

Rachael and Gemma from Membership Services would like to welcome 77 new members to the Association and talk about the ARCO benefit.

Membership Update

ARCO goes local

CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

Arco currently offer BIGGA members 20% discount on a wide range of workwear, safety clothing, equipment and industrial and maintenance products.

In the past members have had to order goods over a central phone line to qualify for discount. To make purchasing products far easier you are now able to obtain discount from your local depot.

Due to changes in the computer systems depots are now all geared up to accept your orders, just make sure you let them know you are BIGGA members.

For your convenience you can still order over the phone or via the website, www.arco.co.uk, if that is your preferred method.

To obtain a copy of the 'big red' book, Arco's safety and maintenance supplies catalogue then call 01482 611611 or log on to the website.

Discount is not available on selected technical products and special offers.

ARCO



PRIVILEGE CARD:

Due to lack of use, the privilege card is being withdrawn with effect from the 1st December 2004. Please do not use your card after this date. Thank you for your co-operation.

DESIGN A SLOGAN

Thank you to all of you who have put pen to paper and sent in your entries. We will be looking at all the slogans over the next few days and converting the best one into a car sticker. The winner will be announced in next month's edition.

Message of the Month Winner

Our congratulations go to November's winner, Scott Thomson, from Wetherby Golf Club, who's message was posted on the 11th October 2004 under the 'Talking Shop' section. David receives an 18 litre Gelert Rucksack featuring a multi function organiser, 2 mesh pockets and a grab handle.

BIGGA welcomes...

SCOTTISH REGION

Keith Alexander, East
Shaun Anderson, Central
James Arthur, East
David Brown, East
John Church, West
Francis Clarkson, Ayrshire
Steven Copeland, West
Alan Dykes, West
Alan Hendry, East
Ross Mackenzie, North
Andrew Peace, West
Niall Sandie, East
Martin Stewart, East
John Tait, East
Gordon Von Krafft, East
Craig Watson, North
Rob Wooddisse, Ayrshire

NORTHERN REGION

Christopher Baker, North Wales
Daniel Binner, North East
Michael Cooper, North West
Trevor Dobson, North West
Martin Garside, North West
James Sands, North East
Ian Stewart, Cleveland

MIDLAND REGION

Charles Allwood, Midland

Stephanie Bell, BB&O
Michael Bohanan, Mid Anglia
Simon Dipple, East Midland
Andrew Helby, BB&O
Ryan Helliher, BB&O
Vic Holt, BB&O
Peter Kendall, East of England
Niall Kerr, Mid Anglia
Ignatious Masvosva, Midland
Cyril Millward, Midland
Stuart Nash, BB&O
Thomas Price, Midland
Peter Tomlinson, Midland
David Walls, BB&O
Paul Whitten, Midland
Donald Wilmott, BB&O

SOUTH EAST REGION

Daniel Barnes, Surrey
Simon Bates, Kent
David Bingham, Surrey
Thomas Clark, Surrey
John Clarke, Essex
Kevin Cole, Kent
Andrew Cracknell, Essex
Stuart Dare, Surrey
Alan Drury, Kent
Stephen Fawcett, Kent
Jaey Goodchild, Surrey
Rocky Hughes, East Anglia

Robert Meintjes, Surrey
David Miller, Surrey
Daniel Morgan, Kent
Dwayne Moss, Surrey
Paul O'Kane, Essex
Darren Stuttle, Essex
Phillip Whaley, Essex
Michael Williams, Surrey

SOUTH WEST/SOUTH WALES

Graham Down, South Wales
Christopher Ralph, Devon & Cornwall
James Trollope, South West
Woody Whyte, South Wales
Paul Wilkie, South Wales

OVERSEAS MEMBERS

Tommy Franzon, Sweden
Richard Laux, USA
Leif Mattsson, Sweden
Mark O'Sullivan, Germany

STUDENT MEMBERS

Jason Bastable, South Coast
Richard Crocombe, Devon & Cornwall
Andrew Sprunt, USA

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Robert Baker, London
James Orpin, Germany



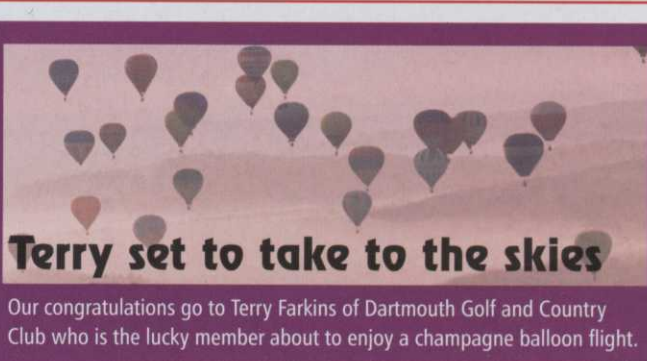
Tip top merchandise...

Continuing our focus on BIGGA merchandise, BIGGA have two performance fabric polo shirts available. Both polo shirts are made with a dry gear fabric that actively pulls moisture away from the skin by rapid evaporation.

The Dry Gear shirt is the cheaper of the two at £16.00, it is made from a 52% cotton, 48% Polyester mix and is available in white with either blue, green or red collar trim.

The Nailshead polo shirt is priced at £19.50 and boasts a 65% cotton, 35% polyester mix. The Nailshead is available in navy, light blue or rust.

For further information call Rachael Duffy on 01347 833800.



Terry set to take to the skies

Our congratulations go to Terry Farkins of Dartmouth Golf and Country Club who is the lucky member about to enjoy a champagne balloon flight.

OCTOBER'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER

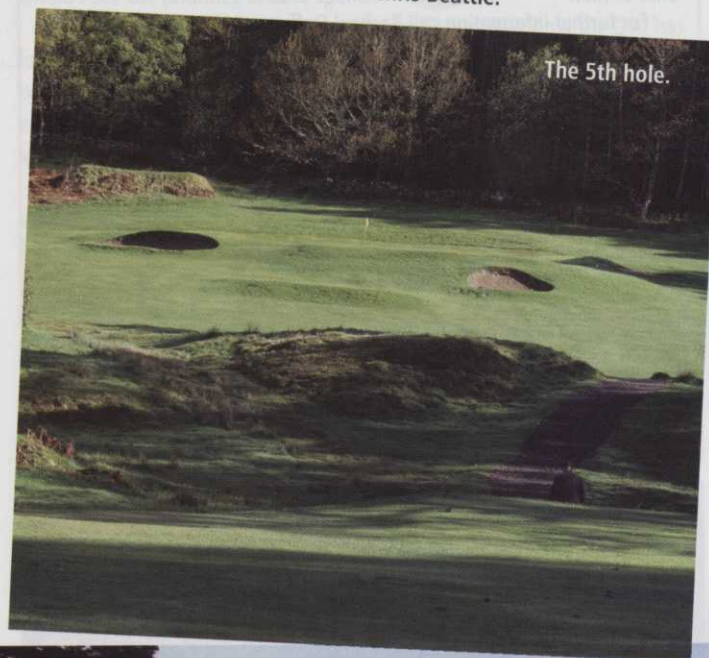
Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win an 0.5 litre isolating flask suitable for hot and cold drinks and soups. Our congratulations go to Paul Harris of Aspley Guise and Woburn Sands Golf Club.

Course Feature

Aye, Aye Captain



▲ Ally Philp, seated, with Assistant Chris Beattie.



The 5th hole.

Ally Philp is Head Greenkeeper and, for the last two years, Captain of Comrie Golf Club as well. Scott MacCallum met with one of the most contented men in the industry on a wet day in Perthshire.

Bump into Ally Philp, Head Greenkeeper of Comrie Golf Club, in Perthshire, and more often than not he will have a smile on his face. Not just because he happens to work in one of the more attractive areas of the British Isles, but because he is immersed in a job he loves, doing it at a club in which he has more than just a vested interest.

This month Ally comes to the end of a two year stint as Club Captain, during which time he has seen the opening of a new clubhouse. Ally's period in office has also seen two of the club's younger members take impressive strides towards making an impact on the game, a key factor for which must lie in the lessons given to the local youngsters every Thursday in the playing season.

Ally assists the Assistant Pro from nearby Crieff Golf Club in this, educating the children on etiquette, bunker raking, pitchmarking and divot repairing, as well as passing on playing knowledge which comes with a 2 handicap. He is, after all, a 12 times Club Champion at Comrie.

It typifies what is perhaps the most impressive thing about Comrie Golf Club - how much the club is a part of the local community and how much responsibility the 470 members take for the successful running of the club.

When I arrived it had been raining for most of the morning, and the previous night, and the clubhouse was buzzing to the sound of the Senior and Ladies' teams taking part in an indoor putting competition as they had decided it was too wet to go out and play their charity match in aid of McMillan Nurses.

Indeed Ally's records show eight and a half inches of rain in August alone so the Comrie members' waterproofs have been well used this year already. "The course isn't closed. They've just decided not to go out," explained Ally quickly.

Comrie was opened in 1891 and redesigned by the great James Braid in 1924. In the clubhouse, opened by Colin Campbell, a Comrie man and Head Professional at Loch Lomond Golf Club, was at a table groaning under the weight of home made sandwiches, cakes, pastries and anything else designed to make a mouth water. I can personally vouch for the quality of the Lady Captain's bacon and egg flan.

Later, during the interview conducted in the men's locker room, one of the Senior members interrupted us to ask if he could do some Hoovering. You couldn't see that happening at Sunningdale or Muirfield.

"We had a vote when we came to deciding upon a new clubhouse and 99% of the membership were in favour and 99% were against having a bar in the new building," revealed Ally.

Although he was born and brought up in Comrie Ally has only been Head Greenkeeper for the last two and a half years, having previously been Head Man at another nine holer, St Fillans.

"The job actually became available while I was Vice Captain and, although I had reservations about applying because of that, I was encouraged to do so by other members and certainly haven't regretted it one little bit."

He has seen nothing but plusses through his dual role and has taken the opportunity to educate the membership on what he's been doing on the course and why he's been doing it.

"Members ask why I'm aerating and I explain why. Then they'll say 'But the greens are good', and I'll then say 'Well, why are they good?' As Captain they are more inclined to listen. I do get some criticism about pin placements and the like but I just rib them about not having anything else to talk about."

Before launching his greenkeeping career Ally had started an apprenticeship as a glass engraver with Stuart Crystal in Crieff.

"I was made redundant and told I could either leave at the end of the week or straight away. I walked up to the golf club to speak to my dad, who was an assistant at Crieff, and told him I'd been made redundant. The Head Greenkeeper overheard me and asked if I wanted a summer job so I started there."

Ally has chaired all the club committee meetings for the last two years but, although he can contribute to the discussions, as an employee, he doesn't vote on matters.

"In two years I can say there has been no real conflict in my dual role. Sometimes when I'm out on the course I can be called in to take a phone call but the Club Manager, Steve van der Walt, has been very good at handling most things and I am really just a figurehead."

Listen to Ally and you hear the voice of a contented man, but it masks the fact that working at Comrie is no walk in the park. Indeed with a staff of two, including Ally, the job very much resembles that of a hamster on a wheel.

"It's non stop. We don't get paid overtime, just time off in lieu which can be very difficult to fit in. Although we're not compelled to by our contracts we don't take holiday in May, June, July, August or the beginning of September as there is just so much to do."

The situation is compounded if Ally or his recently-qualified Assistant, Chris Beattie, are ill. Fortunately Ally has only had one day off sick in 20 years but Chris, who joined the staff initially on a part time basis, but then full time last year was off this summer for a few days with an injury.

At a stroke this severely increased Ally's workload and reduced what could be done on the course for a key period in the summer.

The nature of the never ending hard graft is graphically illustrated by Ally as he runs through a regular week at Comrie.

"Monday is Medal day here so I'll change holes and cut fairways and Chris will cut greens and rake the bunkers and then we'll divot fill all the tees. Then it's lunch after which we'll cut rough and do our strimming and flymowing."



▲ The clubhouse from the 2nd green.



▲ The 7th hole.



Players on the 8th tee.



The view of the 3rd hole from the tee.



The 3rd hole.



The 3rd green.



Players on the 6th green.

"The Seniors have a 9am Shotgun start every Tuesday with the Ladies medal that afternoon which means a rush to get all the jobs done. If the Seniors have a home match that's another shotgun start on a Thursday," said Ally, who added that being a nine holer means that it is more difficult to keep out of the way of play than an 18 hole course.

It does mean that there are many jobs which they'd like to do but through lack of manpower and finance these have to be put on hold.

"If Chris and I were to rebuild a bunker we'd hire a digger and buy in rootzone and turf and it would take us about four to five days per bunker on top of the regular work we'd still be doing"

But it is the tees which Ally sees as the job he'd like completed in the medium to long term.

"A lot of our tees are uneven so I'd like to rebuild and enlarge them," said Ally.

Adult members of Comrie pay £145 annual subs currently so there isn't a huge sum of money coming into the club each year, but the members do hold fund raising events and among the beneficiaries is a Course Development Fund.

"It may be we'd have to look to increase the subs if we had a particular project we wanted to do," admitted the Club Captain.

But Ally is a pragmatist and knows that, like most courses, he is judged on the quality of the greens.

"You don't get people saying 'Have you seen Comrie's tees?'. It's greens we're all judged on so that's what I spent most of my time improving since I got here."

A dedicated follower of Jim Arthur - who visited the course in 1980/82 - Ally still keeps the reports Jim produced at home. He has a minimalist approach to course management and aerates the greens every two to three weeks, which has improved the quality of grass coverage in the time he has been there.

Such is the way with small courses Ally calls on the services of colleagues at other courses to help, or members have also been on hand to help.

"For example, Charlie McDonald, at Crieff Golf Club, vertidrains for me once or twice a year and in return he borrows our vibrating rollers and pro seeder.

"It works very well, while our local Toro dealer, Henderson Grass Machinery, at Kinross, are excellent and take account of us being a small nine holer when it comes to doing business."

In addition to the double compaction and wear and tear a nine holer experiences Comrie is a moorland course which suffers from not having much depth to its soil - three inches on one of the fairways with rock just below the surface.

"When changing holes you need a pinch bar as well as a hole cutter as you do hit stones and have to lever them out as you go round."

But whatever the obstacles Ally and Chris face they do produce a golf course which is a test for the best, including two youngsters who have already made a splash in the game. Wallace and Carly Booth are a talented brother and sister team of whom a great deal is expected.

Both learned their golf at Comrie and now Wallace is on a golfing scholarship in Augusta, Georgia, while 12 year-old Carly has already made headlines by playing in a pro-am with Sandy Lyle and has all the attributes to go a long way in the game.

It's feeling he's had some input in the development of the young golfers of the town as well as providing an excellent test of golf for the members... not to mention that bacon and egg flan, that helps to keep Ally smiling.

Inventory of Equipment at Comrie Golf Club

- 1 Tym T431 tractor
- 1 Kubota B2150 tractor with front loader
- 1 Toro 3200-D - Greensmaster
- 1 Toro 2300-D - Reelmaster
- 1 Toro 3000- Greensmaster
- 1 Ransomes Super Certes handmower
- 1 Groundsman 460 HD
- 1 Allan National Banks mower
- 3 True surface vibratory rollers

- 3 Toro verticut units
- 1 SISIS outfield spiker
- 1 Disc Aerator
- 1 Kawasaki blower
- 1 Allen flymo
- 1 Stihl brushcutter
- 1 Pedestrian walkover sprayer
- 1 Birchmeier 20litre knapsack
- 2 cyclone spreaders, 1 pedestrian, 1 tractor mounted
- 1 1.2m pro seed
- 1 Marston trailer
- 1 Rotary Deck
- 1 set Allet gang mowers

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The Career Path to Success



Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2004 – Alex Shore

Careers are very individual things. While some people stick with one particular job, at one certain level, and are happy to do so, others find a vocation that suits them, then climb the career ladder step by step and don't stop until they hit the top.

That is certainly what Alex Shore is doing, and winning the 2004 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award has helped him jump up a few rungs.

September 27 was the date of the Final held at BIGGA HOUSE and Alex, along with the seven other finalist – Kate Walls, Christopher Kerr, Robert Finnegan, Peter Kennedy, Stuart Glover, James Canham and Alastair Higgs - faced a exhausting, but exhilarating day of tackling both an interview and conducting a course report of Aldwark Manor.

So how do you start an interview with the 2004 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year? Simple in my case, ask him an obvious question. "So Alex," I started, "how does it feel to win?"

"It really hasn't sunk in yet. I think it will take a while to believe that I won, but I'm sure by the time I get back to work it will have hit me, and the lads at the club will help bring me back down to earth," replied Alex.

That is the answer from someone who didn't dream of winning the entire competition. A modest individual, Alex, 26, knew that, with the high standard of the finalists, anyone could have won it.

"Everybody knew their stuff and were really passionate about their jobs and greenkeeping as a whole. A bunch of us were talking before the ceremony and we all agreed that it was very close, I don't think any one of us could have predicted the winner. I certainly did not expect my name to be read out."

The spirit of the eight finalists was summed up when Alex chose to take his time to shake the hands of the seven other entrants and thank them before going up to receive his award.

"Everyone was very friendly, and that made for a great few days. The standard was so high, and everyone wanted to win, but the atmosphere always remained friendly and everyone helped each other out when needed," added Alex, after his celebration night out of bowling and beer.

Alex's career has been built around education, and the important role it can play in life. After leaving school he started his professional days at a company called Ravens Sports Fields, which is a sports turf/ground maintenance company. He was soon to be back in the classroom however.

"I left school about eight years ago, went to Ravens and they put me straight back into college. I was studying Amenity Horticulture at Oaklands College, while developing my landscaping skills at Ravens.

"I am very grateful to the manager there for taking me on and putting me through college and for showing me the ropes.

"It was a fantastic experience for me and I don't think I would be in greenkeeping, let alone the winner of the Toro award, if he hadn't been so encouraging."



Alex now had his career and was quickly looking onwards and upwards. The next step for him was clear.

"I wanted more variety and I wanted to work with people who were really passionate about their job, they were certainly that at Woburn Golf and Country Club. I enjoyed sports field maintenance, but I think moving into greenkeeping was the natural progression for me. I see greenkeeping as a higher level of groundsmanship, so to get into that was the next path for me.

"I enjoyed playing golf, though I was never a world beater, and it just seemed the right move for me at the time. I have never looked back."

His last statement is backed up by the passion you detect in his voice when he talks about the club he has been an Assistant at for five and half years.

"It is a close team at Woburn, so originally that helped me fit in quickly. It's a very friendly team and everybody helps each other out. We have three courses, the new Marquess course, the Duke's and the Duchess courses.

"Each has their own green staff, so it's individual in that way, but then we all come together and help each other out when needed, so it is still a big team effort, and that creates a good spirit and an excellent working environment."

Another reason for Alex's attraction to the Woburn vacancy back in 1999 was that the club had similar ideas

to his own about the importance of education. The club is known for placing a high emphasis on training programmes, while allowing its staff to make up their own mind whether or not to take up the opportunities out there. In fact it was the club's green staff, who were studying at Oaklands College at the same time as Alex, who recommended the position to him.

"With all employees the club make education schemes available for anyone who wants them and when they want them. So the club is always very pleased to help you in any course you want to take up, from first aid to spray training to gaining a training licence. Eddie (Bullock), the Managing Director, is always keen to help his staff into the education side of greenkeeping," stated the award winner.

As normal, Alex was both keen and quick to make the most of the

Gareth Jones meets Alex Shore, the 2004 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year.

opportunities provided, and he believes it has made a big difference to him as a greenkeeper.

"I was pleased to make the most of the chances in front of me. I wanted to push myself forward and learn more. The more qualifications, certificates and, most importantly, more knowledge about your job you have the better off you are going to be. So doing my NVQ Level 3 has helped inspire me to do as much as I possibly can."

In any successful career you need to be in the right place at the right time and the 2004 Student of the Year is currently in the right place. Woburn has just hosted the European Tour's Heritage Tournament, which was won by Sweden's Henrik Stenson.

Alex played a major part in the set up of the Duke's course, but was forced to miss the final rounds due to the Toro competition at BIGGA HOUSE.

The club also held the Bovis Lend Lease European Senior Masters this year and in the past has entertained the cream of women's golf with the Weetabix British Open and has had the men's British Masters over the Duke's course for 20 years until 2003.

"I am lucky to be at a course that holds major events. To have that kind of experience is great, and not every greenkeeper is fortunate to have that kind of tournament experience. As I said, I am lucky.

"Holding major tournaments like the Heritage and British Masters, means that the club demands a high standard of work, so you have to set yourself up to that level. That, along with the fact that your colleagues are working to the same high standards, is going to have a positive effect on your work and development as a greenkeeper."

The future is looking healthy for Alex, particularly with the Toro Shield and Crystal Bowl taking pride of place on his mantle piece. Former Student Greenkeeper of the Year winners have gone on to scale the heights of the Greenkeeping and Groundcare industry, and Alex has similar ambitions.

"I really enjoy it at Woburn, there is enough variety to keep me interested and motivated. If a deputy position came up that is certainly the next step for me and it's something I'll be looking at closely. I eventually want to be a Head Greenkeeper, but I wouldn't say I am ready to be one yet, I still have a lot to learn before doing that."

More to learn, does that mean more time in the classroom for Alex?

"I've been looking in to doing a HNC or a foundation degree possibly. For now I will be concentrating on going to America and the training course I will receive from the University of Massachusetts and then I will see what happens after that.

"I would like to learn more on the scientific side of things, and it will be nice to apply my theory to practice on the Duke's course. Andy Brown (of Toro) said to us all that it is important in today's environment to also learn the business and budgeting side of golf, so that's another thing I would like to get more involved with, but that is all for the future," said the man who is clearly keeping his feet on the ground.

Past winners, such as Keith Scruton in 2003, speak highly of the eight week trip to the US. The visit entails a six week period of study and then two weeks visiting the Toro factories in Minneapolis and California and also a trip to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

"I'm really looking forward to the trip. I am nervous about it too, as eight weeks away from home is a long time. Hannah, my wife, was shocked and delighted when I told her I had won, but like me she is a bit anxious to be losing me for that amount of time.



▲ Toro's Andy Brown presents winner Alex Shore with the shield with runners up James Canham, left, and Robert Finnegan.

"However we both know how important this experience will be and the great benefit it will be to my career. The course is very scientific based and that is something that will help me and I really want to learn more on that side.

"Like greenkeeping in general, it will be very hard work, but it's all worth it. You really do get out what you put in. It is about dedicating time to education and your learning, it is hard to juggle both, but if you can do it, it really will be of benefit," concluded Alex, as he took in the magnitude of winning the entire competition.

So, how do you finish an interview with the 2004 Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year? Ask him another obvious question. "So who would you like to thank then?" – See told you it was obvious.

"Well there are a few people. On the golf side, Eddie Bullock, Managing Director at Woburn, Chris Hunt, Course Manager, Steve Tompkins, Head Greenkeeper and his Deputy, Simon Trotter, have all been very supportive and I owe them a big thank you. They taught me how to compile course reports and things like that. Chris White, my lecturer at Oaklands, had the confidence in me to enter me in the competition and he has stood by me all the way. Hannah, my wife, has been very strong and a great help, her support has made a big difference to me."

"BIGGA and Toro have been wonderful. Everyone at BIGGA has been very helpful, especially Ken Richardson and Sami Collins. From Toro, Andy Brown and Peter Mansfield have been excellent. The two organisations put so much work in to this competition and that effort makes the competition really magnificent.

"Finally I would like to thank all the other contestants, they helped confirm my belief in the importance of education in greenkeeping and also made the whole few days very memorable for me."



▲ The entire cast of the 2004 Toro Student of the Year Award final.



▲ Winner Alex with runners up James and Robert.

The Runners Up

After selecting Alex Shore as the winner of the competition the panel had to make two further decisions – the two runners-up. The two 2004 Student Greenkeepers of the Year runners-up receive an all expenses paid trip to Continue to Learn and BTME and Clubhouse 2005 in January. After much deliberation Robert Finnegan and James Canham were declared the 2004 runners-up.

Robert Finnegan

Spend two minutes with Robert and his passion for greenkeeping will no doubt rub off on you, it really is infectious. He began his career as an Assistant at Navan Golf Club, before moving to Scotland to gain the training he was desperate for. Studying a HND at Elmwood College, Robert has landed himself a job at none other than the home of golf, St. Andrews, on the Old Course.

An ambitious individual Robert, 20, is determined to make the most of the opportunities that come along, and he plans to work as a greenkeeper around the world while still in his 20's. He plans in particular to spend time working in both the US and Scandinavia.

With Euan Grant, the Head Greekeeper of St. Andrews' Old Course, nurturing Robert's enthusiasm and ability, the youngster should progress to be a fine greenkeeper.

James Canham

James is just 18 years of age but has knowledge beyond his years. Educated at the College of West Anglia, James is working towards his NVQ Level 2 and has clearly

absorbed everything he has been taught so far.

James is an Assistant at Weston Park Golf Club and has aided in the many changes within the course. He is keen to gain more knowledge in the machinery, business and budgeting side of greenkeeping, as he believes these are becoming increasingly important factors within the industry.

Another individual who has a great passion for his job, James enjoys the challenge of putting the theory learnt in the classroom into practice on the golf course.

James plans in the future to gain as much knowledge as possible in as many areas as he can. This attitude should see him rise though the ranks of greenkeeping and he plans to be at the top within 10 years.

Despite not being crowned the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year for 2004 the remaining five Finalists certainly did not leave empty handed.

BIGGA Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, and Toro's Andy Brown emphasised at the awards ceremony that all eight entrants really were winners. A cliché maybe but one that is certainly very true in this case.

The interview panel of John Pemberton, BIGGA Chief Executive, David Walden, BIGGA Board member, Peter Mansfield and Andy Brown, both of Toro, were extremely impressed with the standard of all eight interviewees and the course reports that they produced.

It resulted in some tough and very close decisions having to be made by the panel, which highlighted just how the standard of education in greenkeeping is increasing year on year.

Christopher Kerr, studying at GOSTA, Peter Kennedy, at Reaseheath College, Stuart Glover, Greenmount College, Alastair Higgs, of Sparsholt College, and Katherine Walls, from Myerscough College, all left BIGGA HOUSE with the great experience of being in the competition final, and all that it entails, and the knowledge that they are among the top young greenkeepers in the UK and Ireland. All can look forward to very bright futures.

After the success of the 2004 Student of the Year competition and the high benchmark set by the entrants BIGGA and Toro are already eagerly awaiting the start of the 2005 competition.



▲ The eight finalists, from left, back row, Stuart Glover, Christopher Kerr, Katherine Walls, Alastair Higgs and Peter Kennedy and, front, James Canham, Alex Shore and Robert Finnegan.

A Triumph for Persistence

Scott MacCallum witnessed Graeme MacDonald's fine win in the National Championship, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen, and wonders if credit should go to a famous spider.

Must of us, well those from north of the border, know the story of Robert the Bruce. Depressed, having lost another battle, and holed up in a cave somewhere, his eye was drawn to a spider attempting to weave a web. The poor spider got close a few times before it all fell apart, but eventually persistence earned its reward and the spider succeeded. Bob drew inspiration from this try, try and try again mentality, gathered up his broad sword, climbed aboard his horse once again, and went out and changed the course of Scottish history.

Although he has a Scottish name, I'm pretty sure Graeme MacDonald was more likely to have been thinking about Ransomes Jacobsen's new revolutionary remote controlled spider mower when he teed up at Alwoodley for the 2004 National Championship, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen, but having come close in the event so often he showed similar fortitude to Scotland's most famous spider to clinch a fine win.

A model of consistency, the Newark Golf Club Course Manager has won a host of club Championships in and around the Peterborough area, and had regularly collected prizes in the National Championship but the top one had always eluded him.

"I lost on countback to Chris Lomas at Coxmoor and Hollinwell last year so was determined to go one better this time," said a delighted Graeme, after he had been presented with the BIGGA Challenge Trophy.

"I've played in the National Championship for many years and, knowing the history of the event, it was always something I wanted to win. Having now done so, it just about tops anything else I've ever achieved on a golf course."

Graeme thought the course was awesome and certainly deserving of its reputation as one of the finest, and toughest, in the country, particularly as the two rounds were played in weather more conducive to kite flying.

"I didn't play too well on the opening day but played really well, ironically in the company of Chris Lomas, on the second day."

Rounds of 84 in extremely windy conditions and 75 off a handicap of 4, in only slightly weaker wind, just pulling him clear.

He opened his second round with a bogey and was actually two over after three holes but was a model of consistency after that with two birdies and three bogeys over the final 15 holes.

Royal County Down's Noel Crawford, had to settle for the BIGGA Challenge Cup after rounds of 78 and 75.

It was to be the third time that scratch man Noel has won the Cup,



Alwoodley proved to be a hospitable club, but a fiendishly difficult course.



Graeme MacDonald with the BIGGA Challenge Trophy.

having been best gross in 2000 at Fairhaven and St Annes Old Links and 2002, when he did the same at Hillside and Hesketh.

Noel, another regular attendee of the Championship, had a real scare on the second morning after his taxi got lost on the way to the course. He only just made it to the tee in time, having to play his opening drive in his street shoes to do it.

After such a sticky, or should it be slippery start, his round came alive with an eagle courtesy of a holed 60 yard chip on the 5th.

Phil Taylor, Alwoodley's excellent Course Manager, and his dedicated team had ensured the 76 competitors faced a genuine test of golf and the immaculately prepared course was as good, in condition and in layout, as any to have hosted the National Championship in recent times.

Next year's National Championship will be hosted by Sherwood Forest and Worksop Golf Clubs and will be played on Monday and Tuesday, October 3-4, 2005.



The overall winners from two days at Alwoodley.



Richard Andrews chips onto the 16th green on day two.



At least this ball was found.

BIGGA National Championship sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd

BIGGA National Champion (Best Nett Score)
BIGGA Challenge Trophy – Graeme MacDonald, Newark GC, 151 Nett

BIGGA Scratch Champion
BIGGA Challenge Cup - Noel Crawford, Royal County Down GC, 153

Gross 36 Holes
Andrew Unwin, Rotherham GC, 160 (Better Second Round)
Mike Hughes, Edgbaston GC, 160

Handicap 36 Holes
Anthony Gerrard, Halifax GC, 155 Nett
Dave Fellows, Coxmoor Woods GC, 156 Nett

1st Round

Scratch – 7
Denis Tweddle, Turnberry Hotel, 75 Nett

8-15
Matt Folka, Hawkstone Park, 76 Nett

16-28
John Watts, Leeds Golf Centre, 83 Nett

2nd Round

Scratch – 7
Eamonn Crawford, Royal County Down GC, 72 Nett

8-15
Simon Woolley, Brickendon GC, 74 Nett

16-28
Gary Crawford, Royal County Down GC, 73 Nett

Nearest the Pin (Day 1 only)
David Beale, Orsett GC

Longest Drive (Day 1 only)
Adam Newton, Fulford GC

Regional Trophy
Midland Region

Richard Barker, Antony Bindley, Matt Folka, David Goodchild, Barry Holt, Mike Hughes, Graeme MacDonald and Simon Woolley, 641

South East Region

Richard Andrews, Don Clark, Philip Gerrard, Mark Henderson, Ian Semple, Chris Wells, Darren Woodward and David Badham, 643

