



Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

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Education Update

Ken Richardson, Education and Training Manager, looks forward to BIGGA's 2006 Major Competitions.

May is the month when Sami and I concentrate on a number of competitions and this year is no exception. We are also working on the Continue to Learn programme for Harrogate Week 2007. Yes, it really does take 10 months to make all of the arrangements.

The details of the programme are still to be finalised but we are planning to have four more one day workshops, four more half day workshops and four more seminars than we presented in 2006. The programme will include learning opportunities targeted at all levels of greenkeeper and groundsman plus sessions of special interest to Secretaries, Secretary Managers, and Golf Club Officials and to Golf Professionals.

BIGGA Golf Environment Competition



Golf Environment Competition

Thanks to our existing sponsors, Scotts UK Professional and Syngenta Professional Products plus two new sponsors for this year, Ransomes Jacobsen and Course Care Ltd, we can continue to run the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition.

You should find an entry form in this copy of Greenkeeper International. Judging of the competition will take place throughout the year with the prizes being presented during Harrogate Week 2007.

Toro Student of the Year Competition



Last year's Toro Student of the Year, Alan Pierce has not been back in the country long before the entries for the 2006 Toro Student of the Year Competition start to arrive at BIGGA HOUSE.

Entries should be returned to BIGGA HOUSE by May 5 2006. Judging will commence on Monday July 3 and the Final will take place at BIGGA HOUSE on Monday September 18.

If you wish to nominate a student greenkeeper and have not received an entry form, contact BIGGA HOUSE as soon as possible. Entry forms can also be downloaded from our website, www.bigga.org.uk.

Remember that thanks to continued sponsorship from Toro, the Toro Student of the Year wins an eight weeks trip to the USA that includes six weeks at the University of Massachusetts and a trip to the Golf Industry Show in Anaheim, California. The winning student's lecturer also wins a one week trip to the Golf Club Industry Show.

BIGGA Spraymaster of the Year

Thanks to sponsorship from Greenlink International and Blazon, another greenkeeper could be flying to the USA to spend a week in Anaheim at the Golf Industry Show. Moreover, his/her golf club would receive a Gambetti Barre 300 Litre Tractor Mounted Sprayer.

SPRAYMASTER

Application forms for this competition were included in the April Edition of Greenkeeper International. Application forms can also be obtained from Greenlink Sales staff or by contacting BIGGA HOUSE.



BIGGA Training and Development Manual

My apologies for the delay in the BIGGA Training and Development Manual going live on the Internet. This has been due to technical problems with the BIGGA website. However, the Manual should now be available through www.bigga.org.uk members' area.

Education and Development Fund

Novozymes and Fairways GM have joined the BIGGA Education and Development Fund as Company Member Silver Key Supporters and Reaseheath College has joined the Fund as an individual member. Welcome to all three and thank you for supporting greenkeeper education and training.

Rachael and Gemma would like to welcome 109 new members to the Association and present the improved insurance quotation service available to members.

Membership Update

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS WITH INSURANCE FROM UNIQUE

BIGGA have worked with Unique on a range of insurance products and services designed for BIGGA members. Unique do the shopping around for you, allowing you to benefit from a range of insurance products that have been developed to get you the best deals for your circumstances without the hassle.

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MAY'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. The radio can stand alone or can be clipped onto a belt with headphones for when your on the move. Our congratulations go to Paul Smith, of Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club.

BIGGA welcomes...

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 Paul Lindsay, East Scotland
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 Paul Millar, North Scotland
 Steven Morris, North Scotland
 Adam Taylor, Central Scotland
 Alastair Wylie, North Scotland

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 Alistair Cotton, South West
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 Andrew Davis, South Coast
 Luke Elgie, South Coast
 Steven Grundy, South Coast
 Adam Hewett, South West
 Robert Honey, South Wales
 Robert Horler, South West
 Charles Ireland, South Coast
 Paul Matthews, South West
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Life as a greenkeeper on the other side

Leaving home for a far away country is never easy, and even more difficult when the destination is one that for many years you have felt sceptical about. That is how it was when I left to embark on an internship in the US with the Communicating for Agriculture Exchange Program. (Part of an international student exchange and training programme by The Toro Company.)

*Continue
to learn*

Ever since I had entered the turf industry I had seen the 'green monster' that was the US turf industry. How could they justify the use of such huge volumes of chemicals? Why didn't they see the link between the apparent excess of fertiliser application and the necessity for these chemicals? I came to the conclusion that the best way to understand the system used in the US was to work in it myself.



1st Green at Midland Hills C.C.

Therefore in April 2004 I left for the US to begin a placement at Midland Hills Country Club, in St Paul, Minnesota. A Seth Raynor design, formed in 1920, this club has been described as the 'hidden jewel' of the twin cities of St Paul and Minneapolis. Initial impressions were no let down. Set in the perfect rolling terrain that course designers dream of, the course rolls smoothly from one hole to the next. A beautiful golf course, if anything only lacking in the long roughs that define the upland and moorland courses this side of the Atlantic.

The first thing that struck me on arrival at Midland Hills (from a turf management perspective) was the number of employees and likewise the range and quantity of machinery owned by the golf course. It would soon become apparent how necessary this volume of equipment was. I was given a few days to settle in to life in America, but was keen to get started at work. I had arrived the week before aeration was scheduled to take place and this would be the first real taste of the American maintenance machine. All playing surfaces were aerated using four Toro walker aerators for the greens and tees and two Toro tractor-mounted aerators for the greens. This was far beyond anything I had experienced in the UK and was a sign of how things would continue.

Much of the work through the summer was as could be expected - the daily maintenance of the course was much more exaggerated than here in the UK. However, it was clear that this was just a different way of doing things. Much of my animosity towards the 'green monster' to which I referred earlier diminished as I came to understand the system in which I was working. The American maintenance system (as with much of the social and economic system) is fuelled and in many ways controlled by demand. Perfect conditions are expected year-round and the golf course management crew strive to meet the expectations of the golfers. It became clear that many of what we in this country view as excesses in US maintenance are in fact necessities due to the golfers' demands.

Most interesting in the Midwest states of America is the weather, with extreme cold and snow present for months at a time. With the golf courses closed for long periods from November through March, the management approach has to be altered drastically. In England we are lucky in many ways that we do not get the extremes of weather present in some parts of the US. Construction work in Minnesota must be carried out throughout the season - a prospect that would frighten many of the members of golf courses in the UK. The staffing levels present make this more feasible, although the extra work did add to the already hectic management schedule.

The most striking time of the year in Minnesota would be the autumn. Leaf fall from the trees lining the fairways would cover entire areas. For a period of weeks leaf blowing and mulching was carried out on a daily basis including weekends. Scenes such as those in the picture were common. Incidentally, many of the tree specimens that were primarily the cause of the leaf issues were enormous compared to UK specimens.



A sea of leaves surrounding two maple trees

By Barry Wright



The dormant surrounds to bunkers provide a stunning contrast. The ingress of the cool season grasses is clear

One of the most amazing things about the US is the huge variation between different climates across the country.

With the winter coming in fast in Minneapolis, I looked towards the south to continue my education and understanding of the US system. For this, I moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where I found placement at the Turtle Point Club at Kiawah Island Golf Resort. This course had been designed in 1981 by Jack Nicholas and was redeveloped in 2000 by Jack Nicholas again. Much of the redesign involved updating the original constructions, implementing USGA greens and renovating bunkers.

As I arrived at Kiawah in January, the Bermuda and Zoysia grasses were in their dormant stage. The most striking thing about this time is the areas that are not overseeded, such as bunker faces and areas of Zoysia grass (which incidentally does not respond well to overseeding as it will struggle with the transition for the summer). This resulted in a large use of chemical throughout the months where the warm season grasses were dormant, with the need to control the ingress of the cool season grasses into these areas. While these grasses would quickly be replaced by the warm season grasses in the summer, it was important to keep the course as perfect as possible at all times.

Much remained the same with the level of staffing and quantity and variety of machinery.

The most notable similarity was the expectations of the resort management. Being a resort, much of the play is of the pay-and-play type, but this did not reduce the expectations of perfection. In fact, in many ways this only increased expectations - especially with the attachment of the name Kiawah Island. One of the more admirable attitudes was the intention to retain a good sward rather than continually striving for high green speeds. If only this could be accepted worldwide.

The fertiliser and water usage at Turtle Point was phenomenal. However, it was necessary. With temperatures around 95°F (35°C) with 95 per cent humidity for long periods through the summer, turf would not survive without the maintenance that is practised. The geology of Kiawah Island also added to that necessity. Kiawah Island is essentially an enlarged sand bank - low nutrition and high infiltration present across the island. Thus high fertiliser usage. The water was backed off a little during

the transition period, although the fertiliser levels were stepped up in order to try to promote the Bermuda grass, which would quickly take over once conditions were favourable.

One of the biggest criticisms of US golf course maintenance is the lack of definition that is given by the long roughs we have here in England. I noted this at the beginning of the article. However, in my time in the US I began to see how US golf courses have other forms of definition, as do the parkland courses in this country. The lower heights of cut of the roughs are necessary with the desire of the clientèle to have a green golf course with a perfect sward throughout.

This desire, of course, results in the increased levels of maintenance and the

greater use of chemicals and larger applications of water. With this increase in maintenance also comes a bigger need for labour, much of which is increasingly being provided by Hispanic labourers (often Mexican).

While we may in this country find the Americans' approach to golf course management alien, I found that the differences are primarily due to one aspect - the golf course maintenance aim is above all to provide what the clientèle demands. Perfection. Green perfection at that!



Barry Wright was a trainee greenkeeper with a BSc from Myerscough when he joined the programme. He spent 18 months from April 2004 until September 2005 on work placements under the Toro scheme.

Greenkeepers interested in finding out more about the opportunities afforded by this programme can contact Bruce Jamieson on 01252 844847 or email him at brucejamieson@compuserve.com to qualify, you will need to have two to three years greenkeeping experience and a desire to make greenkeeping your chosen career.

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"Everyday I drive through the gates to the club and get a real buzz. It's incredible and like nothing I've experienced anywhere else. It's just wonderful to be here." That's the statement of Adrian Cornell, as he speaks about life at Stock Brook The Country Club, where he is employed as Head Greenkeeper.

If you complete the same journey past the wooden gates and down the grand driveway, with golf course tickling both sides, you know exactly what he means.

Stock Brook oozes class from the moment you enter the premises. No matter whether you are here for a round of golf, a quick swim or gym session, a game of tennis, attending a wedding or just sampling the delights of the kitchen, Stock Brook's motto is that every guest should have a truly fine and memorable day. Whether you are a one time visitor, casual attendee or fully signed up member of the club, customer service is designed for that person to have a fantastic experience.

Stock Brook is owned by the Peachey family and their belief in running a top class leisure venue is embedded throughout the staff. The club contains three loops of nine holes, aptly named The Stock, Brook and Manor. The Championship course is made up of the Stock and Brook courses, which combines to form a 6, 950 yard test of golf as the Essex wind whips around the 270 acre complex. The golfing side of Stock Brook certainly encapsulates the views of its owner.

"The emphasis from Terry Peachey, the MD, down to his staff is as soon as a guest drives through the gates they get treated very well and have a first class day, no matter what activity they are doing. He also believes in good value for money, so we work hard to provide that on the golfing side of things. We have to make our visitors feel like kings," said Golf Courses' Manager Arnold Phipps-Jones, as he sits alongside Adrian in the splendid clubhouse.

Achieving such a consistent high level of both golf course and service is certainly demanding, but one that is reached by Arnold, Adrian and the Stock Brook green team, all 11 of them. They accomplish this feat through a successful and complete team effort. From Arnold as Course Manager, down to the youngest member of the staff, all have their part to play and all are allowed their say and their ideas processed.



The Stock Brook team, L-R, Back Row, George Davie, Jon Goodman, Graham Burns, Terry Passfield, Lawrence Eley, Adrian Cornell; Front Row, Stephen Burroughs, Cohn Moule, Stephen Eaton, Trevor Dean, Tony Bryant and, insert, Arnold Phipps-Jones



"I can't over emphasise the wonderful staff we have here. Every one of them is great and they all work so hard to meet the high demands we set. There is a real feel of team unity here, with everyone helping each other out when needed. It just makes life so much easier for me as their direct boss, while I'm supported superbly by my Deputy Jon Goodman. They are all tremendous," stated a proud Adrian, who is also the GTC's South East Representative.



Stock's 5th hole is a long par 5



The 12th green on the Brook Course



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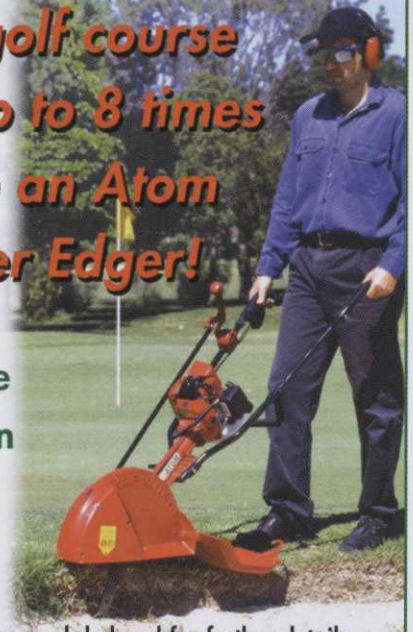


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The 21st hole, on the Manor course, boasts one of six lakes to be found at Stock Brook



The opening hole on the Stock course, a harsh wind makes it a tough start

Added Arnold: "We encourage all the lads to have their say. Without the input from below you can get lost. So having a team that has the skills and knowledge to do the job and the confidence to produce ideas for the course is crucial to us. We all have a share in this club."

Arnold and Adrian, in particular, have developed a strong bond. Arnold, who has been at Stock Brook for over seven years, also oversees operations at Three Rivers Golf & Country Club, which was brought by the Peacheys some three years ago. It means a true partnership and trust has had to be formed to ensure that Stock Brook does not suffer due to its sister course.

"I've been here for just over a year now and we have a good working relationship. I've known Arnold for many years, so that helped when I first started and we, like the team, have gone from strength to strength. It's great having Arnold in his position as it keeps the sales reps off my back and I can concentrate on the course," joked the Head Greenkeeper.

While Adrian is managing the day-to-day running of the Manor, Arnold focuses on the long term maintenance of both Stock Brook and Three



The tee shot on the 15th, out of bounds runs along the right of the fairway



Watch the water on Stock's 9th



An accurate drive is needed on the 14th to avoid the trees

Rivers. The Course Manager outlines all major works, such as fertiliser, aeration and spraying programmes. Logistics is one of Arnold's main responsibilities as the two clubs share much of the main greenkeeping equipment.

The sharing of equipment puts pressure on mechanic Terry Passfield, who has been with the company since its inception, as his role covers both clubs. His mandate from both Arnold and Adrian is to keep all machinery finely tuned and ready at a moment's notice and with over 50 machines under his control Terry is kept busy to say the least. All this means Arnold must work closely with both Terry and the Heads at both clubs to ensure the desired programmes are done at the right time and with the correct equipment.

"All major maintenance work goes through me, it has to really. For example, Three Rivers are aerating the greens at the moment, so they have all the needed equipment there. If Adrian just decided to go out and aerate without discussion he wouldn't have the right equipment to do a proper job and it would be a free for all. Instead we organise everything clearly and keep

