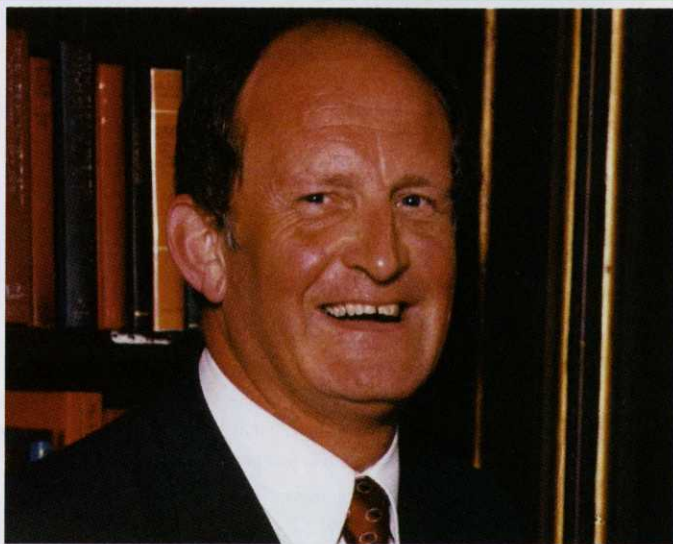


# What's your Number?



**Name:** Colin Gregory

**Company:** Massey Ferguson

**Position:** Groundcare and Utility Vehicle Manager

**How long have you been in the industry?**

"I joined Ransomes in 1966."

**How did you get into it?**

"My father was a Sales Manager of a dealership in Norfolk."

**What other jobs have you done?**

"I've been in the Agricultural and Groundscare industry all my working life."

**What do you like about your current job?**

"Working as part of team in a company which supports your decisions."

**What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?**

"Loads - Massive changes in Grass Cutting Machinery and the use of Compacts."

**What do you like to do in your spare time?**

"What spare time? The little time I have, I spend gardening and watching golf."

**Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?**

"Happily retired watching MF Groundscare grow and grow."

**Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry?**

"Too many to mention. The industry is incestuous."

**What do you consider to be your lucky number?**

"No 1."

**Pick a number.**

"12."

**You've picked Andy Cornes from Acorn Golf, do you know him?**

"He is not known to me."

The perfect approach to quality course signage

# Signs & Design

## Tee Signs



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# Sustainable Solutions By Richard Fry

For turf grass professionals, a dense, healthy plant and consistent playing surface are key goals.

The achievement of these targets is extremely challenging, requiring the use of pesticides, fertilisers, soil conditioners, wetting agents and water, together with certain intensive management practices such as regular mowing and aeration regimes to achieve and sustain the desired condition.

For example, modern golf course greens are mowed at a height of 3-4mm and are designed to receive the majority of the wear even though the total green's surface can be as little as 3% of the total playing area of a golf course. However, even under intensive management, the goal of turf sustainability is becoming the main focus of attention as greenkeepers, agronomists and research organisations work to identify turfgrass management systems that are more efficient, thus requiring less inputs.

Increased use of wetting agents (surfactants) can improve aspects of turf sustainability by increasing uniform soil wetting and decreasing irrigation requirements. Water conservation is a major issue and any savings in water usage on turf by reducing the amount of supplementary irrigation will be welcomed.

Incorporating a wetting agent in to the turf management programme will maximise infiltration and minimise runoff and help retain water within the soil profile. With these gains, golf courses can be maintained with reduced pesticide, fertiliser and water needs; benefits that are consistent with the aims for sustainability.

Wetting agents are often referred to as surfactants. The word "surfactant" is actually derived from the words, surface active agent.

The application of wetting agents on turf is not new as products for this use have been around since the early sixties. However, their use was quite limited as in the early years the formulations available were basically industrial surfactants such as Teepol. It was not until the early eighties that wetting agents, developed specifically for use on fine turf, became more widely accepted throughout the UK.

## IMPROVED WATER UTILISATION

Wetting agents work by lowering the cohesive and adhesive water surface tensions and this allows the water to more easily move into the soil and thatch instead of just laying on the surface or running off sloping contours. The benefit of applying a programme of wetting agents therefore is improved water utilisation, whether from natural rainfall or applied irrigation.

Historically, some UK soils in which turf is grown are hydrophilic. A hydrophilic surface will readily suck up the water until it reaches a state of full absorptency.

However, there are many soils that are referred to as hydrophobic as they do not have the ability to rapidly soak up water and in most cases will repel any absorption. Many of these soils, and also sand based constructions, will have particles that have formed an organic, waxy coating that will repel moisture. With out treatment these water repellent soils will cause major problems with localised dry spots (LDS) that will not support root development or plant regeneration.



As an example, to better understand the interaction of surfaces in regard to surface tension, absorption and repellency, a simple experiment can be carried out by placing a water droplet on a piece of blotting paper and another on wax paper. The blotting paper is generally hydrophilic, which means the water droplet is not affected by surface tension and the paper's adhesion between the water molecules and itself are greater than that of the water's molecules alone. So the water is absorbed quite readily. When attempting the same experiment on wax paper, the droplet does not separate and beads up. This is because the wax paper is hydrophobic and does not allow for the absorption of water rapidly. It is the wax coating on the paper whose molecules are weaker than that of the water, so absorption does not take place. It is this wax-coating example that has led to a high level of research into developing formulations that will allow water to be absorbed by hydrophobic soils.

## STANDARD WETTING AGENTS ALONE ARE NOT THE ANSWER:

Though treating turf surfaces with standard wetting agents will infiltrate the ground by force of gravity and allow some spreading to occur, complete wetting of the soil rootzone will not happen.

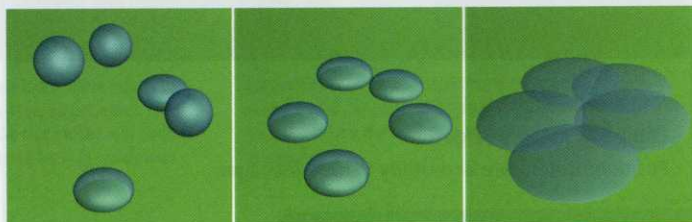
Infact, these products will only act as a maintenance tool to manage the symptoms. They cannot and will not address the cause. As a result, those areas left untreated within the soil profile will continue to be water-repellent. When subject to a sequence of wet/dry cycles, these areas develop dry spots and high spots. Sloped contours are highly vulnerable to these conditions.

It is important to note that dry spots can occur for many reasons on greens. Other causes that should be examined are compaction problems, excessive thatch accumulation, insect and disease presence and poor irrigation coverage.

To counter the problems associated with standard wetting agents one company, Rigby Taylor has undertaken a great deal of research into complete immersion technologies that addresses the problem in three ways; 1. Initial soil penetration, 2. Rootzone wetting & spreading and 3. Soil profile re-wetting.



Soil core showing a conventional wetter



Conventional wetting agent droplets

Wetting agents with some spreading characteristics

Complete Immersion technology

This unique, three-in-one approach, allows the wetting agent to achieve a strong attraction between the applied product molecules and the soil particles. This attraction converts a water repellent soil in to one that is water receptive with the result that the wetting agent more easily penetrates the soil surface and thatch layer. The wetting agent spreads both vertically and laterally across the water repellent zone and advances deeper into the rootzone.

## SOIL RE-WETTING

The hydrophobic (water repellent) end of the re-wetting molecule attaches itself to the waxes and lipids covering the soil and sand particles.



Re-wet

The hydrophilic (water-loving) end which attracts the water molecules so allowing the soil to re-wet. The extended chain is very stable and so provides a long-lasting effect.

The advanced immersion re-wetting technology ensures that once penetration of the target rootzone has taken place, a dry soil will be re-wetted in 4-6 hours and visible effects can be seen in 48 hours.

When it comes to selecting a turf wetting agent it is vital that the buyer selects from a reliable and proven source, one that can provide technical advice and ongoing support. There are many products currently being promoted within the industry but it is important that the right product is selected for a particular problem. It is also important to stick to the recommended programme. It took a long time for the problem to occur so there are no quick-fix methods in its removal.



Soil core showing Complete Immersion Technology benefits

Richard Fry works for Greenlink International. For further information contact Rigby Taylor on Freephone: 0800 424 919 or visit: [www.rigbytaylor.com](http://www.rigbytaylor.com)

# No Introduction Necessary

Scott MacCallum meets BIGGA's new Chairman, Billy McMillan – a man who could be known as Number 20.

It is often said, when introducing someone who everyone knows, that, "They need no introduction..." but then the person is given one anyway. I'm going to fall into that very same trap when I say, "BIGGA's new National Chairman needs no introduction." You'll understand what I mean when I explain that the man who took over the Chairmanship of the Association from Richard Whyman at the AGM last month is Billy McMillan, Course Manager at Tyrrells Wood Golf Club, in Leatherhead, Surrey, and a member of the most famous family in greenkeeping.



## Meet the Chairman

In being appointed Chairman Billy becomes the first son to follow father and in much the way George W. Bush is referred to as "43" and his father, George Bush Snr, as "41", in terms of US Presidents, we could call Billy "20" and his dad, Jack, "2". The Duracel battery-operated former Sunningdale Course Manager, and current European Tour Consultant, was the second Chairman of the Association in the late 80s.

"When Richard asked me I was quite humbled and very honoured to have been asked. It's very personal, done by phone call rather than a letter, and you're given time to think about it, because you do need time to reflect and take stock, as well as put the support networks in place that you are going to need during the tenure of Chairmanship," explained Billy, as we sat in his office overlooking an extremely windy Tyrrell's Wood.

In the end he took about three weeks before committing, not because he had any doubts about taking on the role, but to ensure he had the full support of all concerned before accepting.

"Your heart says to take it straight away but your head urges you to check everything out first. I also sought advice for previous Chairmen, as well as John Pemberton at BIGGA HOUSE, on the amount of time that is required to devote to the role and then armed with this information took it to the golf club so they were well aware of what it would entail," he said, adding that when it comes to priorities the golf club's needs would always take precedence.

Billy has spoken to his dad about his new role, and Jack and his mum, Rita, are extremely proud of their son's new Association role.

"He was particularly chuffed that I'd been asked and I'm proud of what he and the Walters (Woods) of this world have done for greenkeeping. We were very lucky to have the calibre and profile of people around in those early days and that they had the time and energy required to move the Association forward. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their

courage, foresight and wisdom because without them we wouldn't be as strong an Association today."

As you can well imagine Billy's greenkeeping education began almost as soon as he could walk.

"Since I was knee high to a Dunlop 65," he says, using the wit and turn of phrase that seminar delegates the world over have enjoyed through the years.

"At Cardross Golf Club, near Glasgow, my brothers and I would be out divotting, or, following the boys who were hand cutting greens, switching and clearing up. The great thrill was when we were allowed to wash their machines and then drive them back into the shed – we were so small the handles were above our heads. It was a passion even then," he said, talking of innocent times denied youngsters today because of much tighter Health and Safety legislation.

Currently the oldest in the family, Stewart, is Course Manager at Mill Ride; Bobby is at Hendon; Ian, a former winner of the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping, is three miles from Billy at Walton Heath, and Cameron is at Queenwood. Sister, Heather, is not a greenkeeper but is an equally important member of the dynasty.

Funnily enough Jack implored his boys not to become greenkeepers because of the poor money and poor working conditions. Initially Billy took him at his word.

"When I left school at 16 I was going to be a plumber in Dumbarton but my dad came to see us when we were at cadet camp and told us were moving to England. I was full of doom and gloom and said I was going to be a plumber, but he said he'd got me a job with him as a greenkeeper. So much for his earlier advice!"

Billy and his twin brother, Bobby, joined Jack at Bushill Park Golf Club in North London as Apprentice Greenkeepers.

**"Your heart says to take it...  
but your head urges you to  
check everything out first."**



Tyrrell's Wood Team

"I remember dad putting his arm round Bob and me on our first day and saying we must never sacrifice quality for quantity – we must always do a quality job... but if we weren't back by 8 o'clock he'd kick our backsides. So he not only insisted on quality but indoctrinated us with productivity as well."

Billy stayed at Bushill Park until he was 17 and a half when he got his first Head Greenkeeper's job. He had to fib at the interview to get it, saying he was 18.

"It was a nine hole course near Reading, then called the Black Swan Golf Club, now it's Hurst GC, and I had a husband and wife team working with me. They were from a farming background and were great. They didn't know much about greenkeeping but they taught be a lot about driving tractors and tying knots. They were good times."

From there he moved to Cray Valley, in Kent.

"It was a very commercial operation and we built an extra nine holes while I was there and learned a lot about driving lorries and 360 diggers. I also met my wife while I was there."

From Kent he was tempted by the opportunity of working at Badgemore Park, at Henley-on-Thames.

"I've never been reluctant to move for work. Greenkeepers are slightly nomadic, Scottish greenkeepers particularly so, and it lets you experience life and different conditions. No two golf courses are the same and I've been fortunate to work on London clays, heathland, chalk downland and it all helps make you a better greenkeeper.

After the spell at Badgemore Billy was asked by his dad to join him at Sunningdale in the run up to the 1987 Walker Cup match.

"I became Old Course Foreman and it was a very special time for me at Sunningdale. You couldn't buy that sort of experience and preparing the course for the Walker Cup was wonderful.

"The club's resolve was without compromise, and when it came to greenkeeping, organisational skills and dedication my dad was leading edge. I don't think we'll ever get him to retire but we're hopeful of getting him to slow down to six days a week."

From Sunningdale, Billy moved to Effingham Golf Club, a mere four miles from Tyrrell's Wood, and a fine chalk downland course. He remained there until he was drawn to the newly built Wildwood Country Club in 1992.

"Wildwood was a real reality check on life for me as we had to secure membership from zero in a very tough market place so the product had to be perfect. It was a tough school."

The club ran into financial difficulties and was sold to a Japanese company and Billy's job was extended to become Group Course Manager, overseeing final construction of Lamerwood Country Club, in Hertfordshire.

"I did this for six months when they said they asked me to become General Manager. I thought they meant of Wildwood Country Club but they meant Group General Manager. Another enormous challenge," said Billy.

"The Managing Director was Mr Takabatake, but we all shortened that to Mr T. He enjoyed that and we found it easier to spell. He was, and still is, very kind to me and told me I could have all the assistance I needed to do the job. He also told me, and this is a great lesson in instilling confidence in people, that I would never make the wrong decision - which meant he would back me 100% - but that we might discuss things from time to time should I get it wrong."

Billy had responsibility for all aspects of the clubs from the golf operation through to the golf course but always ensured that he had an active role on the greenkeeping side of the operation.

"It was an enormous job – For four years I was driving thousands of miles a year and I probably wasn't home enough. That's probably why I'm



divorced now, my work/life balance was wrong."

The catalyst for change came when Wildwood was sold leaving Billy facing a 75 mile journey each day to his place of work so he moved to Mannings Heath Golf Club until his current role at Tyrrells Wood, which he took on three years ago.

"I really do feel blessed. I don't think I've ever worked for a nicer, warmer and friendlier membership and I feel I've got the balance between my work and home commitments about right."

In three years on the golf course the team has remodelled huge parts of the golf course and they have increased the machinery base to become an impressive fleet of machinery while they have also invested in new irrigation.

"It has all been a huge commitment for this members' club."

Billy is a self-confessed people person and is thoroughly looking forward to the opportunity to meet many more people than would be the case in normal circumstances.

"I want to open my ears and listen to the problems that people are experiencing and share the burden with them. That's the great thing about

BIGGA, people can share difficulties and problems and seek advice and help. It is such a generous industry, I've never been charged for good advice in my life. At Harrogate you talk with greenkeepers to three or four o'clock in the morning, get up at six and do it all again.

"I'll do the best I can to represent BIGGA in all regards. I'm sure there will be issues for the Association to involve ourselves with over the next 12 months which will be emotive, tough, exciting and rewarding. We have to continue to progress the Association to secure its future because if we don't we do everything that has gone on before a disservice. Nothing stands still so we must continue to develop and I'm sure we will have to work closely with all the staff at BIGGA HOUSE to that end."

Billy has six children to keep him on the straight and narrow – Laura (23), whose son and daughter make Billy a grandfather; Lewis (21); Amy (19); Billy (14); Shannon (13) and Summer (9).

If he has one piece of advice for all greenkeepers up and down the country it is.

**"Remember to go home. Your family do need to see you sometimes too."**

**"Remember to go home.  
Your family do need to  
see you sometimes too."**

# Keeping it Green



Scott MacCallum pays a visit to John Deere's UK headquarters and finds out that for such a huge company, success in the golf and grounds care industry may be relatively recent, but it's continuing to grow.



Type the name "John Deere" into Google and do you know how many entries come up? Over 2,470,000. Reduce that to just "Deere" and it's over 11,600,000, with virtually every one of them referring to "John Deere".

That's just a measure of the size of the John Deere company worldwide and the impact the green machines have had on the world. But don't just make the mistake of thinking that John Deere is purely and simply a manufacturer of agricultural, grounds care and domestic machinery. There is also a huge industry in children's toys, whether it be ride-on tractors or die-cast models; a John Deere baseball cap is now a sought after piece of apparel, while John Deere also sponsors a tournament on the US Tour which receives additional publicity each year as it offers a single qualifying spot for The Open Championship – giving Michelle Wie, a regular sponsor's invitee, a much hyped chance to be the first woman to appear in a men's Major.



Home Park GC from Surrey at Reynolds Plantation Resort, Georgia, USA at the John Deere World Championship Golf Tournament final last November. Left to right: Club Owner Neil Burke, John Deere Dealer Salesman Andy Page of Palmer's Turfcare at Hailsham, East Sussex, Richard Whyman of BIGGA, Secretary Elaine Purton, Head Greenkeeper Danny O'Rourke

It may therefore be surprising to learn that John Deere in the UK recently celebrated a joint anniversary – completing 40 years in the agricultural market and 20 in the grounds care division. In that time John Deere has made a huge impact on the golf market, and the distinctive green liveried machines can be seen at many clubs in all parts of the country.

"We built our business in agriculture around strong customer support and without a doubt that was a key element in how we were able to grow our grounds care business so rapidly – focusing on product and parts backup, and overall offering a level of support that was new to the grounds care business," explained Richard Johnson, who became managing director of John Deere Limited in the UK & Ireland last year.

"Our challenge now is to sustain that and to keep ourselves ahead of the competition. While we feel we have set the benchmark in this area, our competitors are always looking to try and close the gap."

So how do Richard and his staff of 117 at the John Deere Limited headquarters at Langar, near Nottingham, plan to move forward?

"We enjoy a reasonable market share in golf, but with the depth of the product line we have and the opportunities presented by the new products coming through, we certainly don't feel as if we've exhausted our growth in the golf market, and we look forward to increasing this in the future."

With expansion in the golf market seen as steadying off, at best, such confidence is admirable. Richard is not gazing into a rose tinted crystal ball, however, but is merely hinting at what John Deere may be bringing to the market place over the next few years.

"We are always looking at new technology. A good example of this is our new 2500E hybrid greens mower, which combines conventional diesel power with electric motors to drive the cutting reels, and this machine has already become well established at golf courses throughout the UK and Ireland. On the agricultural side we have developed market leading GPS



Richard Johnson



David Hart

guidance systems, and these are the types of cutting edge technology that the company is constantly looking to transfer across the divisions."

John Deere has always been renowned for the importance it places on research and development, and the company regularly takes greenkeepers from all over the world to its feedback sessions, with the information exchange providing much for the JD boffins to chew on.

"Today John Deere worldwide spends something in the order of \$1.5 million a day on R&D, and a key part of this is our feedback sessions," says Richard. "We have held them for many years and do so to find out what the customer – the greenkeeper – is looking for from our product range, whether it be concept machines which may take five years to come to the market place, if they make it at all, or refinements to the ergonomics of machines which are much closer to being available for sale."

And the information that the company gleans from this influx of course managers is rarely wasted.

"Many of our golf and turf machines over the years have been based on asking greenkeepers what they want to see in the future, and trying to develop the products around the answers they give, with environmental issues such as noise pollution and the risk of oil leakages on greens becoming increasingly important. So if we can save the end user money in running costs, and if we have a product that is more environmentally friendly, then everybody benefits."

Richard has been with John Deere since 1988, when he joined as a business management trainee having studied agricultural engineering at Harper Adams Agricultural College in Newport, Shropshire. Following spells as a grounds care territory manager and then homeowner equipment product manager, he became UK business development manager.

Richard then moved to Germany in 2001 for a two and a half year stint at the European HQ in Mannheim as European parts & service manager, covering the agricultural side of the business. He returned to the UK as agricultural division sales manager for southern England, before being appointed managing director in succession to Alec McKee in January last year.

"I'm lucky to have sampled life on both the grounds care and agricultural sides of the company," he adds. "Working in Germany was also extremely valuable in gaining a wider perspective of the business, on both a European and global basis."

While Richard is the MD, the man who is now the public face of John Deere's grounds care division is David Hart.

David is another agricultural engineering

student, this time from Lincolnshire College of Agriculture & Horticulture, and he joined the industry 22 years ago as a salesman with John Deere dealership Ben Burgess. He entered the John Deere fold six years later as an area manager, product support for the agricultural division, and moved on to become an agricultural territory manager based in the south west of England.

After five years he then moved to Langar as product manager for harvesting equipment, including combine harvesters, balers and mowers, before becoming commercial & consumer equipment division manager in 2003.

It may have been by a long and circuitous route, but David eventually got to where he wanted to be because grounds care is in the blood – his late

father, Ernie, was both a member of the IOG and a BIGGA Life Member.

Having already attended many of the company's feedback sessions, David is well placed to see whether there are regional differences in what the world's course managers are looking for.

"To be honest there are more similarities between golf and turf products around the world than there are in commercial mowing, for example, where you see a lot of localised or regional trends," he says.

A large proportion of the work carried out at John Deere's Langar headquarters is education and training related, with four full time trainers, five classrooms and four dedicated, state-of-the-art workshops designed specifically to help both dealer staff and end users become well acquainted with the full product range.

"We have a network of 120 dealers in the agricultural business and 44 in the golf and turf market, as well as 38 dedicated dealers on the homeowner side," reveals Richard.

Added to that the John Deere website, one of those millions of Google entries, is becoming increasingly valuable in allowing customers to do their homework and benchmarking in advance before they venture out to a dealer.

John Deere has been a Golden Key Supporter for over 10 years now and the company is committed to supporting BIGGA into the future.

"We have had a very strong relationship with BIGGA over the years and we view the activities of the association and what it does for the industry as a whole very favourably," says Richard.

"We have been very happy to support these activities through different means of sponsorship, and as both John Deere and the industry move forward I do believe that BIGGA has a key role to play."

Already prominent in that support is the donation BIGGA receives from the John Deere Team Championship – the combined golf club and dealer event for which the association receives £25 for every team entered (the donation from the 2006 event was £7200).

The Great Britain event (an equivalent is also held in Ireland) involves qualifying tournaments around the country, with a grand final – last year held at East Sussex National – from which the winning team, comprising club captain, club secretary, course manager and the dealer, goes on to represent GB every alternate year in the John Deere World Championships held in the USA.

So there you have it. John Deere is a huge multinational company, and its UK and Ireland arm is very much committed to the future well being of BIGGA and greenkeepers in both countries. And thanks to this article there will now be over 11,600,001 entries on Google!



Gregg Breningmeyer, Deere & Company's Worldwide Golf and Turf, Sales and Marketing Director presented Past Chairman, Richard Whyman with a donation to BIGGA

# In the Shed

Greenkeeper International brings you 'In the Shed', a puzzle page to keep you entertained when the weather forces you in or for when times are slow.

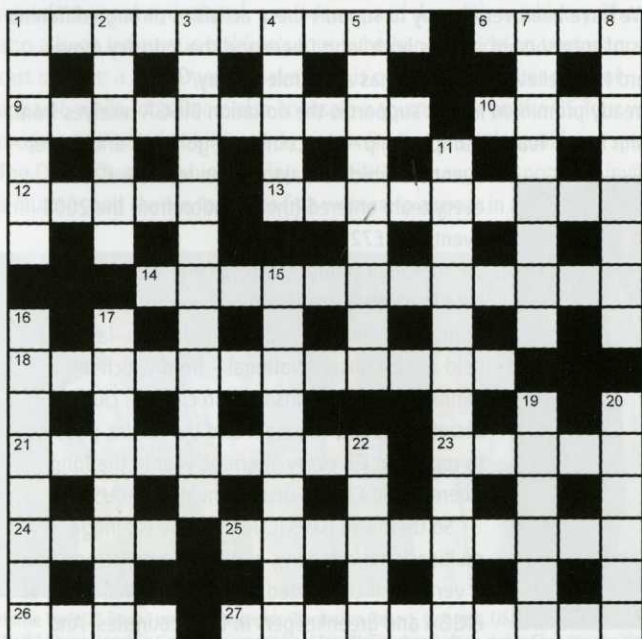
## CROSSWORD - Compiled by Anax

### ACROSS

- 1 Toadyishly attentive (10)
- 6 Vehicle, name derived from "general purpose" (4)
- 9 Composer of Orfeo, the first recognised opera (10)
- 10 Long cry, typically canine (4)
- 12 Minimal in magnitude (5)
- 13 Single notch, or row of notches (9)
- 14 Specialised, incomprehensible language (12)
- 18 Above reproach, especially in a way considered to be superficial (7-5)
- 21 Enthusiastically pursuing something (2,4,3)
- 23 Feeling of boredom (5)
- 24 Wide-screen cinema format launched in the 1960s (4)
- 25 Cut of meat taken from either side of the spine (6-4)
- 26 Oddball character, often one with extensive technical knowledge (4)
- 27 Kaiser Chiefs' 2005 album (10)

### DOWN

- 1 Decorative covering of brass, made to look like gold (6)
- 2 Grammatical arrangement of words in a sentence (6)
- 3 Suspect, dubious (12)
- 4 Intestinal blockage (5)
- 5 Offer discount against competition (9)
- 7 Email addition, often called a smiley (8)
- 8 Director of the 2002 film The Pianist (8)
- 11 Queen of England who was beheaded and replaced by Mary Tudor (4,4,4)
- 15 Hair-care product introduced in 1929 (9)
- 16 Would-be (8)
- 17 The right to vote (8)
- 19 Light sleep (6)
- 20 Seal used to mark official documents (6)
- 22 Singing style in which the voice changes rapidly between normal and falsetto (5)

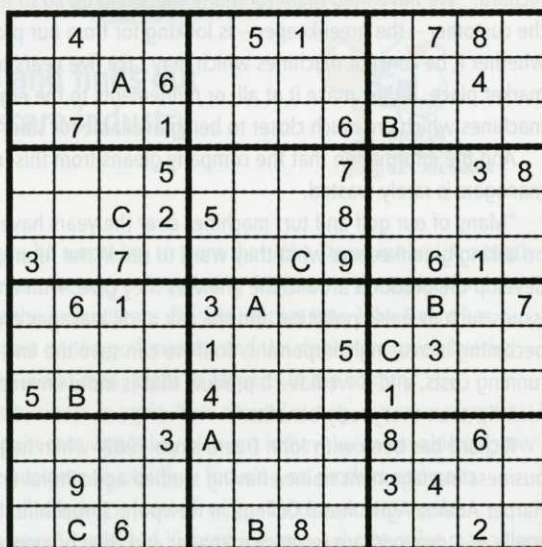


## QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ

1. Name the Irish golfer famous for holding the winning putt for the European team in the 2002 Ryder Cup and ending up in the lake at the Belfry.
2. Who designed the original Volkswagen?
3. Runner-up in 1996, 1997 and 2001, who became World Rally Champion in 1995?
4. What is the name for the highest point on a triangle?
5. Who took a hat trick against Australia at Sydney in 1999?
6. Which part of the body is the scapula?
7. Name the only England manager to begin his managerial career at Lincoln City.
8. Who wrote The Last of the Mohicans?
9. What is acrophobia?

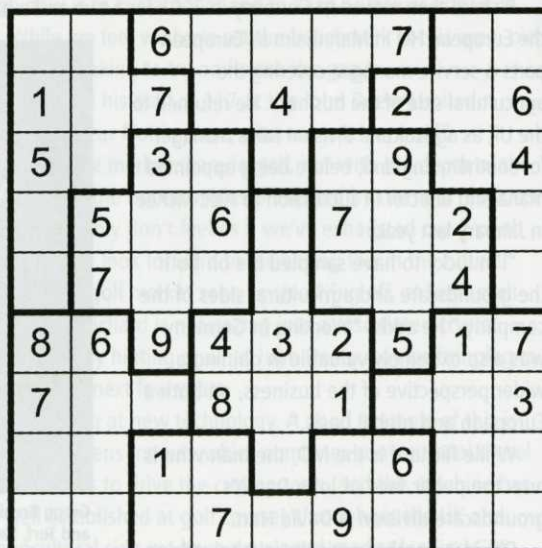
## MONSTER SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x4 box contains the numbers 1 to 9 and the letters A, B and C.



## SQUIGGLY SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 12 box shape contains the numbers 1 to 9.



Supplied by  
www.dailysudoku.com

ANSWERS TO ALL THE PUZZLES ARE SHOWN ON PAGE 59



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**GROUND CARE**



# News from the Chief Executive

Harrogate Week 2007 – a week to remember for all the right reasons. There is no doubt that this event has grown to be the major turf management Conference and Exhibition in Europe. The support by members was unprecedented while exhibitors extolled the virtues of being there with many rebooking for 2008 at the show. I was pleased to witness crowded halls and very busy education workshops and seminars, proving to those sceptics that predicted a poor attendance that there is a healthy demand for an annual event and that Harrogate is a viable venue.

Harrogate Week 2007 will produce a good profit, however, not good enough for this size of event to be acceptable for the long-term success of the Association without some sort of cut to overheads. Plans for Harrogate Week 2008 are already under way and the major machinery manufacturers have expressed a wish to exhibit in accordance with their marketing strategy. Just where they will be allocated space will need careful consideration and full consultation however exhibitors in 2007 have been assured priority booking until February 28.

FEGGA is playing a pivotal role in the development of greenkeeping across Europe, especially in the 'emerging' countries. BIGGA, once a founder member, withdrew its membership several years ago, mainly due to a difference of opinion between the two organisations. Times have moved on and differences have been resolved. Unification is the way forward and BIGGA has applied to rejoin following discussions with the executive of FEGGA. The application will be considered in February at FEGGA's AGM and Conference in Slovenia.

FEGGA, BIGGA and the GTC are in discussions regarding the introduction of Pan-European greenkeeping qualifications that will facilitate a better understanding of the skill levels of those wishing to work outside their native country and Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, will be able to give you more information.

10 years ago we were expressing concerns about increasing pressure relating to environmental issues. Today those issues have been developed into major political agendas and golf is very much in the forefront. There is no doubt that resources such as water and chemical treatments will come under more and more scrutiny and BIGGA is working with or represented on several focus groups in an attempt to manage change rather than be driven by it. Golf as a business is also changing and the boom period of the 1990's is now behind us all. Golfers expect to be able to play 365 days of the year on courses that are in their opinion perfect. In general there is keen competition between clubs for members and visitors to the point where more and more clubs are becoming heavily reliant upon casual green fees. Those that have so far escaped this treadmill are fortunate.

Like it or not we live in a climate where numbers count and the larger any organisation can become the more chance it has of having an effective voice both commercially and politically. To this end, as you may be aware, representatives of the BIGGA Board of Management recently met with representatives of the IOG and it has been agreed that the two organisations will look at the potential of a strategic merger for the benefit of their respective memberships. I am aware that this is a very emotive issue and there will be a diverse range of views. There will be transparency of operation and detailed consultation with the members at all stages. I would urge your patience and ask that you consider matters fully rather than adopting a 'knee jerk' reaction. Reservations by members of both the IOG and BIGGA will be addressed and it is the intention to be able to put a detailed proposal to members of both organisations in January 2008. The Board assures the membership that no binding agreement will be made without their approval. There is no doubt that a merger would bring new challenges, however, it will also bring new opportunities that will benefit both greenkeepers and groundsmen. I will be happy at any time to discuss the proposals with members who can either ring me at Headquarters or send me an email. During the course of 2007 my colleagues and I intend visiting many of the Section and Region events and I hope that members will take the opportunity to speak with us on this and any other matter. Your views are important and will help us develop the Association.

**John Pemberton**

## SCOTTISH REGION

### CENTRAL

First things first, I hope you all had a good Christmas and a Happy New Year.

It's the time of year when we all have our Christmas nights out, go for a meal and a drink and thank your staff for their support and commitment over the past season. This year we (The Scoonie Boys) met up with the Leven Links Lads for a games night, pool, darts, and bowls, Scoonie went down 2-1 – I think we were at a disadvantage as I have heard that the Leven lads have a pool table and darts board in there booth, true or not? Mind you there's always next year.

By the time you read this BTME will have come and gone - a great place to meet old friends, make new ones, eat good food, and have a few shandies. There is a great opportunity to learn something new from the excellent workshops and seminars on offer. Anyone that hasn't been to BTME should make a point of planning a trip down next year.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Alistair Tough, (Auchterarder GC), James Wilson, (St Andrews Links Trust) and Stuart Harley, (Royal Burgess), who all joined the Section recently. I look forward to meeting you at future events.

As for Section news the spring outing this year is at Panmure, a qualifying course for the 2007 open at Carnoustie, to be granted permission to play prior to the qualifying is a major coup for the Section. Many thanks to all involved in achieving this. This will be a superb test of golf for all and places will be on a first come first served basis, so please return forms as soon as you receive them. The Central Section looks forward to seeing you on the day.

Frank Newberry, who many of you may know already, presented the evening seminar, at Elmwood last month. 14 guys turned out to listen to Frank's enthusiastic presentation which kept everyone entertained, and the topic (The Influential Greenkeeper) was of great interest to us all.

### Let's get involved, it's your Section

The Section are arranging various workshops in 2007 dates and time can be found on our website, If there are any subjects you think we haven't covered and would like to have, please get in touch and the committee will endeavour to arrange one. The website is growing all the time with good articles and interesting pictures, but we need your help, please send anything you would like added to the site i.e. pics, articles, any news you want to share with the Section, lets get involved it's your Section.

Well that's me, I better go dry off my wet clothes, this rain! When will it snow? (Just joking)

Bye for now

Derek Scott

Chairman

[www.biggacentralsection.org.uk](http://www.biggacentralsection.org.uk)

### EAST

I write this report with the festive season fast becoming a distant memory and Harrogate looming large before my eyes!

The weather, apart from a few days of sharp frost during Christmas, has been unseasonably mild with high winds and torrential rain falling during December and the early part of January - The exception to the rule being the Aberdeen area where less than 60mm of rain fell during December.

On Friday, March 2, Ratho Park GC, in conjunction with the Scottish Golf Environment Group, are holding an Open Forum to discuss climate change and environmental issues affecting golf clubs. The organisers are hoping for a good turnout from Greenkeepers and Groundsmen, as well as their own club members. The speakers on the night, which starts at 7.30pm, are as follows; Carolyn Headly – SGEG; Stuart Smith – Lothian Bat Group;