

Rachael and Gemma from Membership Services would like to welcome 99 new members to the Association.

Membership Update

Enjoy the Summer with BIGGA - Everything you need for the perfect holiday

EUROPEAN MOTORING ASSISTANCE

If you are planning to take your car abroad this year it may be worth your while looking at the European Motoring Assistance offered at a very competitive price to BIGGA members by Europ Assistance. The cover includes protection prior to your departure if your vehicle is lost, immobilised or rendered unroadworthy as a result of fire, theft, accidental damage or breakdown.

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PERSONAL ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Although you'd rather not think about it, accidents do happen. Your BIGGA membership provides 24 hour cover for accidents which occur at home, work and on holiday. To make a claim call 01277 251000 and ask for Ira Mullish or Michaela Edwards.



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BIGGA welcomes...

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JUNE'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 a DIGITAL FM SCAN RADIO/ALARM, with a detachable speaker and headphones. Our congratulations go to Ian Stephens of Retford Golf Club.



Sprayer Advances Benefit All

There was a time when there was little hygiene in our hospitals. Surgeons were even bloodstained! It was also not so long ago that, after use, a sprayer would be parked up, with obvious encrusted deposits inside and out. Time has taught us that good hospital hygiene is critical. But does it really matter about sprayers? Yes. Which is why they have undergone a design revolution aimed at minimising internal and external spray deposits. But why?

*Continue
to learn*

As in any activity - whether on the golf course or at home - we're now all under great pressure to keep the workplace cleaner. Spraying is no exception to this rule and, in the last few years, huge advances have been made. So that greenkeepers now have few excuses not to improve their practices; practices that are directed to ensure we should better clean our sprayers inside out.



1. Today the focus is on your machine's hygiene and meeting this important need immediately after you've finished spraying on the course.

INTERNAL CLEANING

Once spraying is finished, and even though no more spray can be seen coming out of the nozzles, some spray solution is still likely to remain in your sprayer. Just how much liquid is held back will depend on the amount of thought given to minimising the quantity by engineers who built your machine. But the next time you mix up you can be reasonably sure retained liquid will be mixed with new solution. It will, of course, then be contaminated.

If you are using the same mix as before this may pose little risk to, say, your greens. But if it's not you have a problem in the making. A problem that's not just expensive for your club, but one that could put your greens out of action for months.

To avoid such a catastrophe, advances in sprayer design now minimise amounts of spray solution retained in the tank. For example, tanks are now made of free draining material, such as polyethylene, and there's now an obvious sump that's effective even on slopes.

2. Engineers have made enormous advances to both minimise spray 'carry over' and remove it from areas where spraying has just been carried out.

Dead end appendices, like pressure relief pipes, are now designed to bleed to keep spray liquids moving so they are not held back until operators accidentally or otherwise open the relief valve. But despite such advances there will still be some traces of liquid within. But at least what remains is now minimised - an advance critical to the next stage of engineering development!

Now it is possible to remove small residual volumes without even having to leave the green or fairway you have been spraying. This is because sprayers can now be fitted with dedicated, clean water tanks that direct water to tank sprinklers that flush the inner wall surfaces. Credit dishwasher technology for this! Dishwashers do not require large water volumes nor are they filled with water.

Today it's the same with sprayers. Time was when operators had to return to where the sprayer was being loaded, fill it up three times with water and safely dispose of the rinsings. This need for responsible disposal has become an ever more serious problem.

For where today can you safely dispose of large volumes of contaminated water? But - at a stroke - spray tank sprinklers have made it possible for greenkeepers to clean their sprayers right in the area they have been working.



Bill Taylor, of Hardi, charts recent advances that will ensure sprayers are cleaner, bringing important benefits to all



3. Small volumes of clean water are enough to sprinkle inner surfaces of the main tank to effectively remove harmful residues.

Because only small volumes of water are needed for the purpose, it makes it possible to transport it on the sprayer and, in turn, to spray out products exactly in the area being worked, leaving a clean sprayer ready for its next job. We can also take a tip from arable operators here.

They calculate very precisely just how much spray solution is needed for the job and then, cunningly, reduce the volume so that a small area is left unsprayed. Then they use this area for both their internal and external cleaning routines. But, you ask, do I really need to bother with this routine if I'm always using the same types of products?

Remember. Any spray liquid remaining in the sprayer may also harm the materials of which it is made. It's not unknown, when sprayers are parked up in the sun, for solvents used to dissolve pesticides to re-condense as a concentrate onto internal surfaces. Such undiluted solvents can and do cause structural damage. So even where there may be little threat from spray liquid carry over, there still remains a risk to the fabric of the sprayer.

EXTERNAL CLEANING

This technology is much more recent and, as I write, firm guidelines for its use are still emerging. But there are already some ground rules!

Every time a car is taken on the road it gets some dirt on it. Each occasion a sprayer is used it too inevitably gets some external deposits on it. If those deposits are left on the outside and it rains or anyone leans on it or touches it, then there is a risk of contamination.

Indeed, arable sprayers can get so contaminated with herbicides that, if it rains when they are parked up, it kills off the vegetation below. But the overall picture is much worse than that. Environment agencies, water supply companies and regulators are telling our industry that 'inappropriate cleaning' may be the single greatest source of ground water pollution. The area underneath a dirty, parked sprayer may be exposed to dose levels that far exceed that for which the product is approved.

Imagine then if a sprayer is parked on concrete close to a ditch. Very easily, some pesticide will get washed off it onto the concrete and into the ditch. Clearly we all have to do better than allow that and ensure external,

as well as internal, deposits are also removed; and removed in the field of use, just as should be the case with internal cleaning activity.

4. External deposits need to be removed after your internal cleaning routine. Remember - regular cleaning brings benefits to all.

Greenkeepers can use the same clean water supply for both internal and external cleaning routines. Clean internal surfaces first but leave about a third of the water for outside. Pressure hoses and lances can be fitted to the sprayer ready for use on greens and fairways.

Keep your booms open, pull out the hose and then pressure wash the booms and rear ends of the tanks first. This is where most deposits are found, so it's best to start there. Doing this small, quick job regularly

minimises deposits and leaves the sprayer so much safer for you, as well as looking its best to your playing clientele.

Can you reduce build-up levels on the outside? Yes, by using the coarsest spray advised on the label. If the product you use offers the choice of medium/coarse sprays, then choose coarse and, as with drift control, try and avoid the use of fine sprays.

So do remember that just a few minutes spent on these important routines at the end of spraying will not only help your sprayer last longer, it will minimise environmental risks and ensure you make best use of all the spray you've bought. It makes sense for us all to keep our sprayers clean.

More information on sprayer cleaning and all the latest spraying news is on the Hardi International A/S website, www.hardi-international.com.



Your Letters...

Jim's Poem

*'Twas in the county of the bard, where first I heard the holy word, where NPK and all its herd were put asunder
Vile meadowgrass cut to the ground and trampled under
At Warwick where you held court, with young pretenders played some sport and even breached the sacred fort of ancient Bingley.
Excaliber you doubled up or took them singly*

*They battled back, but all in vain, great blows upon them you did rain
the lights that flickered in my brain, you struck the matches,
And lit a beacon 'cross the Downs with plain dispatches
So having heard the word firsthand, I joined the loyal, trusty band who
rode throughout this cursed land with honest reason
To feed or water meadowgrass would be high treason.*

*We rallied South we sallied North, from Dornoch down to Perranporth
foolhardy Captain's spouting forth did feel thy sting,
And when the sword was fully weighed, you plunged it in
Then from the West the darkest deeds did thunder in on ghostly steeds
delivering malicious seeds of discontent
And introduced the snivelling, crawling creeping bent*

*Your knights who once had been so loyal, did quickly smell
the lustrous spoil
so soon they did from you recoil and shift their ground,
They mustered round the dollar flag and shunned the pound.
They that once had pledged their lives did scabbard up their poa knives
for mobile phones and four-wheel drives they left their champion
Alone amidst the barren fields like bonnie campion*

*Cold winter blew its bitter blast, the creeping bent it breathed its last,
its glory days were over fast as you predicted,
It could not bear the chilling blows that you inflicted
Next rye sails in upon the breeze and plants his standard on the tees,
then spreads to fairways his disease, that dwarfish snail
His slime now licks around the cup, our holy grail*

*The battles will not be in vain, proud fescue will return again, as we
foreswear to make your aim our lifelong quest
And let you pass with sweet refrain unto thy rest
And we will place a guardian there, a linksie-man to shield your lair, his
single charge to have a care, the rye to slaughter
'T will be one tomb no-one would dare to feed or water*

*So fare thee well my honest friend, on time and tide you may depend,
your legacy will long extend across the land
For honest truths at journeys end alone shall stand*

Kerran Daly

Jim Arthur

It was with great sadness that I heard of the death of Jim. Until about 12 months ago we had an ongoing friendship built on my respect for the great man's knowledge and above all his ongoing crusade for us all to stick to the basics of good greenkeeping.

Sadly when I was trying to explain the reality and pressures that today's Course Managers have to work under, despite knowing that his principles of little fertiliser, little water and plenty of aeration were correct to produce a better surface which reduces the need for chemicals etc, he didn't want to listen to my support of the modern world of golfer's demands! Down went the phone as it has so often to his 'friends' in recent years - but I hope I speak for all those of us who fully support his beliefs when I say Jim, despite his frustrations with us in privileged positions in golf knew that we all had the greatest respect for him.

I was proud to be part of the R&A's Golf Course Committee some years ago when funding was approved to allow Jim to coordinate all his works and with the assistance of his chosen co-writers produce Practical Greenkeeping. This book will long be the very basic 'bible' for all aspiring Course Managers setting off on their greenkeeping careers. I know in terms of greenkeeper education Jim's beliefs and support of the tried and tested methods of a programme to encourage the fine grasses will continue to be taught for generations to come.

David F Golding
GTC Education Director

Tribute to Ian Ormond Taylor

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Ian Taylor, a Scottish Greenkeeper, who was really proud of his roots and trade. Anyone who came into contact with Ian during his greenkeeping life at Bothwell Castle, Cambuslang, Glasgow Gailies and finally Powfoot will have good memories of his enthusiasm, sense of humour and dedication. We also remember his quiet calm as he sat back and pondered with his pipe in one hand and his favourite tippie in the other.

Ian will be remembered as one of the stalwarts who formed the Ayrshire Section. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his selfless endeavours. When he did something he always put his full heart into it, as people who knew him remember. Ian's fondness for Country and Western, wearing full regalia or latterly his caravan days. There is no truth in the rumour his bad feet were caused when putting his gun back in its holster.

Ian's many friends in the golfing community will remember his presence and mourn his passing. Ian's funeral service took place on Thursday March 24 at Ecclefechan Parish Church and was attended by many friends and former colleagues. Our thoughts are with his family in their sad loss.

Robert T. Bruce

YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor,
Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE,
Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email
them to: scott@bigga.co.uk

Course Feature



▲ Paul Worster

God Gave this Place for Golf

Scott MacCallum visits BIGGA Environment Competition winner Minchinhampton Golf Club and meets a Course Manager, whose environmental work acts as a real stress buster.

There are some parts of the country where golf seems to be a much bigger part of the community than others. There are some places where it seems that everyone and his pet dog are involved in the game in some way or another and its not just skateboarders you have to be wary of when you walk the pavements, but caddie cars.

St Andrews and Gullane spring to mind immediately as just that sort of place but there is another, not quite such an obvious name, to add to that list.

Minchinhampton, in Gloucestershire, is not the biggest place in the world, but Minchinhampton Golf Club boasts 54 holes with the Old Course resembling an inland version of some of those in Fife or East Lothian. Cut from the common land the course passes backwards and forwards across public roads with golfers holing out just a few yards from the through traffic. The other two courses, complete with a magnificent clubhouse converted from a stone built barn, are more conventional and under the stewardship of Course Manager, Paul Worster, represent fine challenges for the 1400 playing members - the Old Course - which is almost a club within the club, has another 600 playing members. Both clubs have thriving junior sections, encouraged by the club, as an investment in the future.

The three courses are maintained by a combined staff of 11 - nine on the New Courses, consisting of the Avening designed by Fred Hawtree in 1972, and the Cherington designed by Martin Hawtree in 1992, which cover a combined 250 acres, and the other two on the Old Course - but despite the obvious hefty workload the team still has had time to become the 2004 winners of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Scotts, Syngenta, and WRAP.

"People do ask - haven't you got enough to do without bothering about environmental matters, but it isn't a case of that," said Paul, who is a superb ambassador for his profession and the environmental lobby.

"It takes a lot of the stress out of the daily grind of preparing a golf course. I'll bet I was the only Course Manager in the country who was transplanting buttercups and reeds at the beginning of the week. We've produced a little marshy area and are making sure that it develops".

Of course, its not just therapy for the staff, the Minchinhampton membership also benefit. "It brings a whole new perspective for the members. They are not wholly focussed on lightening fast greens and criss-cross cut fairways they realise there is something more involved and it takes their attention when they are playing" said Paul, who along with officials from the club received the Environment Competition trophy at Harrogate in January.



A combination of 11 staff maintain the three Minchinhampton courses

Golf began at Minchinhampton in 1889, when the Lord of the Manor was introduced to the game by a friend from Scotland. It is no surprise that when you take on board the introduction to this article, or indeed the name of the first course, that the friend came from St Andrews.

"The friend actually said, and we've included the quote in the club handbooks, that 'God gave this place for golf'."

The Lord of the Manor, being a golfer - albeit a recent one - and as a result a decent sort, appreciated that he couldn't just ride roughshod over the community and take over common land to indulge his latest hobby - the relatively new sport to the area of golf - so he made his Great Park at Minchinhampton available for graziers and public use in exchange for the rights to play golf over the commons. However, the game quickly caught on and Paul produced a framed picture, which hangs in the Mess Room, showing women in long skirts and bodices playing golf over the Old Course with horses and carts travelling along the tracks which are now busy B roads. At that stage, in much the same manner as courses were maintained up and down the country, it was a Pro\Greenkeeper who was in charge of the upkeep. In the 1960's and 70's the common started to get a lot busier and many more people were playing golf so the club realised that if it was going to develop they have to move. To that end they sold their only tangible asset, a pub called the Old Lodge, previously an old Coaching Inn, which acted as the clubhouse, and used the money to finance the land for the Avening Course on farmland a couple of miles away.

Course Feature



This water feature is a haven for various wildlife



"There were, and still are, some pretty astute financial people running this club and 20 years after building the Avening they were able to build the Cherington course to cope with the yet more demand for golf in the area.

Although built on modest budgets father and son Hawtree both did remarkable jobs on limited budgets - Martin who is retained as the Club's resident architect to oversee any design project which is undertaken, also had to comply with regulations which dictated that the course could only rise or fall by no more than one and a half metres. The swales, mounds and contouring he put into the course means it looks anything but a flat golf course and the greens are very undulating and can stimp at up to 11," said Paul who is a category one player himself.

To assist with the development of the Cherington course trees were transplanted from the Avening to add character and definition as quickly as possible.

"We transplanted 8,000 trees using a JCB or tree spade and if we lost 50 I'd be surprised. We had the right operators who know how to dig a tree without ruining it."

Ironically, some of those trees are now being repatriated to the Avening Course as there is a feeling it needs to be tightened up.

"We employ an arboriculturalist who advises us on each and every tree and we can look at strategy, species and health of trees. We are thinning out about 180 trees this year and there was quite a bit of disquiet among some of the members as some of them can remember when they were planted, indeed some of them were members of the planting parties and actually planted the trees and to see someone taking a chainsaw to them has been a bit of a shock," said Paul.



The Old course is common land and is split by public roads

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Course Feature



Wooden trays are positioned throughout the courses to store grass clippings



A place to rest for the local buzzards



With Marking Day approaching the Old course's grass cannot be cut for two weeks

"If you get the right professional advice it carries the day. That's what we do. If we feel we haven't got the knowledge, we'll go out and get it rather than making it up as we go along".

The bunkerless Old Course is looked after by Senior Greenkeeper Nigel Crewe and his Assistant, Ian Shaw, and their job has some interesting elements.

Cattle and horses roam free on what is still common land and the first job of the day is to repair the damaging cattle and horse prints from the greens - a task that can take up to three or four hours.

Bizarrely, although all Minchinhampton's courses are run by Paul, the Old Course is a separate section and any time that materials or labour are transferred from one to another, a paper trail has to be left, and invoices drawn.

"At the moment, we're on the eve of Marking Day when the cattle are branded and we are not allowed to cut any grass other than greens or tees for two weeks before or after Marking Day. The idea is that the livestock get the first cut so it can get pretty tough," said Nigel, who added that a few beasts are lost through accidents on the roads around the common each year.

Marking Day also signals one of the highlights of the Minchinhampton golfing calendar - Cow Pat Night!

Among the touches which impressed the judges in the Environment Competition were holes left in a new drystone wall to retain badger runs, wooden perches which attract the local buzzards, wood construction frames and trays which have been placed discreetly on every other hole on both new courses to take grass clippings. "The guys are now fanatical about finding one to empty their boxes and from there we can shovel the clippings easily off the ply and return them to compost. We did the whole job for £250."

Composting is another extremely important element of their work and there is a massive compost heap on the edge of the Maintenance Compound measuring about 30 Metres Square and nearly two metres high.

"A fan is used twice a day to get some oxygen into it to aid decomposition and we reuse what we produce in about nine months."



Paul and his team created this hole to retain a badger run

Paul believes that golf clubs are far more environmentally aware now than in the past. "We are all a lot more conscious of environmental matters than we were, but we are also far more active and as a result have a far greater potential to pollute. We can all do our little bit to help," said Paul, who is slowly changing some of his machinery fleet to electric or LPG.

"We are not just providing a wildlife sanctuary. We are operating a business while trying to minimise the effects of environmental damage. The environment belongs to us all, and its up to all of us to help look after it."

He is also aware of the "bad press" that golf gets from some aspects of the media, which fuels a low public approval rating for golf.

"Ninety percent of the UK population lives in big towns and cities so for a lot of people sport is playing snooker and darts in the pub and going to football matches. Golf has unfortunately been perceived as damaging, polluting, and therefore expensive and elitist - people still think that there is an arsenal of chemicals and fertilisers wantonly thrown at golf courses because some of the courses they see on TV lead them to believe that to be the case.

"If we can get the point across that we've got some wonderful habitats out here and that this sport does little or no harm to the environment, we shall be preserving the game for generations to come."

Paul's first involvement with environmental matters came at his previous job at Lilleybrook golf club, on which a SSSI site was designated just before he left to join Minchinhampton 13 years ago. "What was involved came as a bit of a shock to me at the time, but when I came here there was so much work involved in building the Cherington Course that we didn't have much time to devote to the environmental aspects."

That all changed when one of his staff, Samantha Kennedy, began to take an interest in the environmental well being of the site. "Sam was critical to what we were doing so we sent her on training course to improve her knowledge. She helped me to create a methodology statement for the maintenance of the golf courses, and produced a booklet for the members to read in the clubhouse explaining our approach.

When Samantha left for Bowood Golf and Country Club, her role was taken by another member of staff, Martin Didcott, who was employed primarily for his environmental knowledge but also doubled as a greenkeeper.

"He coordinated the environmental work because I've got a lot of other things to think about - budgets, committees, competitions, Health and Safety, Risk, COSHH, staff appraisals, training, the list goes on and on.



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The club have been busy transplanting and thinning out trees



A feature like this highlights why the BIGGA Environmental Competition judges were so impressed



The compost heap has a fan which blows air into it everyday to assist decomposition



Golf Environment Competition

Quite frankly, none of these things, the environment included, are easily managed without the support of a good team, and at Minchinhampton the focus is very much on the team, and a partnership between staff, management, and the members themselves.

"The environment is very much an opportunity to reward a member of staff with more responsibility. It can be easy for Assistant Greenkeepers to become frustrated at an apparent lack of rapid career progress - you can take a member of staff from outside your "core team" and give them the environment as a big important project.

"Do not underestimate the pressure that Course Managers are under. I have been there and felt it. The R&A Best Practice website is an example. People don't have the time to visit it as regularly as they should to get the full benefits of the information available. Making that commitment is a difficult thing".

Minchinhampton entered the Environment Competition for the first time in 2003 and it says much for the quality of the work being carried out that only a year later they were picking up the top prize.

"We were running along competition lines for some time but felt that we weren't ready for that final step of putting in the entry form. I'm so glad we did because it wasn't nearly as invasive or time consuming as we'd feared."

The club held a presentation dinner for the staff and their partners during February in honour of winning the competition.

"I was so proud when the guys were applauded into the room by about a hundred members. I followed it up after the meal with a PowerPoint presentation on the work we had done to win the competition and this was really well received. I've since had some rebookings, and done the presentation for the ladies, three BIGGA and company seminars in the south, and an advance booking from the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust."

What advice could he give to other clubs thinking about becoming more environmentally active? "I'd sit down with anyone and everyone who's interested. Itemise the things that need to be done, put someone in charge, give them a budget, and let them run with it."

Paul is also concerned about the threat to remove more and more chemicals from the greenkeepers armoury.

"I firmly believe that before I retire routine chemical applications will have been withdrawn from use on Amenity Turf. While I have no intention of suddenly and completely ceasing the use of chemicals here, what I want to do is to understand how best to manage without. Golfers have got to appreciate that it is not necessarily best practice to exterminate every single weed just because they don't happen to like the look of it, but we are in a competitive business and I don't want to fight it on the back foot."

You can't see Paul Worster or Minchinhampton Golf Club ever being caught on the back foot and the Club will continue to thrive.