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38 Bookham Industrial Park
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A guide to who's who at BIGGA

President
Sir Michael
Bonallack, OBE

BIGGA Board of Management
Chairman - Richard Whyman
Vice Chairman - Billy McMillan
Past Chairman - Kerran Daly

Board Members

Raymond Day
Jeff Mills
Gavin Robson
Iain Macleod
Bert Cross
Walter Woods BEM
Mark Dobell

Chief Executive: John Pemberton
Email: john@bigga.co.uk

Deputy Chief Executive
Education & Training Manager: Ken Richardson
Email: ken@bigga.co.uk

Communications Manager/Editor: Scott MacCallum
Email: scott@bigga.co.uk

Sales Manager: Rosie Hancher
Email: rosie@bigga.co.uk

Membership Department: Gemma Lee
Email: gemma@bigga.co.uk

Contact us

You can contact The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association in any number of ways:

Post: BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark,
Alne, York, YO61 1UF

Email: reception@bigga.co.uk

Website: www.bigga.org.uk

Tel: 01347 833800

Fax: 01347 833801



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Greenkeeper INTERNATIONAL

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Editorial

Communications Manager/Editor: Scott MacCallum
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833801
Email: scott@bigga.co.uk

Assistant Editor: Melissa Toombs
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833801
Email: melissa@bigga.co.uk

Design

Design and Production Editor: Marie Whyld
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833802
Email: marie@bigga.co.uk

Advertising

Sales Manager: Rosie Hancher
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833802
Email: rosie@bigga.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive: Kirstin Smith
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833802
Email: kirstin@bigga.co.uk / sales@bigga.co.uk

Sales Assistant: Karen Russell
Tel: 01347 833800 Fax: 01347 833802
Email: karen@bigga.co.uk / sales@bigga.co.uk

Printing

Warners Midlands Plc, The Maltings,
Manor Lane, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH.
Tel: 01778 391000 Fax: 01778 394269

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Welcome

SHARING A GOOGLE PAGE

It's always nice to know who your neighbours are. With a few minutes to spare, amid the hectic activity which always accompanies the run up to Harrogate Week I thought I'd check out Google and see where BIGGA ranked on it and with which other websites we shared a page.

It was pleasing to discover that under BIGGA we ranked in the top two places, with the main – soon to be relaunched! - British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association site, and the second which takes you directly to the BIGGA Greenkeeper International pages on the site.

Just below our two is an intriguing site called BIGGAFISH.com, which when visited proves to be no more than a single page with the word BIGGA above a black leaping fish on a mustard coloured background with the words "Coming Soon". We'll wait with baited breath. Gettit!

After BIGGAFISH comes the BIGGA Central Section site, again a good result for them, followed by a site called biggabush.co.uk. Now, it's not what you might think but instead I believe it's a music orientated site and the home page invites you to sign up to their mailing list.

Welcome to BIGGA comes next and you'd be entitled to expect another way into your favourite Association's website. Nope. BIGGA is a Jamaican soft drink – "I'm a Jamaican and I drink no soft drink. I drink bigga" is the phrase which hits you on the home page!

Sirdar Bigga – Sirdar Yarn UK is next which offers you a fabulous choice of knitting yarn for any jumpers or scarves you might want to run up during the cold winter months ahead.

Then up pops The Official J Bigga Website – J Bigga Music Videos which offers downloads and spoof videos etc. Definitely attracting the younger end of the surfing market, it's a busy site produced in America.

Bigga Giggas "specialises in the new, extremely large sample instruments made possible by streaming samplers such as GigaStudio Tascam, Kontakt Native Instruments and HALion Steinberg." I think that means that they sell machines which produced sampled music, but I could be wrong.

The final website on the page is designed to sell the "Notorious B.I.G – Bigga Than Life DVD. A profile, it says, of larger-than-life West Coast rapper and 1995 Billboard rap artist of the year, Christopher Wallace, (a.k.a. "The Notorious B.I.G." and "Biggie Smalls"),

So there you have it. Happily we come out top when you type BIGGA into Google but you certainly wouldn't be able to predict whom we'd share a page with – fishing, music, Jamaican soft drinks, yarn and electronic musical instruments. It's a strange old world out there right enough. Or, at least it is, if you have the word Bigga attached to you in some way.

So keep logging on to make sure we remain at Number 1 and I'm sure the new BIGGA site, when it's launched at Harrogate, will have plenty to keep you interested and coming back.

Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Scott MacCallum, Editor

DLF TRIFOLIUM SUPPLIES ROYAL LIVERPOOL

After a hugely successful Open Craig Gilholm, Head Greenkeeper at Royal Liverpool GC, selected varieties from DLF Trifolium for repair and renovation work.

Craig saw the opportunity to introduce more fine fescues, which have stood up to severe drought and heavy foot damage throughout the Open competition. Much of the course had recovered naturally and Craig supported the view that fescue dominated areas were far more resilient than many people believed.

The cultivars were selected for fineness of leaf, shoot density, disease resistance and their natural ability to survive drought and low nutrient inputs. Musica and Carioca chewing fescue combined with Cezanne slender creeping red fescue, featured heavily in the mixtures. Craig

selected the Johnsons J Fescue and Aitkens Blade 4 mixtures for use throughout the course.

Craig stated, "We have been very pleased by the establishment of the mixtures throughout the course and the fact that we are continuing to increase the fine fescue component of the sward."



ROLAWN LAUNCH TEESSIDE INITIATIVE



(L to R) Cedric McMillan (Rolawn's Sales and Marketing Director) and David Anderson (Joseph Parr's Managing Director)

Rolawn, Europe's largest turf grower and leading topsoil supplier, have formed a business partnership with Joseph Parr (Middlesbrough) Ltd, Teesside's leading independent builder's merchant. Under the new arrangement, Parr's will act as a key distributor for Rolawn covering the Teesside region.

Cedric McMillan, Rolawn's Sales and Marketing Director commented "The association between the two companies is ideal as we share the same principles of quality and service". David Anderson, Joseph Parr's Managing Director added "We believe the partnership will provide customers with the key benefit of being able to source materials from a single local supplier".

SPRAYING BOOKS NOW EVEN BETTER

BCPC (British Crop Production Council) has revised and fully updated its best selling sprayer operator books.

Field Scale Spraying (formerly Boom & Fruit Sprayers Handbook) and Small Scale Spraying (formerly Hand-Held & Amenity Sprayers Handbook) now include up-to-the minute guidance on such important topics as nozzle selection, equipment choice, safe working practices, calibration and much more.

The Field Scale book is clearly focused on the needs of operators using boom sprayers in arable crops, grassland and field vegetables or large air-assisted sprayers associated with fruit and horticultural spraying. Small Scale Spraying covers a

multitude of sectors where hand-held equipment or small amenity boom sprayers are employed including parks, golf courses, forestry and gardens, pavements and other hard surfaces, nurseries and glasshouses.

The books have a new editor, mechanisation expert Bill Basford. "At the end of the day safe and effective spraying comes down to the skill and expertise of sprayer operators," he says. "Whether you're new to spraying and yet to obtain your Certificate of Competence or an 'old hand', I think you should find these new books helpful."

For more information visit the BCPC website at: www.bcp.org/bookshop.



SOIL RELIEVER COMES OUT PUNCHING

Southern Green, manufacturers of the only USA built deep tine aerator - The Soil Reliever, have appointed JSM Distribution as their exclusive distributor for the UK markets (exc. Ireland).

Southern Greens' Vice-President of Sales, Jeff Lawson, comments "It is very pleasing for Soil Reliever to have such a strong, structured, service orientated distribution company such as JSM promoting our range of deep tine aeration equipment"

JSM Distribution takes up their appointment in full from January 1, but is already supporting current users with replacement parts and tines, and technical support. They will also be exhibiting at BTME 2007.



NEW AREA MANAGER FOR SCOTLAND



Tacit have announced the appointment of Robert Rees as their new Area Manager for Scotland.

In his new position Robert will be responsible for development and execution of Tacit's business strategy in Scotland and the provision of a range of quality products on a bespoke level while tailoring the service to the individual needs of each golf course.

Before joining Tacit Robert had worked for SGM as an Area Manager for the south of Scotland. He has been in land related industries for 30 years and the golf industry for the past 18 including four years at Gleneagles.

GRASS IS GREENER AT MYERSCOUGH

The resources of Myerscough College's Sportsturf and Mechanisation department have been boosted thanks to a kind donation of equipment.

Mr Frank Moore, a leading innovator in his field, has donated thousands of pounds of machinery to the College for students to use. Mr Moore, from Beaminster in Dorset, is well known for designing the Moore Mower and has now retired after a long and successful career. He created the ride-on lawnmower to reduce machinery operators' exposure to vibration. The Moore Mower is a unique product on the market and has been particularly popular due to regulations introduced in July 2005 to protect employees and the self-employed from health problems caused by exposure to vibration. It is currently used by organisations such as local authorities to mow around graves and in sports fields and playgrounds. An engineer by profession, Mr Moore has worked for companies including Howards, designing and producing rotovators and agricultural machinery, as well as setting up his own business.

The Moore Mower is just part of the equipment donated to the College by Mr Moore, also donated were a prototype model and his research and development work, which will be useful for

Sportsturf and Mechanisation students at the College in understanding a range of mechanical design processes and systems.

Brian King, a Lecturer in Sportsturf at Myerscough College said: "This equipment will be of great value to our Higher Education students as a raw material for their research. The machinery has a market value of over £20,000 so we would like to thank Mr Moore for his generous support for Myerscough College."



(Left to right) Stewart Brown, Brian King, Dave Waterworth and Malcolm Eckton from Myerscough's Sportsturf Team with the newly donated Moore Mower

NOMINATE YOUR UNSUNG HEROES

Don't forget to nominate your Unsung Heroes. Greenkeepers and Groundsmen who do a superb job and put in that little bit extra. This is your chance to put them forward and get them recognised. Nomination forms are available from the Pitchcare website, the Nov/Dec issue of Greenkeeping magazine and Lynda at Terrain Aeration. If you're pushed for time call her on Tel: 01449 673783 and she will do the paperwork for you. The closing date is December 9.

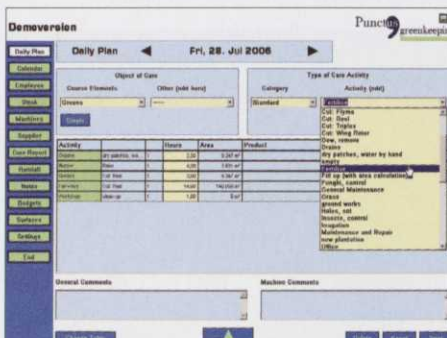


Current Unsung heroes Ian Willett (left) and Arthur Williams (right) open the nominations at Saltex

SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTORSHIP

Developers of Grounds Management Software, Punctus, have announced that Intelligent Greenkeeping Solutions Ltd will be distributing its market-leading product Punctus Greens in the UK, Ireland and Scandinavia.

Punctus Greens is an electronic diary and office manager. It makes the daily organisation and management of Golf Courses easier by managing men, equipment and materials. Five to ten minutes are usually enough for daily inputs. These cover all common areas: personnel, course maintenance, machine maintenance etc. The resulting reports provide an excellent basis for communication and decision-making.



What has been done today? Clicking instead of typing.

NEW APPOINTMENT

Water engineering specialists Autoflow Systems have appointed Ashley Proctor as company director following the departure of Jon Mawson.

Ashley has over 11 years experience working within the sports turf industry and is looking forward to his new challenge after progressing through the ranks from irrigation installer, service engineer and irrigation designer. His new position will involve the day-to-day running of contracts combined with the pricing and designing of irrigation and pumping systems.

Jon Mawson's departure comes after 14 years with the company and he will be missed by customers and colleagues alike.

Managing Director David Flawn exclaimed, "Ashley comes with a wealth of experience and his technical knowledge gained over the years will prove to be a welcome positive asset to this new position".



IRRIGATION USAGE A SUCCESS

The British Turf and Landscape Irrigation Association's revised educational programme is proving to be a great success.

Held at the Thistle Hotel, Brands Hatch, Kent, adjacent to the world famous motor racing circuit, the BTLIA Foundation Certificate Module was aimed at assessing actual irrigation system performance and efficiency and then relating these operational criteria to the turf management environment. The effects of different climatic conditions, soil types, turfgrass species, and micro-climates surrounding golf green complexes were considered in the assessment.

Part of the course provided experience of golf irrigation auditing, including a practical session at West Malling Golf Club, where the attendees set out water collection devices and gathered data such as precipitation rates and coverage uniformity that was subsequently used to produce an irrigation schedule that matched the system to the turf characteristics and conditions.

The British Turf and Landscape Irrigation's new educational programme is set to continue with other modules of the Certificate and Diploma Courses being offered in the near future.



BOLD NEW APPROACH

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) has called for a new approach to wildlife conservation by launching its 25 year vision for Scottish wildlife: "Natural connections - a vision for re-building Scotland's wildlife".

Speaking at the launch, SWT's Chief Executive Simon Milne said: "Our vision is about taking a bold approach to protecting our natural heritage. More often than not our attention is focused on individual, threatened, species; we now need action at a wider scale and create wildlife-rich landscapes with networks of habitats. Our wildlife is one of the most sensitive indicators of environmental health and the effect of climate change is already becoming apparent. If we are to meet the many challenges facing wildlife we must strive towards establishing expanding communities of native species across large areas of Scotland."

As a recent review has shown, the UK is still far off meeting its target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010 and in fact 39% of habitats and 27% of priority species are still declining across the UK. As Milne continues, "Traditionally we thought we could protect wildlife in special 'nature reserves'; such places will continue to be important but in the face of climate change they will not be enough. Whether on land or at sea, wildlife does not observe artificial boundaries. Wildlife in small, often isolated pockets of habitat is often prone to extinction and the ability of species to adapt and find a home in isolated patches of habitat diminishes. We must therefore be ambitious in our approach, tackling the threats to wildlife at multiple scales, from the species to the

whole ecosystem. We now desperately need conservation at a landscape-scale if we are to give our threatened wildlife the breathing space it needs to survive. This is why SWT has launched its 25 year vision at such a crucial time in wildlife conservation."

Fred Edwards, President of Scottish Environment LINK (a forum made up of 36 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environment organisations), said: "The Scottish Wildlife Trust is to be congratulated in putting ecosystems at the heart of their vision. The recent consultation by Scottish Natural Heritage on its strategic framework (Making a difference for Scotland's species) is important as it prioritises resources. We however must understand that by trying to fix one element we won't solve a bigger environmental problem. It is time that the government, local authorities, conservation organisations, landowners and politicians acknowledge that an ecosystem approach to conservation bringing together all contributing components, is the only way to truly re-build Scotland's biodiversity in the longer-term."

Backed by a membership of over 28,000 and with a portfolio of over 120 reserves, SWT calls for government to give real recognition of the economic and social value of our environment. To provide sufficient financial support for landscape-scale action as well as ensure that a strategic approach is taken to tackling ecosystem threats. It also calls for greater integration of wildlife-friendly approaches to farming, forestry and land management practices as well as the more urban and rural greenspaces where people can enjoy and appreciate nature.

BIGGA VS COMBINED SERVICES GOLF MATCH

The third annual scratch golf challenge match between BIGGA and the Combined Services held at North Berwick GC on October 16, produced a nail-biting finish on the 18th hole. In the last match the BIGGA four-ball pairing of Stuart Taylor and Douglas McIntosh needed to win the hole to half their match and win the overall match, both having putts of under four feet for birdies, only to see the Combined Services pairing of Marshall Scott and Steve Davies hole from about 15 feet for a birdie to secure the win to save the Combined Services from a second successive defeat.

Earlier in the day the morning foursomes had finished level, as did the afternoon four-balls, so the overall result was a very creditable half with five points to each team. The golf throughout the day was of a very high standard, with some very close

matches, particularly in the afternoon four-balls.

Our thanks go to the North Berwick GC for hosting the match, played on the outstanding links course superbly presented by Stuart Greenwood and his staff. We were particularly pleased to welcome Stuart and the Club Secretary, John Douglass, to the after match dinner. Our thanks to the BIGGA team for playing with such commitment and skill, and to the Combined Services team for playing the match in such good spirit.

The BIGGA team was Steven Lamb, Kenny Mail, Brian Heggie, Kenny Stirling, Gerald Bruce, Ian Mawer, Brian Storey, John McLoughlin, Stuart Taylor and Douglas McIntosh.

Match Secretary, Peter Larter

PS - Apologies, due to technical problems there is no team photograph.

HELPING CUSTOMERS TEE OFF ON TIME

Golf car dealer, T H White has joined forces with Calor, the UK's leading supplier of Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) to promote LPG golf cars to country clubs.

T H White, authorised distributor of Ransome Jacobsen golf cars, has teamed up with Calor to encourage golf clubs to add cleaner, more convenient LPG golf cars to their fleet. As an added

bonus, customers purchasing four LPG golf cars will get 500 litres of free Calor LPG.

The campaign offers customers 500 litres of free Calor LPG on the purchase of four E Z GO golf cars. For further information about the campaign visit: www.calor.co.uk

A tool to groom your bottom line – Toro Financing.



For more than 90 years, Toro has partnered with turf care professionals like you to create the world's most appealing landscapes. Toro is committed to providing innovative, reliable equipment to make your job easier. Now Toro introduces a product to help your bottom line: Toro Financing. Designed specifically for turf care professionals, Toro Financing can help you acquire the equipment you need to create picturesque, playable landscapes - and stay on-budget.

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Co. Kildare. Tel: 00 353 (0)45 526170 Email: torosales@lely.ie www.toro.com

TORO

Count on it.

MARK MAIN

Moray Golf Club and north greenkeeping has lost one of its fine young greenkeepers. Only 22 years old and in his 4th year apprenticeship with us, Mark was an extremely loyal, pleasant and hard working colleague with an assured future ahead of him. His untimely death occurred while travelling to attend Elmwood College where he was studying for his Level III Greenkeeping. As a lifelong Aberdeen Football Club fan he often travelled this road which makes his loss all the more upsetting.

Mark played most of his golf out of the neighbouring Hopeman Golf Club and regularly took part in the North Section outings and National tournaments, he was keen and competitive and frequently picked up some sort of silverware!

We up here will all miss his laid back but professional manner, his quick wittedness and his football friendly banter.

We are shocked at his loss and extend both our comforts and condolences to his family.

George Paterson

NATURAL SOLUTION



Picturesque Highlands' golf club Royal Dornoch, has made a major investment in the quality of its championship and recreational links courses with a five-year exclusive deal for both Toro machinery and irrigation.

Under the new agreement, the club has acquired a comprehensive range of new Toro machines including tees, greens and fairway mowers, Workman utility vehicles, a ProCore 648 greens aerator and a HydroJect 3010 aerator.

ANOTHER BRAID COURSE FOR SWAN

The 1897 James Braid designed course on the Kent outskirts of London is about to begin a renovation programme under the direction of Howard Swan and James Edwards of Swan Golf Designs, International Golf Course Architects, based in Essex.

It is likely that works to the course will start this autumn with a bunker renovation exercise.

Howard Swan adds: "I am very pleased to be able to work on another James Braid course, adding Dartford to the likes of Middlesbrough, Workington, Old Fold Manor and, of course, the highly acclaimed renovation and restoration to Goodwood. We shall, as ever, look to sensitive and sympathetic treatment of the course and Braid's design philosophies and intent in bringing the rather lovely, if modest, course at Dartford, to the present day."

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR GOLF COURSE

After a two year break STRI is returning to Harrogate week during the BTME/ClubHouse exhibition.

The two-day course for Secretaries, Chairman of Green and those involved in managing golf courses has been completely revised with a new format. The first day takes place in Harrogate at the Holiday Inn. Focus will be on current issues affecting: Turfgrass Management, Managing the Golf Course, Golf and the Environment.

Programme topics include plant nutrition, turfgrass protection, mechanical operations, optimising pace, the disturbance theory, how to benchmark and improve your golf course, water efficiency, responding to the effects of climate change, new diseases, the impact of fertilisers and pesticides.

On the second day a coach will transport delegates to STRI's Head Office and trials grounds in Bingley for the morning and then on to a golf course for a walkabout session, covering both agronomy and ecology, in the afternoon. The coach will return delegates to Harrogate at around 4:30pm.

Attendance will qualify delegates for BASIS, BIGGA CPDC's and Master Greenkeeper Certificate points.

The cost of the two-day course is £325 per person plus VAT. This includes: two days training with course notes, refreshments and two lunches, all transport, a copy of STRI's best seller 'Care of the Golf Course', pre-registration and entrance to the exhibition.

Full details and programme can be viewed and downloaded at www.stri.co.uk

To book please Tel: 01347 833833 or book on line at: www.harrogateweek.org.uk



OLD SCOTTISH RIVALS DO BUSINESS

Stewartsturf Limited has recently announced the sale of its Sports and Amenity Business, Stewart and Company Seedsmen Ltd to Richard Aitken Seedsmen Ltd.

These two old rivals formed in 1894 and 1964 respectively, have been the mainstays of the industry in Scotland for generations. Richard Aitken said he was delighted to have purchased Stewarts with all the connections, history and relationships involved. "We can now move forward expanding the quality of service that we offer to our customers

in Scotland and England," he commented.

For his part, Graeme Forbes of Stewartsturf said: "following our decision to concentrate on our turf growing business we enjoyed the successful management buyout of our contracting business to Sportsmasters UK Ltd in July. For our Sports and Amenity Business we could not have found a more appropriate buyer than Aitkens whom we have always held in great respect, both as a business and a family."

CLEAR AND CONSISTENT RESULTS

Clear and consistent results are now being obtained from the mixture synergy work, currently being conducted at the STRI on behalf of Barenbrug. Recent visitors to the demonstration plots were members of the RTF Turf Group who saw first hand the effect that one species or cultivar can have on another within a mixture.

Eight different Barenbrug mixtures, all with RTF as a component, were sown last October and are now providing the company and the RTF Turf Group with valuable information on mixture synergy and its importance in mixture formulation.

Barenbrug's Jayne Leyland said: "Twelve months on we can now see clear and consistent differences in the mixtures. They are providing us with invaluable data for future mixture formulations. It is very important that we maximise the benefits of an innovative cultivar such as RTF and develop the best mixtures to maximise its outstanding attributes."

The four members of the RTF Turf Group, who are accredited to grow RTF turf in the UK, are Inturf, Lindum Turf, Q Lawns and Tillers Turf.

RTF Rhizomatous Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) is a remarkable species, which through its amazing rooting depth capability can tolerate both drought and waterlogging. RTF increases this capability by producing underground stems (rhizomes), offering unrivalled recovery and tensile strength, plus the added benefit of incredibly fast establishment when laid as turf, which could be critical in terms of water conservation.



RTF Turf Group members check the mixture synergy demonstration plots at the STRI. Left to right - Chris Carr, Q Lawns; Barenbrug's Jayne Leyland; Alex Edwards, Inturf and Stephen Fell, Lindum

HELPING TO SAVE SUMMER-HIT LAWNS

Green-fingered garden lovers from across the South East have been turning to one Suffolk company in their hundreds - after one of the warmest summers on record.

With the clocks officially signalling the end of a particularly warm British Summertime this weekend, Sovereign Turf managing director David Waring says the unprecedented weather prompted huge sales of his new drought-tolerant turf product.

Introduced late last year, Xeris was created after extensive research into Britain's changing climate.



It called upon the experience of Sovereign's Portugal-based sister company - helping to produce a grass of high visual and textural quality without the need for regular rainfall. The knowledge was adapted to meet the needs of Britain's climate trends.

David said: "Without a doubt, gardeners all over the South of the UK have been waking up to the impact of our changing climate.

"The Met Office confirmed recently that England saw the warmest extended period since records began more than 350 years ago.

"That heat takes its toll on our lawns and can leave the garden looking in a really sorry state by the time we head toward winter."

David added: "I think the greatest concern anyone has when they seek out a drought-tolerant turf is that it will look and feel less appealing than real grass.

"We've always been conscious of that fear, so we've gone out of our way to ensure that our product is exceptional - both to look at and feel.

NEW APPOINTMENT

Vassgro Amenity of Bedford is pleased to announce the appointment of Mark Ellis as Technical Sales Representative. This appointment is greatly welcomed within Vassgro, as it will add another dimension to their business promoting a range of products to key customers in Beds, Bucks, Herts, Cambs, Northants and N London.



Mark has 15 years experience in the fine turf industry having worked previously as Golf Course Manager at Stocks and Mentmore GCs in Hertfordshire.

Mark has a long history with BIGGA and continues to support the Association. Mark can be contacted on: 07894 194922 or: 01525 403041 or emailed: mark@vassgro.co.uk

TRADE OPEN DAY

Cannons Turf hosted a Trade Open Day in Lincolnshire on October 25, inviting visitors, many from the golf sector, for a tour of the turf, irrigation facilities and to view the Trilo 110 BV turf harvester.



A Nearest the Pin competition was held during the Open Day

AUTOGUIDE GETS MOORE FOR ITS MONEY

Autoguide Equipment has announced its purchase of the manufacturing and marketing rights of the Moore Mower with immediate effect.

The Moore Mower designed by industry veteran Frank Moore, has been added to the growing range of specialist mowing machines manufactured by Autoguide.

The mower is a 36in (90cm) cut ride on cylinder mower offering grass collection with the ability to empty the box without leaving the driving seat. The unique high tip, forward dump grass box allows discharge into containers up to 1.15m (45") high - or onto a compost heap.

Commenting on his new acquisition Autoguide Managing Director Richard Robinson said: "The adding of the Moore Mower to our range confirms our commitment to offer our customers a range of British built equipment for the niche market. We are very pleased that Frank Moore has entrusted us with his product and intend to provide a first class spare parts and service back up to old and new customers."



Richard Robinson (L) with Moore Mower Designer Frank Moore at this year's Saltex

ABU DHABI GC TO GET UPGRADE



Abu Dhabi Golf Club - home to the Abu Dhabi Golf Championship, the first event of the PGA European Tour's International schedule taking place in January next year - is to get a further upgrade to enhance the playing and spectator experience.

Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA), which owns the championship, the largest annual sporting event in the UAE capital, has charged its tourism asset development arm, Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC), with enhancing the club's entrance, including major approach landscaping, improved directional signage, and further course improvements to challenge the world's best golfers.

"The aim is to continually refresh the championship experience for all involved,"

explained Mubarak Al Muhairi, Director General, ADTA and Managing Director, TDIC. "This year's inaugural championship attracted a very enthusiastic spectator base which we hope to retain and build on for January 2007. To do that, and in order to enhance the experience, we must continue to invest in necessary asset improvements."

The club upgrade will be accompanied by a series of course revisions aimed at increasing the degree of difficulty for a field of some 120 European Tour players.

"The revisions will extend the course to nearly 7,400 yards and will involve adding championship tees on several holes and lengthening others, creating new bunkers to frame fairways and greens and to ensure we can create fair, but challenging pin positions," said Ahmed Hussein, Chairman, Championship Committee.

"The improvements are already underway with the work being carried out with as little disruption as possible to Abu Dhabi Golf Club members and guests who play the course for the 51 non-tournament weeks of the year."

The Abu Dhabi Golf Championship will run from January 18-21 and has a US \$2 million prize fund.



GOLF TAKES THE LEAD

David Golding, GTC's Education Director, invites golf club employers and greenkeepers to have an input into the review of the work-based vocational qualifications, N/SVQ Levels 2 & 3.

The GTC has had representatives at meetings arranged by the Lantra Sector Skills Council to review the current Sports Turf work-based qualifications. It is important that our sector is well represented at these meetings to protect the content of these increasingly popular awards. Regular readers of the GTC articles will know how important we see skills training within the range of turf programmes and qualifications. The review group initially reviews the skills employers require to maintain, supervise and manage a golf course or sports facility.

At this stage I should point out that the VQ's are Sports Turf and developed for both greenkeepers and grounds persons, it just so happens that our specialist sector have adopted the VQ's while the other "side" of turf have not.

Personally I believe this is a shame as there is such similarity in the professions however, the GTC has a responsibility to golf and we must remain focused on encouraging the employers we represent through the English, Scottish and Welsh Golf Unions to invest in staff training.

BIGGA is well represented at all meetings relating to development and the reviews of turf qualifications, with leading training providers in attendance the GTC ensures the group work towards ensuring employers needs are met in the standards.

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the range of skills required by employers are identified.

In simple terms the group looks to the skills required by a greenkeeper right through to the manager.

Having identified the long list of skills these are then grouped to develop vocational qualifications and awarded a N/SVQ Level which the Governments accreditation authorities Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) approve.

While there is a Level 1 qualification, this includes a broad range of horticulture skills and can be useful for certain learners, I would suggest to the majority of staff either starting off as greenkeepers or spending the majority of their work maintaining the golf course, the Level 2 Sports Turf is the qualification they should be registered on.

It should be noted that the apprenticeship for greenkeepers embraces the N/SVQ Level 2 Sports Turf as well as the key skills of numeracy, literacy and communication.

The current Level 2 Sports Turf includes all the skills a greenkeeper should be competent in as well as the knowledge relating to each skill.

The level of knowledge and understanding required within a vocational qualification is often overlooked, however, please be reassured that the turf review group ensure all the basic information required is included.

The GTC, as the basis for the Level 2 review, invite comments on the current Training Manual sometimes referred to as the Black Book, which has been the main recording document by GTC Approved Training Providers since its introduction in 1994.

If you have any comments on the GTC's Training Manual please contact me direct.

The Level 3 Sports Turf is where the group is suggesting a mix of more technical and supervisory skills are brought together and aimed at providing employers with at least a person competent to supervise the maintenance of the golf course and the first line of management.

The list of skills grouped into units include Managing Information, Estimating resource requirements, Health and Safety, Irrigation, Drainage, Create grasses and planted areas, Managing sports turf areas.

In addition to the above, the review group are recommending at least two optional units be included at Level 3 - Carry out an ecological survey of the golf course and Plan the maintenance of equipment and machinery.

The ecology unit will require the candidate to walk the course to identify plants, animals and habitat types, report on the condition of the environment and record the data.

The planning of equipment and machinery maintenance will require the candidate to prepare a maintenance schedule/plan whether the work is carried out "in-house" or by an outside servicing agent.

The Advanced Apprenticeship includes the N/SVQ Level 3 Sports turf as well as the numeracy, literacy, communication and IT skills.

The consultation process will be co-ordinated by the Lantra SSC - www.lantra.co.uk - but if you would like to discuss the present Sports Turf vocational qualifications please do not hesitate to contact the GTC direct.

The management standards have recently received accreditation and new a new Level 4 Sports Turf qualification is now available.

I will discuss the revised Level 4 qualification in detail in a future article.

Finally, both the QCA and SQA in partnership with industry through Lantra are ensuring that all other qualifications relate to the National Occupational Standards.

For the Sports Turf sector this involves the GTC being involved in with Lantra and the Awarding Bodies, City & Guilds/NPTC, SQA and Ed Excel to ensure all awards are relevant for our sector.

The formal qualifications for greenkeeping range from N/VQ's- Apprenticeships (work-based), to the National Certificate /Advanced NC, Certificate of Higher Education/HNC, Higher National Diploma/Foundation Degree and the B.Sc and Masters Degree which are the college/university based programmes.

The GTC staff and Board representatives will be in attendance at the Harrogate Week exhibition - so please come and visit us, but before that enjoy the festive season!

You can contact David direct at the GTC on Tel: 01347 838640 or email: david@the-gtc.co.uk

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