

Rachael and Gemma from Membership Services would like to welcome 75 new members to the Association.

Membership Update

Rain, Rain Go Away!

As I sit here at the beginning of August the North Yorkshire area is in the middle of a long spell of rain and gloomy weather.

This summer has not exactly been the best on record, so I thought I would talk about keeping dry. Normally I might highlight our waterproof range around the November issue of the magazine but with the weather as it is I thought I'd start early this year.

Waterproof Socks

Keeping your feet warm, dry and comfortable must be a priority to those who work outdoors in all weathers. BIGGA's merchandise range contains waterproof socks, which are 100% breathable and can even go into the washing machine on a 40 degree wash.



The beauty of waterproof socks is you no longer have to wear cumbersome wellies but can use them with more comfortable shoes and boots. BIGGA also do a range of waterproof gloves, which are designed

to offer excellent grip and dexterity in wet conditions. Normally the Sealskinz socks and gloves retail at £20 and £22 respectively.

BIGGA is able to offer them to members at £16.00 plus £1 p&p or you can purchase any two for only £29.50 plus £1.50 p&p.

Waterproof Suits

For further protection from the elements BIGGA has a mix and match range of waterproofs. The most expensive suit in the range is the "Greenkeeper" at £70 featuring a high performance waterproof breathable lining system and a Teflon coated microfibre outer shell.

The trousers are available in a variety of lengths and have long zips on the bottom. The "Greenkeeper" comes with a two year guarantee. The "Highlander Cargo Suit", great value at £55, is available in two colour ways and has a one-year guarantee.

All waterproofs offer the choice of up to three lines of stitching which could include your club logo and job title for example.

■ For further information please call Rachael Duffy on 01347 833800.



BIGGA welcomes...

SCOTTISH REGION

Stephen Briody, West
Kevin Cross, West
Stephen Duffy, West
Graeme Kirkpatrick, West
Mark Logan, Central
Niall Macdonald, West
Dean Muir, East

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Andrew Bright, Cleveland
Kenneth Fitzgibbon, NW
Gary Fraser, Cleveland
Chris Halker, NW
Glyn Hewitt, Northern
John Johnson, Northern
Jon Middleton, Northern
Tony Wilson, North East

MIDLAND REGION

David Cole, Midland
Dylan Collins, BB&O
Garrod Duncalfe, Midland
Sean Haynes, BB&O
Jonathan Holmes, Midland
Colin Neller, BB&O
David Pearce, Midland
Geoffrey Smithdale, BB&O
John Spear, Midland
James Stokes, Midland

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Ian Burton, Essex
Ian Cannell, Essex
Charles Carter, London
Stuart Evenden, Essex
Bryan Girling, Essex
David Grant, Surrey
Robert Horsburgh, East Anglia
Michael Huggett, London
Terence Mason, London
Jeffrey Nash, Sussex
Daniel Norsworthy, Surrey
Dale Pangbourne, London
Andrew Panter, London
Scott Peterson, London
Heather Reader, London
Donald Robertson, Surrey
Paul Simpson, London
Gregory Smith, Surrey
Paul Stevens, Sussex
Derry Sullivan, London
Clifford Tormey, Surrey
Luke Wesley, East Anglia
Dane Watts, London
Peter Whittle, Kent

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Martin Angel, South West

Philip Meek, South West
Colin Parry, Devon & Cornwall
Jason Tucker, South Wales

NORTHERN IRELAND

John O'Brien

INTERNATIONAL

Philip Ingram, Germany
Scott Lagana, USA
Sevy Schmitz, Germany

STUDENT MEMBERS

Andrew Caldwell, South Africa
Richard Neville, USA

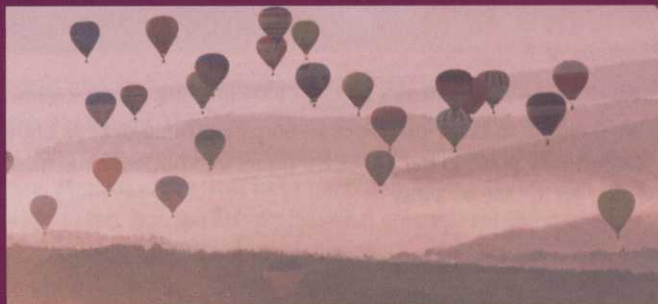
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Rodney Lunn, Northern
Jonathan Marmek, Kent
Stephen McAuliffe, Sussex
William McKechnie, North Scotland
Oliver Sugden, Northern

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Douglas Barr, East Scotland
Grant Clark, East Scotland
Kevin Gosling, East Scotland
Derek Hoskins, East Scotland
Stelios Melandinos, Greece
Savvides Nicos, Greece
Sofia Papadopoloc, Greece
Andreas Thelogou, Greece

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Imagine soaring through the skies watching the sunset on a perfect evening. To be in with a chance of winning a balloon flight at one of over 50 locations UK wide just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA. Make sure you write your name on the application form as the person who referred them and we will enter you into the prize draw. The more new members you refer the more chances you have to win.

The draw will take place on the 15th October 2004 and the winner will be announced in the November edition of Greenkeeper International.

Please call Rachael or Gemma for application forms or for more details on 01347 833800.

Message of the Month Winner

Each month the person who has written the best message on the BIGGA Bulletin Board, which is found on the BIGGA website www.bigga.org.uk, receives an 18 litre Gelert Rucksack. The Rucksack features a multi function organiser, two mesh pockets and a grab handle.

Our congratulations go to September's winner, Ian Tomlinson from Rungsted Golf Club, whose message was posted on the 30th July 2004 under the 'Talk about Turf' section.

SEPTEMBER'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.

Our congratulations go to this month's winner, Kevin Tregartha of Coventry Golf Club.

Course Feature

A Guardian Angel

Just like Robbie Williams Ravensworth Golf Club has an Angel watching over it and, as Scott MacCallum found out, she has seen great things happening at the club

We'd all like to think we've got an angel watching over us but very few of us can actually point to our very own Angel and not have the men in white coats lining up to take us away.

Ravensworth Golf Club, in Gateshead, does have an angel watching over the members and staff - the famous Angel of the North, which at its nearest point is no more than a few hundred yards from the course. While many may be sceptical that such a heavenly influence can have a genuine impact on the fortunes of a golf club, a look at Ravensworth over the last six years will show genuine progress as both a golf course and a golf club.

Of course you should add that the Angel has had quite a bit of support, not least from Ravensworth's Head Greenkeeper, John Talbot, his team, and a number of committed club members. It is very much a team effort.

So what has the Angel presided over during the last six years?

Well, in that time the club has moved to a wonderful new clubhouse on the other side of the course from the original; the course has been reconfigured to fit

the new arrangement; an extensive drainage and aeration policy has ensured the course stays open in even the worst of the wet weather; new tees, bunkers and lakes have been added while the club now boasts a superb junior section thanks to an innovative policy involving the local schools. Add to that a new irrigation system, which itself is soon to be upgraded, and new maintenance facilities and you have a golf club that can't be accused of standing still.

"It is amazing just how far we've come in six years," said Club Chairman, Colin Reay, whose personal efforts towards the wellbeing of the golf club since he took over as Chairman 10 years ago have been mammoth.

The major change in the six years has been the new clubhouse, the need for which came about when the lease with Lord Ravensworth Estates was due to run out and the existing clubhouse, maintenance facility and car park were earmarked for luxury apartments.

The new site, which on casual observation looks nothing less than a number one choice, had been identified as potential land for a hole extension about 20 years ago and



John Talbot (right), Head Greenkeeper, with his Club Chairman, Colin Reay.



John with his dedicated team.

The Angel of the North can be seen throughout the course.



What the Angel would look like if Colin had his way.

it was only when a member pointed out just how much land the club actually owned in that vicinity.

"There was enough for 110 car park spaces and a new clubhouse and when you look at some of the views we have – including the Angel – it became the place," said Colin.

Indeed the local Council requested that the club change the name of the 16th hole to Angel View, which is the closest hole to the course.

Colin, always thinking of the club, did want to put a sign to the golf club on the left hand wing of Gateshead's most famous resident. His fellow members are fairly sure he was only half joking.

The two storey clubhouse was opened on December 19 last year and brought into play the newly configured golf course.

The old 7th became the 1st and the 6th became the 18th and a short uphill par-4 instead of a par-3. The course is laid out over three fields, each with its own characteristics and the only real downside is the fact that the poor members are still coming to terms with the fact that they start their round with the toughest hole on the course.

"The 1st is an extraordinarily difficult par-4, currently playing to an average of 6.4. John is currently building a lake on the left hand side to add more difficulty to the tariff while there is out-of-bounds all down the right and a blind approach shot. Of course it is very much frowned upon to have your stroke index 1 as the 1st hole so we'll have to see how it works when the course settles down," explained Colin, as a group of us including John and Mike Potter, the Club Secretary, sat in the new bar area.

Having survived that 1st there are only a few holes to wait until you hit the 7th an uphill 244 yard par-3 over a

valley, with the green guarded on one side by trees and the other by a big bunker. They breed them tough in the North East!

John took over as Head Greenkeeper when the previous Head Man, Mark Bowman, was head hunted by Seaton Carew Golf Club. Mark, in fact was the first professional greenkeeper the club had ever had and was brought to Ravensworth by Colin.

"Before that it was a very old fashioned system, run on purse strings with £25 the limit any committee man could spend before having to go back to the committee itself," recalled Colin.

John had previously been a one man band in charge of a small 18 hole course, a nine hole academy, a 10 bay driving range and a putting green in Wensleydale.

"Before John was appointed a colleague and I went down to have a look at it and were amazed at what one man had done. He'd even put in an irrigation system," said Colin.

"I looked after it for a couple of years and it was tough putting in 80-90 hours a week and not having a holiday," said John, before Colin jumped in to say that he works more hours now.

Ravensworth was renowned for having the fastest greens in the area but John was concerned that they perhaps weren't the healthiest.

"Every time it rained we were closed so when I started I advocated an intensive aeration programme and hollow tined in May and August," said John.

"I was terrified, but John was always confident it would come together. You've got to remember our members had never seen anything like this and had been happy with their golf course. Then this young lad turns up and tells them that it won't work if we



John's ditch digging protected the course from flooding.

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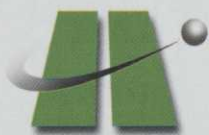
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carried on like it. He said he would stand or fall by his actions as long as we backed him initially which we did," said Colin.

Three years in and the course was transformed and John and Colin were receiving pats on the back from those who'd been critical of the policy prior to that.

Being carried out alongside the aeration was the drainage, necessary because the course, in the old home field, could be like a swamp in very little rain.

"There was a problem with a quarry which had been filled in close to the course which caused water to gravitate to the course so I dug an open ditch across the old 2nd and 18th fairways and since then there hasn't been a problem," explained John, who was a runner-up in the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award last year, and who is hoping to add to his education by tackling an MSc at Cranfield University soon.

"As well as being Chairman of the Club I'm also Chairman of the Newcastle and District League so I can go to every club in the area during the season and, while there are better lay-outs than Ravensworth, there is no course in the area which has had as much work done as ours or which comes close to the condition we have," said Colin, with a degree of pride.

Being in an urban location vandalism is a constant problem – 18 flags a week were being lost at one stage and police are currently investigating a fire which saw the old clubhouse and sheds razed to the ground in June - but it has reduced since the club sent out a letter to all the neighbouring schools offering free golf lessons on a Friday evening and free use of the course on Sunday afternoons for the juniors.

"We now have a Junior Section to be proud of and a lot of low handicappers among them," said Colin, who also tackled the vandalism problem by approaching the local Police Commander and offering reduced membership to the boys in blue.

"Over 20 of them have taken the club up on the offer and the

new members are very quick at responding to problems on their golf course.

It has all lead to Ravensworth gaining an excellent reputation not just as a golf club but as a potential employer and the club is often approached by fathers and mothers hoping to place their children in work at the club.

"It is the club's policy that as soon as someone is employed they are enrolled at college and they must be prepared to attend college before they will even be considered," explained Mike.

That training extends to driving lessons.

"When I started 10 years ago we only had one member of staff with a driving licence and with a road running through the course that was a problem. We were liable so I said the club would pay them to take their driving test and we still do that," said Colin.

For all the huge strides that the club has made over the last six years Colin is in no doubt where much of credit should go.

"The best thing to happen to this club has been John. He is first class and what he has done to the golf course has been superb and made a huge difference to the course."

To illustrate the point Colin and Mike point out that in the past the club would take in around £8,000-£10,000 per annum in green fees and that now it was around £3,000 a week while societies always rebook when they've made a visit to the course.

If clubs think that employing a qualified Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper is an expensive option the experiences of Ravensworth blow that out of the water.

"You get what you pay for and John and his team have proved that," said Colin.

So while the Angel of the North is watching over Ravensworth she needn't be too worried about what is going on. The club is in very good hands.



One of the newly built tees.

Machinery Inventory

- 1 John Deere 4100, 4200 & 4300 (with front loader) Tractors
- 1 John Deere 3245C Rough Cutter
- 1 John Deere 3235A Fairway Mower
- 1 John Deere 2500 Greensmower
- 1 John Deere 2500A Greensmower
- 1 Toro 3200D Greensmower
- 1 John Deere Handmower
- 1 John Deere 455 Rough Cutter
- 1 John Deere 2653A Tees Mower
- 1 Team Sprayer 250 L
- 1 Charterhouse Verti Drain
- 1 John Deere Aercore 1500
- 1 Charterhouse Top Dresser
- 1 Kubota L4200 Tractor
- 1 Marshall Trailer
- 1 John Deere Trailer
- 3 Strimmers
- 3 Flymos
- 2 Sisis Slitters
- 2 Leaf Blowers
- 2 Scotts Fertilizer Spreaders

Bigger is Better

Roland Taylor examines the swing from using compact tractors to larger models on British golf courses

An increasing number of larger clubs are now turning to more powerful tractors in preference to the compacts they have used in the past. Tractor manufacturers key market is agriculture and they have had to take weight distribution in to account to reduce soil compaction. This has meant changes in design to achieve as near as possible a 50/50 axle loading on the front and rear to give an even weight on each tractor wheel.

Tyre manufacturers have also improved their designs. A large tractor fitted with low-pressure tyres, that are inflated correctly, is likely to cause no more surface compaction than a smaller less powerful model. However, there is the possibility the larger tractor will create more compaction at deeper levels than the smaller one.

Other reasons for selecting more powerful units are that larger and wider turfcare machinery, such as top dressers and vertidrainers, require

higher horsepower to give optimum performance.

Another factor is increased output. It is a continual battle to find ways of reducing costs and finding more efficient ways of maintaining high standards.

The bigger machinery covers the ground quicker and reduces the number of loads required to carry out the work, thus saving both time and manpower.

In the following illustrations a number of clubs have purchased larger tractors and we take a look at their reasons for making this decision and some of their comments.

McCormick

The St Andrews Links Trust in Fife attracts golfers from all over the world who arrive expecting to find the six courses in tiptop condition. The sandy soil and coastal weather make this a tough job. To help them maintain the high levels of excellence they have recently upgraded their tractor fleet with three McCormick CX85s.

This move up from traditional compacts is proving to have a big impact on productivity because the tractors can tow larger trailers. Fewer journeys are needed to haul sand from the beach to fill bunkers or carry turf from the nursery to reconstruct eroded bunker walls. The McCormick is also proving capable of working the six tonne top dressers on the fairways and landing areas.

Gordon Mckie, Head Greenkeeper of the Eden course, said, "The tractors are making a big difference. More material is shifted on each journey and they are quicker. We have found the time taken on the three-mile journey to the beach has been cut by 25%."

One of the tractors is fitted with a Liftmaster hydraulic loader that has a two tonnes lift capacity and a tipping height of 3.8 metres.

Another has large flotation tyres so it can be used to mow the nursery turf and operate a larger aerator. All the tractors have spacious cabs with wide doors and provide a comfortable working environment.

Commenting on these latest acquisitions, St Andrew's Links Superintendent, Gordon Moir said, "The tractors are performing well and the fact that they are British built is a bonus."

John Deere

Woking Golf Club was established in 1893 and this 18 holes, 6340 yard, Sussex course is ranked in the UK's top 100. Last year, through a contract hire scheme with John Deere Credit, they took delivery of a 75hp 5410 utility tractor.



▲ McCormick: Gordon Moir, right, Links Superintendent, and Gordon McKie, Head Greenkeeper of the Eden course, at St Andrews Links have upgraded to the CX85.



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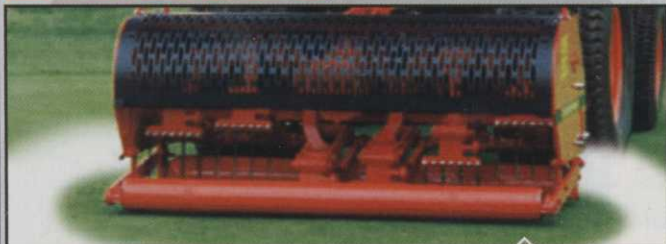


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W54

Head Greenkeeper, Jon Daly, who took over this role in 2003, having spent five years at the club, explained, "Our previous equipment could not be relied on and so valuable time was wasted. We have found the 5410 tractor highly efficient, comfortable to operate, easy to maintain and above all very efficient. This means that more attention can be paid to ensuring the course is in tip top condition."

The tractor is fitted with floatation tyres and according to Jon the weight distribution is such that with an attachment on board the unit has less ground pressure than a greens mower. No turf marking problems have been experienced.

By having a large power unit they are able to use wider machinery behind it, such as a two metre wide vertdrainer and 1.3 metre earthquake subsoiler. This means that the operations are carried out quickly and efficiently.

The 5410 has now been superseded by the new 5415 model. This latest version has a larger and quieter cab, hydrostatic power steering and a choice of transmissions.

John Deere's Tier 11 emission certified Power Tech diesel engine provides the power. At a rated engine speed of 2,300 rpm it is said to give better fuel economy, quieter running and a more comfortable ride.

The cab has curved rear corner windows for better visibility and with a noise rating of 78dB(A) it is less distressing for the operator.

Other ergonomic features include a choice of a comfort or suspension seat, plus a tilting extendable steering column. There are five synchronised transmissions to choose from and four models make up the 5015 series of John Deere utility tractors from 55 to 80 horsepower.

TYM

According to Course Manager, Mark Logan their TYM T431 tractor at Silvermere Golf & Leisure near Weybridge, Surrey, has gone about its work without any problems.

"We use the tractor for fairway aerating, scarifying and hollow tining. The ground pressure is low enough for it to be used safely on greens.

One of the major benefits we have found is the automatic PTO. It is very efficient and safe, especially when we are training staff on the



▲ JD5410: The John Deere 5410 in action at Woking Golf Club.

tractor. One of the other features my team like about the tractor is the air conditioned cab, they are queuing up to use it in hot weather," said Mark.

The T431 has selectable four-wheel drive with 16 forward and reverse gears including a creeper speed and synchronised shuttle. The PTO has an electronic hydraulic push button control and the choice of 540 or 750 rpm. Power is provided by a 43hp Kubota V2203 engine.

TYM offer two other models in their larger tractor range, the T550 (55hp) and the T700 (70hp). All tractors have a two-years warranty.

Kubota

Like most companies involved in selling tractors to the golf course market, Kubota are finding an increasing number of clubs are considering larger equipment to achieve a more efficient operation.

Their groundcare tractor range offers a choice of models in the higher output category.

One in the L30 series is the 50hp model. This four-wheel drive tractor has a ETVCS water-cooled diesel engine, with a choice of manual or GST transmission. Power steering is standard and it can include air conditioning in the cab.

The ME Series tractors have been designed for high output. There are two models in the range an 86hp and 94hp. Both are powered by Kubota's own engine. A fully synchronised main transmission gives 18 forward and 18 reverse gears.

Hydraulic shuttle transmission is another feature. Operator comfort and ease of use has played an important role in the design of these tractors. There is also the option of an easy and quick to attach, or remove, front loader.

Kiote

Foxhills at Ottenshaw in Surrey has three courses; the Chertsey, an 18 hole parkland course; the Longcross (wooded); plus a par three 9 hole. Course Managers, David Langheim and David Wyborn look after these courses.

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▲ TYM 3825: The TYM T431 is used at Silvermere Golf & Leisure.

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