

SPREAD THE WORD!

“Time for a change” said Tim Merrell, Managing Director of The Grass Group. “We are now representing a number of mainline companies and I wanted our customers and suppliers to be able to see we are promoting individual brands but through a group they will know and trust.”

“We are also delighted to be working with Tycrop, who decided they needed a change within the UK market and were very impressed with the new structure and how we are growing and able to represent them in the UK” said Paul Trowman, General Manager of The Grass Group. “We have an excellent product range to offer our dealers and we look forward to a long successful relationship with all concerned”.

The Grass Group has been set up as a neutral platform through which we are representing Trilo, Progressive, Tycrop, Green Clipper and Pro Blades.

In terms of positioning the new strapline “professional from the ground up” we hope to encapsulate both the attitude and deliverables of the Group and our people.

SCOTTS BUYS HUMAX

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company has recently purchased the Humax business for an undisclosed sum. Scotts Miracle-Gro plans to integrate the Humax business so that customers from commercial horticulture and gardening retail continue to receive top quality products that are fit for purpose. Scotts Miracle-Gro will be reviewing the existing Humax range of garden products in both retail and professional over the next few months. In due course the company expects to fully integrate the Scotts and Humax brands and operations.

SHUTTLES AND PERSONNEL VEHICLES

John Wells, Estate and Golf Operations Manager at Bocket Hall, has taken delivery of a selection of E-Z-GO electric utility vehicles for housekeeping and client transportation duties around the conference and golf course complex, from local dealer Ernest Doe and Sons.

The Bocket Hall complex, set in 543 acres of mature parkland, features an international conference centre in the stately home, two 18-hole championship golf courses, the Faldo Golf Institute, Melbourne Lodge with 16 luxury bedrooms and Auberge du Lac restaurant.

NEW IRRIGATION SYSTEM

The first complete new irrigation system for tees, greens and fairways using John Deere parts is going in at Blackpool North Shore Golf Club, following the company’s move into the European golf irrigation market earlier in 2008.

John Deere is now the only worldwide manufacturer to offer irrigation, domestic and commercial grounds care equipment, utility vehicles, compact tractors and finance, all under one brand name.

Designed by consultants York Martin International of Ringwood and installed by Arden Lea Irrigation of Preston, Blackpool North Shore’s new system was arranged through John Deere dealer Balmer’s of Burnley, as part of a five year preferred supplier agreement and service contract for course machinery and irrigation equipment.

The irrigation installation will include a state of the art computer-based Aurora control system and a new water storage facility. The links-type course’s existing John Deere fleet has already been extended with the addition of a new 8700 PrecisionCut fairway mower, 8800 TerrainCut rotary mower, 2653B tees & surrounds mower, 2500E hybrid greens triple mower, two 180C and two 220C walk-behind greens mowers, bought on a John Deere Credit finance programme.

L to R: Dealer salesman Darren Barker of Balmer’s, Blackpool North Shore Golf Club captain Graham Shaw, John Deere territory manager Marcus Morris and course manager Iain Gunn with the new John Deere machines.



THE FASTEST RISING WEB RANKINGS IN GOLF

Booking tee times is the UK’s fastest-growing online golf activity, according to new figures released recently by Online Teetimes Ltd (OTL).

The worldwide traffic ranking for the company’s internet booking engine - which powers several of the leading green fee websites in the UK - has increased by 58% in the last three months.

The success is partly due to a 106% rise in the number of golfers making online tee time bookings in the same period. OTL also reports that the number of rounds booked online in the third quarter of this year has increased by 140% compared to May-June 2008.

SINGLE FIGURE GOLFERS TAKE ON THE PROS

What would happen if a team of single figure handicap golfers took on a team of seasoned professionals in a Ryder Cup-style head-to-head?

Now we know - thanks to Single Figure Golfer, a brand new online community for low-handicap amateurs which launches a competition ‘tour’ next March culminating in a high-profile team showdown against the Pros in October 2009.

Any golfer can join the club free of charge by registering at: www.singlefiguregolfer.co.uk, but only those with a handicap under 10 have the right to call themselves SFGs and take part in the forthcoming nationwide tour.

Membership



AN UPDATE FROM BIGGA'S MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT

A personal thankyou from Head of Membership Services, Tracey Maddison...

During the last two months I have been travelling the length and breadth of the country to visit as many Section AGM's as possible. I can honestly say that I have been impressed by the hard work, enthusiasm and commitment displayed by all the Section Committee Members. I would like to say a personal thank you to each of them, via this article, for making me feel very welcome and the constant effort they put in to the administration of the Section.

Your Section Needs You

BUT they need your support. Many Sections need members to get involved at Committee level, without 'new blood' many Sections will struggle and remain reliant upon the same people to continue in these roles, sometimes doubling up the responsibilities. If you are interested or would like more information about getting involved at Section level contact your Section Secretary for more information or contact me, I'd be happy to chat with anybody who may be interested.

The Section Committee spends a lot of time organising Section golf days, education events or just plain good old social nights, this takes time to do and the sections would really appreciate as much support as possible at these events. Look out for notices on...

"Your Pages"

The new "Your Pages" Section in the Members Area of the BIGGA Website is now up and running and ready for your Section representative to use for Section or Regional news. Log in to the Members Area with your surname and membership number, which can be found on your membership card, and select "Your Pages" from the menu down the left hand side. Then select your Section.

Increased Pressure at Work

During my travels around the Sections I've become increasingly concerned to hear how many members are under increased pressure at work. I recently read an article in a magazine that said one in five people are stressed at work, with workload, management style and relationships at work as the top three causes of work-related stress. With the state of the nation being a hot topic then 'worrying' will, I'm sure, become a pastime for a lot of us. I noticed that when I mentioned the word 'stress' many still curled their lip and rolled their eyes as if it was a nonsense word, but believe me stress is all around us. It is not an illness in itself, but over time it can lead to ill health, such as depression or anxiety, and it is also linked to coronary heart disease.

With this in mind BIGGA are working on introducing a new membership benefit to help combat this issue. Watch this space.

Well, that's it for this month, have a fantastic Christmas and New Year, and the Membership Team look forward to meeting you at Harrogate Week.

This month BIGGA welcomes the following new members...

Scottish Region

Andy Burnett, North
William Forbes, North
David Forrest, North
Christian Landsverk, East
Alexander Richardson, North

Northern Region

Toby Brearley, North West
Philip Cox, North East
Stephen Davey, North West
Andy Elenor, North East
Martin Heywood, North East
Christian Lane, North West
Greg Lee, North East
Ian Lockwood, North East
Richard Webb, North East

Midland Region

Philip Colley, Midland
Liam Martin, Berks/Bucks & Oxon
Derek Swannick, East of England
Jamie Wade, Midland
Jonathan Wall, Berks/Bucks & Oxon

South East Region

Graham Baker, Sussex
Tony Bartram, Surrey
Scott Beadle, Kent
Stephen Laidler, Surrey
Richard Larkin, Kent

S West/S Wales Region

Christopher Dafter, Devon & Cornwall
Liam Screech, South West

Overseas

Declan O'Hagan, Republic of Ireland
Jack Rasmussen, Denmark

CONTACT US

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Justine De Taure
Email: justine@bigga.co.uk



Brad Anderson
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Other useful telephone numbers
(for greenkeeper members only)

Personal Accident Helpline
02075 603013
Greenkeepers Legal Assistance
0800 177 7891

BIGGA's Regional Administrators



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Learning & Development

Key Sponsorship:

UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREENKEEPERS

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

Many young greenkeepers owe their career progression to the assistance they've had from the Learning and Development Fund. An equal number of established greenkeepers have also been able to access the fund to continue their professional development thanks to the donations of the Gold and Silver Key Sponsors.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING KEY SPONSORS



GOLDEN KEY



Golden Key Individual Members

JH Greasley; WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Frank Newberry; Christopher Lomas MG, Lee Strutt MG.



SILVER KEY



Silver Key Individual Members

Ade Archer; Steven Tierney; Paul Jenkins; Iain Barr; Richard McGlynn; Steve Dixon; Sam Langrick.

Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development, provides a departmental update...



Christmas is in the air and that must mean that it's nearly Harrogate Week!

Now that I'm approaching my 16th and Rachael her 8th Harrogate Week, Christmas almost pales into insignificance. With all the preparations that are underway to deliver the ever growing Continue to Learn Education Programme (and making sure that we tick off the 53 tasks that are currently on our To Do List!), the thoughts of presents, cards and wrapping paper certainly come low on the priority list in the Learning and Development Department!!

"If you think training is expensive, try ignorance"

As we are all aware the credit crunch is hitting us where it hurts and we are all being asked to cut back, trim our budgets and make sacrifices while ensuring that we continue to deliver our products to the same high standard. The Training budget is often the first area that feels the blow as they are slashed back to the bare minimum. When you think of the old adage "If you think training is expensive, try ignorance" it really makes you use what budget you have to its maximum. Trying to make sure that everyone gets some training to continue to keep them up to speed with what's going on in the industry, motivated in their job and to make them feel that they are a valued member of the team can be tricky - I have some solutions for you that might help relieve the burden and the budget...

Solution One

At Harrogate Week 2009 there are 30 FREE seminars that can be attended by any visitor to the show on Tuesday 20, Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 January. These include:

Getting to Grips with Hand Arm Vibration, Benchmarking for a more Sustainable Future, Stress Relief at the US Open, EU and UK Pesticide Policy Developments, Turf Nutrition - Getting the Balance Right, Turf for a Changing Climate, Eco-Concept in Golf Course Maintenance, Balanced Programmes - From Organics to Water Management, Primo

MAXX - latest Research and Developments, One Metre Deep Aeration - When, Where and Why?, Finding Askernish, Integrated Turf Management Principles and Practice, New Chemistries to Combat Water Quality, A Starter's Guide to Tournament Preparation, Using Integrated Management to Improve Turf Quality, Introducing Velvet Bents to Your Course, From Coal to 36 Holes, Managing a Changing Climate, Online Learning, Increasing Fertiliser Use - Efficiency Through Improved Biological Strategies,

Setting the Sprayer to Hit the Target, The Future of Spraying, Compost Teas Cut Costs and Chemical Use and Using Latest Weather Information to Assist Course Management.

With all this FREE education available, can you afford not to attend Harrogate Week? For full details of the seminars listed visit:

www.harrogateweek.org.uk/education.

Solution Two

Visit the Business Link Website - www.businesslink.gov.uk. Business Link offers many half-day workshops, free of charge. Many of the BIGGA HQ staff have attended them, including me, and found them very useful and informative. Free training is always worth checking out.

Solution Three

Visit the calendar/event page on the BIGGA Website at www.bigga.org.uk/calendar-events/. We regularly get requests from companies to advertise seminars that are offered free of charge.

I hope some of these suggestions are useful to you!

Higher Education Scholarships

Supported by Ransomes Jacobsen



The most recent scholarships have been awarded to:

- Darren Anderson MG
- Foundation Degree Sports Turf
- Christopher Ball
- Foundation Degree Sports Turf

Learning & Development

THE GREENKEEPING CYCLE

By Bruce Jamieson

As the weather turns colder and the economic downturn begins to bite, many in the golf industry must be looking at their accounts, wondering if they can afford to continue their machinery replacement programme and purchase the chemicals needed to ensure the course emerges from winter in excellent condition next spring.

It is important to remember that we (the older of us, anyway) have seen such slowdowns before. During 1970s there was the three-day working week, with electricity switched off during the day and street lights turned off for weeks on end.

But, interestingly, golf appears to expand after an economic downturn. For, if you consider the development of golf in Britain, expansion periods have followed recessions. So, though times will be difficult in the short-term, our industry should emerge stronger longer-term – or let's hope so, anyway.

It was during such a climate in the 1970s that Jim Arthur came to the forefront by advising a more austere approach to golf course management. His main focus was to reduce fertiliser input, reduce water application during the growing season and increase top-dressing and aeration. This might be a simplistic view of his approach to golf course management. But these were the cornerstones of his advice.

The greenkeeping fraternity was divided into two distinct groups: those for the finer grasses of bents and fescues; and those for the other, less-desirable grasses such as *Poa Annua*.

There was also a small minority who believed

that links golf was the only true type of golf and everything else was a poor second. I was one them.

In 1988 I left Royal Porthcawl Golf Club, a great links course, to join the PGA European Tour and, once promoted to Director of Agronomy, my beliefs were put to the test. Needless to say I quickly realised how wrong I was and adjusted my thinking accordingly.

Links golf is great, and is where the game, as it is played today, started. However golf is played on varying surfaces and it is important that these surfaces deliver what the player is looking for. Quite simply, if you don't deliver what the members want they will find someone else.

As knowledge of what influences the types of grasses on golf courses has increased, so too has the ability to manage and produce excellent surfaces from the various species. During the last 20-25 years the industry has grown together, with respect given to colleagues, no matter what type of courses they manage. Therefore you have to ask the question: Why has the old, divisive argument about the best grasses for golf been resurrected in recent years? The answer is simple – it is time for it to reappear.

For, if nothing else, this industry is cyclic.

For instance, during the 1930s it was common place to apply lime to golf courses with often disastrous results. The practice was abandoned, only to be reintroduced during the 60s – and abandoned again. Now guess what? Lime or liquid calcium is being recommended again today! One statement Jim Arthur was known for was: 'Ask a farmer what to do, then do the opposite'. When it comes to

lime, I agree with Jim. Practical Greenkeeping (Jim Arthur) illustrates this point (pages 67-68) if you are interested in reading further.

Lawns and Sports Greens (A J Macself), a book from the early 1930s, states: 'Lime is somewhat too loosely advocated for use on lawns. Many of the finest of grasses are indigenous to lime-free soils, and dressings of lime are calculated to injure those finer species, while encouraging the rougher kinds to grow coarse and rank.' It goes on to say: 'Few phases of horticulture have been subject to so many conflicting theories as the proper nourishment of lawn grasses.' This book was written at a time when lawns were cut either with a scythe or push-mower.

Similarly during the 50s there was also the compaction theory, where fine turf was rolled frequently, little aeration or top-dressing was implemented and nutrition was reduced. Verticutting, brushing and other disruptive practices were not recommended. Does this sound familiar?

Over the centuries golf and other sports have been threatened – for example, the games of football and golf were banned by three separate Acts of Parliament (1457 James II, 1470 James III and 1491 James IV). Only following the signing of the Treaty of Glasgow and with peace declared between England and Scotland did James IV of England begin to play golf.

Now golf and other sports are under threat again, but this time from the environmental standpoint. Many golfing bodies around the world have recognised that the environmental impact of golf course management has to be improved. However they can only recommend the correct



Picture 1

approach. It is up to each individual club to make a conscious effort and for their employees to be professionally accountable. For example, when implementing the safe storage, handling and use of pesticides. The drive for sustainable golf by the Royal and Ancient should be endorsed by every golf club throughout Europe.

Golf is a soft target when it comes to pesticide use and the environment. If pesticides were withdrawn from agriculture, food production costs would rise and yields drop – not good for any section of society. But if pesticides were removed from amenity turf, food production would be unaffected and governments could state that they had reduced the amount of pesticides being used in the environment. So it is important for our industry that everyone in it ensures that pesticide regulations are complied with.

We should not be using any chemicals that are not registered for turf. If a chemical produced for agriculture is not labelled for turf, but would be beneficial, end-users can apply for an Off Label Application Licence through the Pesticide Safety Directorate (PSD). Provided correct information is supplied, and no comparable chemical exists in the amenity turf industry, a licence is usually granted. Once an Off Label Licence has been successful, the chemical can be applied legally by the whole industry, provided each user has a copy and complies with the licence. For more information go to: www.pesticides.gov.uk.

The definition of a pesticide (Pesticide Safety Directorate) states: "A pesticide is any substance, preparation or organism prepared or used, among other uses, to protect plants or wood or other plant products from harmful organisms; to regulate the growth of plants; to give protection against harmful creatures; or to render such creatures harmless. The term pesticide therefore has a very broad definition which embraces herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides, soil-sterilants, wood preservatives and surface biocides among others. A more complete definition and details of pesticides which fall outside the scope of the legislation is given in Regulation 3 of COPR."

Fertiliser falls under the scope of this legislation, as it is used to regulate growth, and detailed application records should be maintained.

Many problems experienced on golf courses today – such as compaction, poor aeration, over-watering and over-fertilising – have been seen in the past. Now we need to return to a more austere management regime, where the cornerstones of Jim Arthur's advice will prove significant once again, However great care must be taken to understand the individual circumstances of each course, as one solution does not fit all.

To illustrate this, despite complying with USGA Recommended Guidelines for the Construction

of Putting Greens, the picture here (see Picture 1), of a sample taken from a four-year-old green, reveals that the results of too much fertiliser and limited aeration are excessive thatch, limited root growth and poor plant health.

Conversely (see Picture 2), balanced fertility, regular aeration and irrigation to maintain plant health, results in good root growth and limited thatch build-up.

I have been fortunate to work with golf courses all over the world. This has taught me that what works here in Britain will probably not do so abroad. For example, as a matter of interest, in Iceland the climate is very harsh, the growing season much shorter and few chemicals are available for turf. Fescue appears best-suited for greens in this environment, cutting heights are maintained at approximately 5mm throughout the growing season, fertiliser inputs are minimal and compaction is not an issue as winter frost heave can raise the soils several centimetres.

Aeration work is implemented during the autumn and top-dressings applied in spring and autumn. It is fair to say that Icelandic greenkeepers work extremely hard, as they can have daylight 24 hours a day in summer and have to make the most of this limited resource. Greens can be cut several times a day just to keep on top of growth. Icelandic golf courses are managed along sustainable lines.

Meanwhile, if your golf course utilises operating leases for its machinery, ultimately you will replace your equipment every three to five years – regardless of any economic downturn. But if you own your machinery, you may now choose to extend the length of time you keep it and accept the increased maintenance costs prior to replacement. However, be mindful that this could be a false economy that leads to huge expense at a later date, let alone decreased efficiency and a deterioration in the quality of your course. So think carefully.

As a profession we have to be more environmentally aware, and ensure that we manage to enhance rather than damage the environment. As resources may become limited, perhaps now is an ideal opportunity to assess and, if necessary, adjust your management practices.

In the long-term, as long as golf courses are managed properly, provide value for money and benefit the environment, golf as a sport will be around for another 600 years or more.



Picture 2



Kelrar Golf Club, Iceland



Another view of Kelrar Golf Club, Iceland

About the Author

Bruce Jamieson is a well-known agronomist who runs his own consultancy. He can be contacted at: 01252 844847 or go to: www.bjgolf.co.uk

TORO

Count on it.



COMPETING FOR THE GREENER GOOD...

Richard Stuttard, STRI Ecology & Environment

It sounds ironic, but there is a need in today's environmentally aware climate to "green" the golf club. For some golf clubs this has been a widely accepted fact for a number of years and it is the desire to give recognition to these clubs, coupled with a need to further promote this issue to others, that led to the inception of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition back in the mid 90's.

Since then the Competition has gone from strength to strength, highlighting the increasing acknowledgement within the Industry of environmental and ecological issues and their relevance to golf.

This year has brought with it a greater number of Competition entries and an even more diverse range of initiatives. This year's overall winner, Caldly Golf Club, has stood out this year for its diverse approach to efficient, practical and sustainable golf course management.

Upon visiting Caldly there was a clear sense of unity among everyone involved, regarding the direction the club was heading and the message they wished to be sending out to the wider community. Golf Clubs, whether we like it or not, are businesses and as such they are under increasing pressure to "become more efficient", "reduce their carbon footprint" and "be kinder to the environment". These are commonly heard phrases, but they are just words, and it is action that counts. This is

perhaps where Caldly has the edge over so many other clubs. Their unity towards developing an efficient club with a low carbon footprint that is, indeed, kinder to the environment is resulting in rapid action being taken.

It seems obvious to state that a business where all contributors share a common goal will inevitably stand a greater chance of achieving its aim but this is often an inhibiting factor at many golf clubs.

Caldly provides a superb test of golf. The club has achieved the balance between playability and wildlife/aesthetic interest that gives a club the edge in what is an increasingly competitive market.



FEATURE



Royal St. David's GC

The Winners...

Overall Winner – Caldy GC
Regional Winners:
Scottish – Loch Lomond GC
Northern – Fairhaven GC
Midlands – Enville GC

Wales & South West
– Royal St. David's GC
South East – Beaconsfield GC
Best New Entry in 2008
– Silloth on Solway GC
Special Initiative Prize
– Bearwood Lakes GC

Course Manager, Carl Crocher, and his team have a commendable dedication to their course and are clearly proud of the work they have achieved. The course supports a wide variety of habitats, from expanses of grassland, to gorse, water features and pockets of woodland, and all are managed in a manner that is appropriate to both golf and nature. A prime example is the grassland management at the club. Carl and his team have undertaken their own grassland management trials, investigating different combinations and frequencies of cutting and scarifying techniques, depending on the proximity of the grassland to play. The result is fine leaved, open grassland swards close to the playing line, working back to less frequently managed deeper swards further offline. This "compromise" between golf and nature allows the speed of golfing play to be maintained while the wildlife benefits of grasslands (wildflower development, potential for ground nesting birds, and connectivity through the site) are maintained.

Elsewhere on the course, gorse, water features and trees are all used to great effect as strategic elements while, as with the grasslands, being maintained in a healthy state for wildlife. Bird and owl boxes have been placed around the course and the team have even constructed a badger sett to provide further habitat for these creatures which are known to frequent the area.

Back at the maintenance facility the club continues to impress. A reedbed filtration system has been installed to deal with all waste washdown water (a vital consideration given increasingly stringent legislation in this area) with all water exiting the reedbed being stored and re-used. To bolster supplies for this closed loop water recycling

system, the club now harvests rainwater directly from its maintenance facility roofs – a relatively low cost and easy to implement initiative, but one that is often overlooked.

Also at the maintenance facility, staff have developed gorse and heather nurseries for later establishment out on the course and have also taken on a new skill, managing bee hives, much to the interest of many members.

I left the maintenance facility thoroughly impressed and headed up to the Clubhouse to meet the Club Secretary. Here I learnt of the Club's bid to become more energy efficient. Low energy light bulbs and motion sensors have been fitted and the Club have furthered the initiative and commissioned an energy audit for the Club. This has resulted in the production of an invaluable document highlighting all sources of energy use and wastage and prescribing methods for reducing them. Many of the suggestions will result in the Club saving considerable amounts on their energy bills. The Club are even looking into the potential of developing sustainable energy sources on site such as solar panels and wind turbines. Ultimately, the club could essentially be self sustaining!

Across the UK there have been many other exceptional entrants and deserving prize winners in the Competition. The Scottish Regional Winners, Loch Lomond Golf Club, could be forgiven for resting on its laurels given the already stunning setting within which the golf club sits. This is simply not the case however and the whole team here maintain a golf course that is true to its natural surroundings and maximises its diverse and attractive setting. On visiting the Club, David Cole, the Golf Course Superintendent, and his team, displayed a clear sense of custodianship over



the land and this is reflected in the management techniques implemented. Part of the course is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) purely for its rare and diverse lichens and the Club have embraced this and are actively promoting the presence of these rare species.

Additionally, the club has developed sophisticated monitoring techniques for all water, fertiliser and pesticide inputs to the land, and as such can deliver the minimum amounts required to keep the turf suitable for play. The local council do not currently have a recycling collection in place but this has not deterred the Club, who have come together with local businesses to develop their own recycling centre. The approach to environmental matters is very much pro-active, rather than re-active and this puts Loch Lomond in a very strong environmental position.

This year's Northern Regional Winner, Fairhaven Golf Club, stood out for the vast number of projects that are in place for promoting wildlife. The projects range greatly in their scale and it is the attention



Bearwood Lakes Golf Club – Special Initiative Prize

to detail that has impressed the most. The course itself is extremely attractive and offers a thought provoking round largely thanks to the way in which the diverse range of habitats are managed. The course is difficult to define as it incorporates links, heathland and parkland elements. This makes for an extremely diverse site and the Club maximises this diversity potential to the full. Extensive rough grasslands are afforded relaxed management, thereby allowing the influx of wildflower species; pockets of gorse and heather provide further diversity and connectivity across the site and within trees, areas of woodland and other, out of play, areas many of the Clubs smaller scale projects reside. These include large numbers of bird boxes, an owl box and even man-made habitat for harvest mouse. Greenkeeper, James Hutchinson, is in charge of ecological projects at the Club and his enthusiasm for maintaining such high environmental standards at Fairhaven Golf Club has clearly spread to all those involved at the Club including, crucially, the membership, many of

whom have had their golfing experience enhanced by the promotion of wildlife on the course.

The Midlands Regional Prize has been awarded to Enville Golf Club. Course Manager, Jonathan Wood, and his team maintain two courses that allow fairways to pass discreetly through often vast areas of wildlife rich habitat. The most striking feature here is without doubt the extensive heather areas. Impressively, the Club has its own heather trial area where a wide range of management techniques are tested to determine the most appropriate for the course. This has enabled the Club to successfully extend heather areas considerably, both for the benefit of wildlife, and the golfer. The Club are currently working with Natural England on a project to manage some of the more dense woodland blocks on the courses with a view to further promoting heather. The long term vision of the team is impressive.

Enville is also committed to improving water quality. Not only do the Club have a fully compliant water recycling system in place to deal with

contaminated washdown water, but they have also undertaken a project to clean up water entering the feature pond on the course. The ditch feeding the pond has been re-contoured to incorporate swales and reeds in order to slow water flow and allow the reeds to filter sediment and nutrients from the water. The result is the conversion of a pond formally dominated by algae, to a clear, open water body now harbouring a wide variety of wildlife.

Royal St. David's Golf Club is the recipient of the Wales and South West Regional Prize. A consistent strong performer in the Competition, Royal St. David's provides a memorable round of golf. The undulating links environment, coupled with superbly defined fairways and a keen sea breeze, makes the course a first class challenge. Course Manager, Roger Kerry, has considerable experience of managing the environment on the Harlech coast and the whole team have not only maintained, but enhanced the wildlife value of the area. Deep rough grasslands, present for many



Silloth on Solway Golf Club – Best New Entry in 2008

years on the course, have now been extended further and management has now been relaxed to further promote their value. Large scale gorse management has been undertaken in recent years and heather is becoming an important component of the site. The maintenance area has been recently updated with a new water treatment system and storage building and the Clubhouse has recently installed an energy efficient boiler and has extensive plans to further reduce their carbon footprint.

The South East Regional Prize has gone to Beaconsfield Golf Club. Beaconsfield has been a long-standing entrant to the Competition and has therefore had a keen interest in maintaining an environmentally sound golf club for a number of years. Five years after initially commissioning the production of an Ecological Management Plan for the course, Course Manager, Bill Paterson and his team, have made significant alterations to the ecological and playing characteristics of the golf course. There has been an extensive removal and replacement programme of non-native tree species with more appropriate broad-leaved species and the extent of rough grassland on the course has been increased considerably, extending further out and into the playing line thanks to a management regime that has created an open sward dominated by fine leaved grasslands, ideal for golfing play. Within the extensive woodlands, clearings have been created to assist woodland regeneration and create havens for butterflies and other insects.

Also within these clearings basking provisions have been made for the many reptiles known to frequent the course.

The Competition this year has attracted a considerable number of new entrants, an encouraging sign that the message we are trying to portray is being spread. The award for Best New Entry in 2008 goes to Silloth on Solway Golf Club. Silloth is a hidden gem of a club, tucked away in the north western tip of England. This links course had, over the years become dominated by vast stands of gorse and the greenstaff faced a daunting task attempting to bring these areas back into a more manageable state. A few years down the line however the team, led by Course Manager, Brian Storey, has carried out significant work throughout much of these areas, coppicing or removing gorse in order to reduce its cover and bring the desired amount back into a favourable condition both for wildlife and for its aesthetic appeal. The course is now much more open and true to its roots and, as the project continues, it will undoubtedly get better and better. Additionally, the course supports fine leaved grasslands in addition to typical mobile sand dune vegetation. Well managed wetlands can be found in dune slack areas and the course as a whole supports an immense diversity of wildlife.

The final award, the Special Initiative Prize, goes to Bearwood Lakes Golf Club, near Wokingham, Berkshire. Bearwood Lakes is a relatively young course, constructed in the 1990's but has an air of maturity well beyond its years. Course Manager,

Daniel Lightfoot, and his team have brought about significant ecological advances at the Club in the last three years or so and the enthusiasm shown by all at the Club is commendable. The Special Initiative Prize has been awarded for the restoration of a water feature. Previously, the water in the smaller of two lakes contained elevated nutrient levels and massive algal blooms were recurrent each summer. The main source of nutrients in the lake was from the overhanging trees. The greenstaff took action to remove the trees to prevent further nutrient enrichment and also to improve light and air movement at the lake surface which has resulted in the lake becoming an attractive addition to the course, providing valuable habitat for dragonflies and damselflies. Additionally the golf course draw their irrigation water from the main lake on the site and this is constantly monitored so that the water level does not fall below a level agreed with the Environment Agency and washdown water from the maintenance area is treated and returned to the main lake to help sustain water levels.

It has been another good year for the environment and, despite the weather over the last 12 months (which could be described as "Interesting" to say the least!) and the current economic problems, it does seem that the majority of Clubs that are attempting to stand out from the crowd by embracing good environmental and ecological management techniques seem to be holding their own. Coincidence?? I'll let you draw your own conclusions...