from Warrington and a full Toro system including their Toro Lynx software. The installation work began in October and is scheduled to run until April.

The project includes the replacement of everything that's underground, so a new main line and adding sprinklers to greens approaches, tees, walk-off areas and green surrounds. We've moved the tank

location, which has required a new electricity supply to the driving range, and we've moved the pump house to the driving range, which has meant we need a new transfer system from Mobberley Brook. It covers just about everything you can think of.

The installation has gone very smoothly, with minimal impact on the members. They may see the team of contractors on site, but we've been able to keep everything moving with only occasional temporary greens.



Our weekly newsletter keeps them informed, but otherwise they've been largely unaware of the overhaul happening behind the scenes.

My role has been to project manage the installation, working closely with the contractors but keeping my own greenkeeping team focused on our regular winter maintenance programme.

We've taken on the final turfing work ourselves as we want to ensure the



**What we do in... March**

Club: Wilmslow, Cheshire

quality of the fine turf areas. By the end of March, we're aiming to have all the new greens, tees and approaches fully installed and the system pressurised and fine-tuned.

Then it will be about enjoying the benefits of this new state-of-the-art irrigation for the upcoming season and beyond. No more worrying about under or over-watering – we'll have full control.

Ultimately, this project is about setting us up for long-term success, both in terms of course conditioning and agronomic improvements.

I'm proud of how the team has risen to the challenge. I can't wait to see what we're able to achieve with this new irrigation system powering our efforts. **GI**



**I'm proud of how the team has risen to the challenge"**

Water management strategies need to balance actual soil moisture and turf rooting, with data on ET rates.



# Spring dry down

Evapotranspiration (ET) is a key metric to manage moisture. Tracking ET rates in spring could trigger an early start for wetting agents.



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[www.sygentaturf.co.uk](http://www.sygentaturf.co.uk)

Newspaper headlines of impending drought have dried up after successive years of wet autumn and winter conditions. But with the onset of the spring growing season for turf, the effects of moisture deficit can be evident in just hours, particularly on light soils or sand construction greens.

Irrigation can help to mitigate the worst of the effects and keep turf alive. However, limitations in the availability of water - for both its cost and sustainable supply - and the logistics of scheduling around play will make turf especially susceptible to damage in the early season.

Even in early spring evapotranspiration rates can reach over 5mm a day,

when just a few days without rain will see water deficits and soil moisture availability fall below a shallow root zone in short time.

Now is the time to set up a moisture management dashboard on the Turf Advisor App tailored to your course, including the evapotranspiration module; humidity; leaf wetness; air temperature and soil temperature will all influence dry down and moisture availability.

Improving the efficiency of water use and promoting plant health to make better use of available moisture is ever more important, as resources become scarcer and demand for consistent surfaces increases.

Early intervention with planned

**Why you should start a wetting agent programme earlier in the spring:**

- Prevention of hydrophobic dry patch
- Improved root mass development in moist soils
- Available soil moisture to distribute treatment in the profile
- Wetting agents remain effective for longer in cooler conditions
- Better uptake of soluble nutrients to support growth
- Create better balance of air and water spaces



Author: Sean Loakes, Syngenta  
Technical Manager UK & Ireland

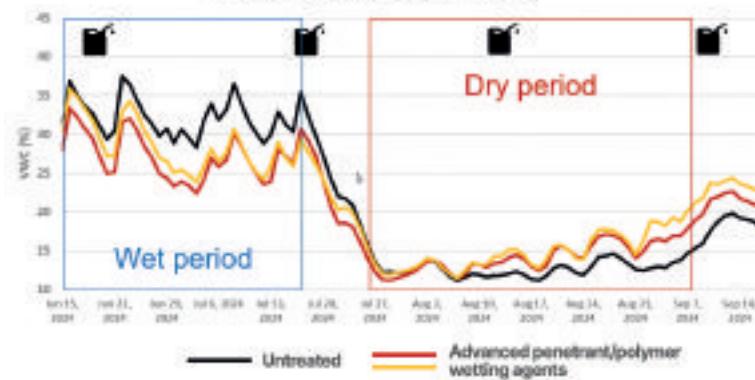
agronomy measures to manage moisture in the soil profile, along with promoting plant health and rooting, can significantly enhance turf quality and resilience to summer stresses

#### Remote sensing

While Turf Advisor weather data and modelling provides useful data, benchmarking that with how your course reacts to evapotranspiration rates and rainfall levels enables far more accurate turf management decisions. Installing remote sensors in the soil to continuously capture moisture and temperature data, such as the SPIIO used in Syngenta research trials, quickly builds a picture of what is happening in real time in the root zone.

Figure 1. Average daily Volumetric Moisture Content (VMC)

- Treatments applied every 4 weeks -



Combining the data information with assessment of your actual turf rooting - measuring the root depth from soil cores and assessing mass through the root zone - is essential in making a moisture management plan and adapting agronomy programmes.

Wetting agent technology now has the capability to move water down from the surface to maintain playability and open air spaces for root development, while also retaining moisture deeper in the soil profile.

New research has indicated that starting wetting agents sooner in the season, when there is still moisture in the profile, helps to move and distribute applications where they will best be utilised to efficiently use resources, rather than the traditional approach of dealing with already dry soils.

Trials have shown starting Qualibra programmes early in the spring resulted in no increase in retained moisture in the top 6 cm of the soil profile after rain or irrigation, but a 21% enhancement at 6-8 cm and 17% at 10-12 cm, compared to untreated.

There is also strong evidence that wetting agent applications when soils are cooler earlier in the season will give extended benefits, compared to later treatments when soils have warmed up and products degrade faster. The earlier approach is especially important for the prevention of hydrophobic soils and dry patch developing.

Research has shown how combined penetrant and polymer formulations can help keep soils drier during excessive wet periods, yet hold moisture during times of high evapotranspiration and low rainfall/irrigation (Fig 1).

Turf plants are reliant on soil moisture for the uptake of nutrients

dissolved in water. Nutrient deficiency can be especially evident in early spring as plant growth kicks off – particularly in turf at low heights of cut or minimal rooting with limited reserves of carbohydrate to remobilise for growth.

#### Stress effects

The effects are far more severe where a plant is under stress and less able to generate its own energy. With multiple stress effects often in play in early spring, including nutrient, moisture, light, heat and mechanical damage, biostimulants have a valuable role in mitigating these effects and supporting plant health.

Stress factors that increase susceptibility to summer disease risks, including dollar spot and particularly anthracnose, have been associated with longer periods of infection and the severity of any attack. Supporting plant health with biostimulants is a key part of an Integrated Turf Management (ITM) approach, as well as enhancing the efficacy and duration of disease control with fungicides, such as Ascernity and Heritage.

Using effective wetting agent technologies to avoid wet and dry cycles and resulting onset of dry patch can help to suppress conditions for fairy ring to thrive, as well as mask any of the effects with healthier turf growth.

Moisture management that starts in early spring, before the effects of dry down stress impact on turf quality, will utilise available resources more effectively rather than waiting until later in the season when there is limited opportunity for recovery.



Follow the conversation

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## NEW in the UK for 2025

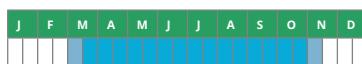


Olmix  
Technology  
  
R  
SEANERGY®

### Melgreen SPRINTER

*Supporting turf during establishment and the beginning of the season*

Thanks to the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY®, combined with manganese, Melgreen SPRINTER boosts root activity and photosynthesis in turfgrass, starting from the end of winter, during overseeding operations or during the establishment of new turf areas.



Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 3 ltr / ha

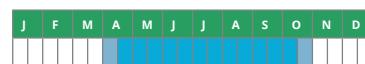


Olmix  
Technology  
  
R  
SEALICA®

### Melgreen ELITE

*Enhance the resistance of turfgrass to stress*

Melgreen ELITE is based on R-SEALICA® technology, a patented combination of the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® and a specific monomeric silica. R-SEALICA® technology activates the plant's genes involved in defense reactions against abiotic stresses, thereby enhancing the resilience of turfgrass.



Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 3 - 5 ltr / ha

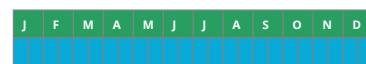


Olmix  
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### Melgreen ARMOR

*Preserve leaf quality and support the protection strategy*

Melgreen ARMOR combines the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® with highly efficient micronized copper to provide a nutritional supplement to turf protection programs and maintain the integrity and proper functioning of the leaf blades that make up the turf.



Pack Size: 5 ltr

Application: 2.5 ltr / ha

Olmix products are exclusively available from Collier Turf Care - [collier-turf-care.co.uk](http://collier-turf-care.co.uk)



# Treble winners

Lister Wilder sweep the board at Baroness dealer awards!

After a record-breaking year of growth and success, Baroness UK celebrated achievements at BTME 2025 with the return of their annual dealer awards. For the first time, the three categories of Highest Overall Machinery Sales, Highest Growth in Machinery Sales and Salesperson of the Year we're all won by the team at Lister Wilder!

The Baroness UK dealer awards were introduced to recognise the outstanding individual and team efforts across the nationwide network. While it's fair to say that 2024

presented its share of challenges, it was Lister Wilder who emerged as the winners of all three categories – achieving the treble and clean-sweep for the very first time. Alongside the team awards for overall sales and highest growth in machinery sales, the individual 'Salesperson of the Year' award was presented to Lister Wilder's David Gray.

"It was a huge surprise, and an incredible honour to find out we'd scooped all three awards" comments Phill Hughes, Sales Director for Lister Wilder. "I am especially pleased for

David Gray who has championed Baroness and shown his total dedication to our golf customers over the last twelve months. This recognition goes some way to reward him for all the hard work he's put in. Of course, we couldn't achieve what we have without the support of Team Baroness and our aftersales departments, so we'd like to thank them all as we look ahead to another positive year."

"All of our dealers have put in an incredible effort throughout 2024 and it becoming our best year yet



**BARONESS**  
Quality on Demand

would simply not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our entire network" adds Baroness UK Sales Director Adam Butler. "We continue to strive for the very best equipment matched by world-leading backup, and we're getting there year-on-year. The whole team at Baroness UK extend huge congratulations to David and the Lister Wilder team and thank all our dealers and customers for their unwavering and ongoing support."



Scan Me to  
find out more

Left: The Lister Wilder team, winners of the Highest Overall Machinery Sales and Highest Growth in Machinery Sales awards Below: Lister Wilder's David Gray receiving his Salesperson of the Year award at BTME



# A sustainable solution: robotic mowers

Emission-free grass care for greenkeepers

As sustainability gains importance for golf courses and large grass areas, greenkeepers are increasingly looking for efficient and cost-effective methods to lower their carbon footprints.

Robotic mowers offer a modern solution, integrating advanced technology with zero emissions for environmentally conscious grass care. Kress RTKn robotic mowers exemplify these innovations by providing antenna-free, zero emissions, reliable performance.

## Addressing seasonal grass care challenges

Maintaining a well-kept golf course can be challenging, particularly when working under time constraints and dealing with varying weather

conditions. As the grass begins to grow with brighter days ahead, robotic mowers can be the first machines out on the course. Their lighter body weight prevents damage to wet grass, making them ideal for early-season mowing.

Many robotic mowers are specifically designed to handle these conditions efficiently, performing reliably in wet weather and ensuring consistent cutting during periods of rapid grass growth.

## Addressing staff shortages

Robotic mowers allow staff to focus on more important tasks, using their skills where they are needed most rather than spending time on routine mowing. This helps to enhance overall productivity while

 **With staff recruitment proving increasingly difficult, robotic mowers offer a cost-effective solution"**



**“As the grass begins to grow with brighter days ahead, robotic mowers can be the first machines out on the course”**



addressing staffing shortages. With staff recruitment proving increasingly difficult, robotic mowers offer a cost-effective solution. The price of three mowers is comparable to the annual minimum wage of one employee, yet they can operate for over 20 hours a day, seven days a week, covering vast areas with ease.

#### Precision and performance

Robotic mowers are designed to deliver autonomous precision and consistency in grass maintenance. Operating quietly and without emissions, they provide an alternative to traditional petrol-powered equipment. For example, transitioning to robotic mowers can significantly reduce carbon emissions on large properties, making them an

attractive choice for those prioritising sustainability. For instance, the advanced RTKn technology in Kress robotic mowers demonstrates how robotic solutions can achieve high levels of precision and reliability, without the need for unsightly antennas on your premises.

#### Quiet and safe operation

One of the standout features of robotic mowers is their near-silent operation. This allows greenkeepers to schedule mowing at any time, without causing disruptions to nearby residents and players. Additionally, these machines can reduce certain safety risks such as staff exposure to hazardous conditions or repetitive strain injuries associated with traditional mowing.

Kress RTKn mowers, known for their quiet operation, illustrate the benefits of advanced robotic technology in reducing noise and enhancing safety.

#### A consideration for the future

Investing in robotic mowers offers long-term benefits. Their advanced technology and efficiency provide operational savings over time while aligning with sustainability goals.

For greenkeepers and golf course managers aiming to reduce environmental impact and improve



grass quality, robotic mower - such as the Kress RTKn models - present a forward-thinking solution for sustainable course management.

# Melgreen: Thalassotherapy for turfgrass

Trampling, slipping, tackles... and mowing!

The daily life of sports turf is no less demanding than that of the athletes. So why not use thalassotherapy to maintain them?



Olmix collects red seaweeds in an environmentally responsible manner, ensuring the natural replenishment of the resource.

Sports turf, like athletes, are subjected to constant and sometimes intense stresses. Similar to athletes, they need to be prepared in anticipation of events and recover after exertion. While seaweeds are well-known for their benefits to the bodies of our champions, their virtues for turfgrass are perhaps less recognised, yet...

## Red seaweeds to stimulate physiology and enhance turfgrass resistance

Rich in marine trace elements and proteins, red seaweeds also contain specific sugars unique to algae, such as carrageenans and floridosides, which have numerous bioactive properties on plants.

The company Olmix harvests the red seaweeds *Solieria chordalis* from the French coasts of Brittany and the Pays de la Loire in order to extract the active compounds at its state-of-the-art biorefinery located in central Brittany.

Concentrated in the R-SEANERGY® technology, these ingredients activate receptors on the surface of plants leaves and trigger metabolic stimulation reactions including: increased photosynthesis, stimulation of root growth, enhanced nutrient absorption, and activation of stress resistance mechanisms.

Based on the concentrated extract of red seaweed R-SEANERGY®, Olmix has developed the Melgreen range of foliar solutions, designed for the maintenance and improvement of sports turf.



## Melgreen SPRINTER: Supporting turf during establishment and the beginning of the season

The vigor of turfgrass rooting is a key factor in its quality and longevity. Unfortunately, trampling and uprooting, which are inherent to the use of sports fields, as well as the frequent renewal of grass, leave little time for plants to develop a dense and deep root system. Thanks to the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY®, combined with manganese, Melgreen SPRINTER boosts root activity and photosynthesis in turfgrass, starting from the end of winter, during overseeding operations or during the establishment of new turf.

## Melgreen ARMOR: Preserve leaf quality and support the protection strategy

The accumulation of energy by the plant and the robustness of its tissues are essential for achieving healthy and high-quality turf throughout the year. To achieve this, it is crucial to maintain optimal leaf quality in order to ensure efficient photosynthesis and the vitality

of the turf, regardless of the season. Melgreen ARMOR combines the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® with highly efficient micronized copper to provide a nutritional supplement to turf protection programs and maintain the integrity and proper functioning of the leaf blades that make up the turf.

## Melgreen ELITE: Enhance the resistance of turfgrass to stress

In periods of intensive use, grass is subjected to numerous stresses caused, not only by sports activities, but also by maintenance operations and increasingly pronounced climatic stresses. These stresses impair the plant's ability to properly absorb nutrients and maintain optimal physiology. Melgreen ELITE is based on R-SEALICA® technology, a patented combination of the red seaweed extract R-SEANERGY® and a specific monomeric silica. R-SEALICA® technology activates the plant's genes involved in defense reactions against abiotic stresses, thereby enhancing the resilience of turfgrass.

## COLLIER® TURF CARE

For more information on Melgreen and other Olmix products, contact Collier Turf Care on **012328 700600** or email [sales@collier-turf-care.co.uk](mailto:sales@collier-turf-care.co.uk)

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# Helping grasses to recover after another wet winter

There are so many factors to consider – but weather conditions invariably have the final word

You will be looking ahead to the transition of the golf course into spring season conditioning following another long and arduous winter. Last month's column discussed the benefit of hindsight, looking at how the condition of the golf course had been influenced by a second consecutive year of prevailing wet conditions and the last few months have seen periods of sustained disease pressure.

Microdochium Nivale (fusarium patch disease) has profited from periods of climatic pressure with winter humidity leading to several sustained periods of 24-hour leaf wetness, particularly in shaded areas. Some level of scarring was almost inevitable.

**“ Managing golfer expectation is always a challenge. It is unrealistic to expect a guarantee of 100 per cent disease-free surfaces”**

Managing golfer expectation is always a challenge, especially in the winter months and during the transition to spring. It is unrealistic for the golfer to expect a guarantee of 100 per cent disease-free surfaces.

The climate, environmental conditions, use of the course and limits of how integrated disease management programmes can counter these challenges all create a fine balance, which will occasionally tip in favour of the pathogen.

Success will come from maintaining playability with firm and resilient playing surfaces – and controlling any major development and spread

of disease. The objective will be to achieve recovery and an easier transition into main season conditions.

Grass type is also a factor with some species offering a head start over others. Annual meadow-grass greens often start the season weak and pockmarked, and before any reasonable surfaces can result, these areas need to thicken and fill in. The recovery process occurs slowly as adult plants produce seed – which in turn germinates and establishes.

This process can be a very slow one, particularly through more intensively used and trafficked centres, poorly drained low areas or shaded and sheltered greens where sunlight and airflow levels are restricted. The use of overseeding to promote recovery may

be part of the strategy for recovery. Localised seeding into scars is an obvious task, if not plugging scars, but it is not a guarantee that the seed will fully establish.

The question over the merits of early season seeding into an established sward is often asked. We can reference work from The R&A Golf Course 2030 project – Integrated Turf Management of Parkland Greens in GB&I, which discusses the different germination rates of species and identifies the optimum timing of overseeding treatments with regards to temperature.

STERF germination rate research



Paul Woodham is The R&A's Head of Agronomy Europe

suggests a higher percentage of browntop bentgrass seed germinates at cooler temperatures than creeping bentgrass. For example, overseeding browntop bentgrass before temperatures are above 14°C, with no frost, delivered a low return. At a daytime temperature of 15°C and nighttime of 5°C, it is expected that it will take 10 days to achieve 90% seed germination of browntop bentgrass cultivars and 60% of creeping bentgrass.

A study of creeping bentgrass establishment at a daytime temperature of 7.2°C and a night temperature of 1.7°C, recorded the average germination rate at 0.4%. Below this temperature combination, no variety germinated. At a daytime temperature of 12.8°C and a night temperature of 1.7°C, the rate increased significantly with an average of 62% germination. It took 14.3 days to reach 50% germination and 23 days on average for 98% of the seeds to germinate at those temperatures. Optimum germination rate was reached at 21.1°C (daytime) and 10°C (night time).

Weather conditions will always have the final word – the cool springs halt growth and there is nothing anybody can do about that. Apart from, of course, learning to be patient! **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](mailto:sustainablegolf@randa.org)

## New Xtend CRF

A range of controlled release fertilisers that combine two key technologies, producing a true controlled release of nutrient.

Xtend CRF features OAS's own ProTect controlled release technology, using temperature primed nutrient release, blended with inhibited nitrogen that slows down the release even further. When formulated with freely available nitrogen, these two technologies combined provide a quick turf response, followed by a consistent release of nutrient over three months.

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- **Xtend CRF 12-20-12+3CaO+6MgO**
- **Xtend CRF 15-2-20+6CaO+2MgO+2Fe**
- **Xtend CRF 25-0-0+9CaO+2MgO**



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