

Where's the Sustainability?

After the 2mm debate in Harrogate I thought I was in the wrong movie. I personally find this debate not helpful in the days of sustainable maintenance. I believe 99% of all the people on this debate cannot see any sustainability behind this. I doubt that golfers wish to have average green speed above 9-10 on the stimpmeter, even on flat greens. So why should they go down this road?

The only reason behind stimpmeter green speeds above 10 for regular play is competition between some greenkeepers, or personal ego problems.

Regarding the recent article about the work at Wentworth (November issue), may I make some comments?

How sad. Another historical golf course monument is now destroyed. Was this really necessary? Mr Colt would not be satisfied, if he were still alive. There are a lot of golf courses in UK and Europe, which proved that it could be done without changing the whole design. It is the same story when Royal Birkdale changed its 17th green. These golf courses like Wentworth, Royal Birkdale and so on should be under protection and not touched anymore. When are we going to stop this?

You are right, Editor it is finally time for the R&A to impose some changes on the balls.

Creeping bent does not create more thatch than Colonial Bent. It is up to water and fertiliser input, which creates the thatch.

**Norbert Lischka MG
Falkenstein GC
Germany
Via email**

Congratulations from the GCSAA

I would like to say thank you to you and all of your staff for the wonderful hospitality that was afforded to the entire GCSAA contingent at the BIGGA Conference in Harrogate.

Everyone was very helpful and accommodating and our group had a great time. The International Summit was the best one that I have been to and I strongly believe that this will be a new beginning for all of us to strengthen our collaborative efforts moving forward. I will begin setting up our next conference call this spring and I look forward to also speaking with you and Ken Cousineau on a more regular basis as well.

Please let us know if there is anything that we can do for you and your team while you are in San Diego attending the GIS next week.

All the best and thanks again.

**Mark Woodward
CEO
GCSAA**

Letters



Please email your notes to: scott@bigga.co.uk



Congratulations from the PGA

I just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for allowing me to join with you last Wednesday evening for dinner during your Annual Conference on Congress week.

It was an excellent evening and it is amazing just how many people we seem to know in this world of golf. Everywhere I turned there was another familiar and welcoming face which only added to what was an already most enjoyable occasion.

I know that all of us here at the PGA are looking forward to working on a more continued and closer basis with BIGGA and I personally will look forward to working with you in the leadership of this initiative.

All best wishes and kind regards

**Sandy Jones
Chief Executive
PGA**



Greenkeepers Training Committee



David Golding, Education Director,
with a monthly update from the GTC

I trust by now the big freeze is over however during January I can honestly say Aldwark Manor's greens looked as good as any in the world!

Covered in snow for weeks and weeks it reminded me of my apprenticeship days at Buxton & High Peak Golf Club where during the then regular annual New Year dump of snow I gained life skills totally unrelated to greenkeeping.

By January/February we had painted the golf course "furniture", in some cases more than once and the machinery had all been stripped down and serviced mainly in house but with some outside assistance e.g. the gang mower cylinders off for a re-grind....but what next?

I was fortunate as an apprentice as I was trained by not only an excellent greenkeeper but also a very multi-skilled man in Ray Norton. Ray sadly died a young man but his skills and knowledge very much live on through his son, Steve, who is the Head Greenkeeper at High Peak and I think he was typical of many traditional Head men of the '50s and '60s in that they could turn their hands to anything and I mean anything.

I am sure this is the case today at the majority of golf clubs. If there is a crisis or a job that wants doing "yesterday" who do they call? The greenkeeper (not Ghostbusters!)

The GTC endeavours to ensure the greenkeeping qualifications and courses include all the skills and knowledge to provide employers with multi-skilled employees who can maintain and manage the golf course but it is the added value of greenkeepers that we often cannot include in the qualifications or apprenticeship scheme.

How random would "Apply undercoat paint to surface" look in a greenkeeping qualification?

Unless I have missed something in the last 40 or so

years in the industry, today's greenkeepers are very practical men and women who can turn their hands to most jobs!

These skills are often passed on by the Course Managers and often never factored into the overall benefit to the business by the employer.

A talented multi-skilled Course Manager is arguably the golf clubs greatest asset and passing on the skills and knowledge throughout the staff is just part of the day-to-day responsibilities and an enthusiastic greenkeeping apprentice could learn so much from the "boss".

I hate to hear of greenkeepers being "laid off" especially during the winter and I can only say in Buxton we did operate with a minimum number of full time staff all the year round and a part timer in summer, but we kept busy.

Ray taught me not only everything I needed to know about machinery servicing and preparing for the advent of spring but new skills like plumbing, decorating all of which I experienced in the clubhouse.

I am sure this still happens and whilst we have no plans to add Units from other qualifications into greenkeeping qualifications I hope you appreciate the point I am making?

Golf club employers, I am sure, appreciate the range of skills brought to the business by the greenkeepers and I hope the practical multi-skilled professionalism in greenkeeping is acknowledged and rewarded.

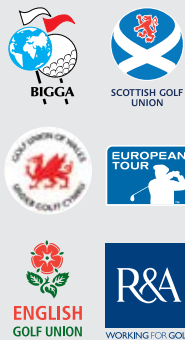
Although the GTC and its Approved Centres desperately try to keep up with the changing funding priorities of the Governments funding agencies, very often by the time I can give you today's priority group for funding, the goal posts have moved.

However for some time now, the 16-19 age group of apprentices have their programmes funded and then it is up to the various

In Brief

This month David remembers his time as an apprentice greenkeeper and how, in the depths of a big freeze not only did he retain full employment but gained new skills, which have proved priceless. David also lends his support to the current apprenticeship framework and encourages employers through their Course Managers to keep signing on apprentices.

The GTC is funded by:



Centres to try and negotiate with the funding agency to contract for 19+ apprentices.

I apologise for not being more specific regarding funding but I encourage employers and Course Managers to contact their chosen Centre/Training Provider and look to interview an apprentice and explain the training programme which is based on the vocational qualifications Levels 2 and 3.

The apprenticeship framework also includes additional skills designed to ensure the apprentice has all the communication skills including numeracy and literacy.

In summary an apprenticeship not only suits the majority of employers looking to recruit new staff but Course Managers can train them on the job using the national standards of the vocational qualifications and support from the chosen centre, oh, and not forgetting the additional skills that will stand the apprentice in good stead for the rest of his/her life.

Back to the decorating...

For further information on the apprenticeship framework visit the GTC website:

www.the-gtc.co.uk

David has recently received some good news for Scottish golf club employers from Lantra. Employers in the land-based industries including golf courses now have the opportunity to receive £1,000 to encourage them to invest in a new apprentice.

The GTC with the Lantra, Sector Skills Council are making business aware of the funding available that is open to apprentices of all ages. Visit the following link for more information:

www.lantra.co.uk/funding

Contact Details

David Golding
GTC Education Director

01347 838640
david@the-gtc.co.uk

GTC
Aldwark Manor
Near York
YO61 1UF

www.the-gtc.co.uk

Learning & Development

Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development,
with an update on education issues



In the words of Lennon and McCartney, "I've got to admit it's getting better – it's getting better all the time"

(Getting Better, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, 1967)...

The Continue to Learn Education Programme at Harrogate Week 2010 was a triumph. Rachael and I have soaked our feet, rested our brains and are ready to take on what 2010 has to throw at us!

In all seriousness, it is always extremely rewarding to see all the planning and preparation that has taken place over the last year come to fruition and the cherry on top of the icing on the cake is to receive such positive feedback from our Members and other visitors to the event.

As a Professional Body, we at BIGGA strive to deliver the very best for our Members. Events such as Harrogate Week reinforce that the time and energy devoted not only by the staff, but by the volunteers on all the Committees we work closely with is appreciated.

I am delighted to report that we had over 1600 attendees at the 129 hours of education events that was delivered over the course of the five-day education programme.

We ran a series of workshops that included some familiar titles and presenters as well as introducing some new, and what have proved to be very popular, titles and presenters.

For the delegates on the 'How to be an Outstanding Manager' I'm sure you'll join me in confirming that Shona Garner is quite an inspirational presenter!

It would be remiss of me not to thank the Gold and Silver Key contributors to the Learning and Development Fund for their support in enabling us to present Continue to Learn at Harrogate Week.

A big THANK YOU goes to you all.

The planning for 2011 is already underway (the ideas file has been building for several months already!) and your suggestions are requested.

Please forward any ideas or brainwaves to me. Serious planning takes place in April, so all submissions should be emailed to sami@bigga.co.uk by the end of March.

BIGGA Higher Education Scholarships



For those of you who attended the AGM, you would have heard that Ransomes Jacobsen has agreed to continue supporting the BIGGA Higher Education Scholarship scheme in 2010.

All greenkeeper members of BIGGA, in or about to enter higher education could apply for a scholarship.



The funding provided by Golden 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 Golden and Silver Key Sponsors.

To be eligible for a scholarship, you must meet the following:

- 1. Be a Greenkeeper Member of BIGGA**
- 2. Be working as a full-time greenkeeper**
- 3. Have been a BIGGA Member for a minimum of two years**

Applicants should be aware that the fund may award scholarships of up to 50% of the cost of the course, however, it will typically be capped at £1000.

Application forms can be downloaded from the education pages of the website:
www.bigga.org.uk

Or it can be requested by contacting the Learning and Development Department on 01347 833800 and selecting Option 3.

My thanks go to Ransomes Jacobsen on behalf of almost 100 Members who have received a BIGGA Higher Education Scholarship.

Up until 31 December 2009 Ransomes Jacobsen had invested £120,000 into the scheme, all of which has been distributed to our Members.

The further investment in 2010 will allow a minimum of eight Scholarships to be awarded.



Contact Details

Sami Collins
Head of L&D
sami@bigga.co.uk

Rachael Duffy
L&D Administrator
rachael@bigga.co.uk

01347 833800 (option 3)

www.bigga.org.uk

Thank you to our Golden and Silver Key Sponsors



JOHN DEERE



syngenta



ARC
legal services



HAYTER
MAKERS OF THE FINEST GRASS



Heath Lambert Group



Golden Key Individual Members: WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Frank Newberry; Christopher Lomas MG, Lee Strutt MG.

Silver Key Individual Members: Ade Archer; Iain Barr; Hamish Campbell; Steve Dixon; Paul Jenkins; Robert Maibusch MG; Richard McGlynn; Stephen Pope; Jason Sarna; Steven Tierney; Neil Whitaker; Graham Wylie, Michael Beaton

PLANT OF THE YEAR FOR '09



E-Z-GO's World Headquarters in Augusta, Georgia has been named one of American magazine IndustryWeek's 2009 Best Plants of the Year.

According to IndustryWeek, despite possibly the roughest economic conditions in many decades, the winning manufacturing facilities still

pursued process and people improvements, and achieved enviable performance metrics in numerous operational areas.

"In the face of challenging economic conditions, E-Z-GO has maintained a lean corporate culture and has relentlessly pursued improvement and progress

toward key company goals," said David Withers, Managing Director of Ransomes Jacobsen.

E-Z-GO was evaluated by a panel of IndustryWeek editors, who also solicited independent evaluations from manufacturing experts and other industry specialists.

Sole Rights for Etesia

An agreement has been signed giving Etesia UK Ltd sole rights for the UK and Eire distribution of Pellenc's patented professional ranges of Selion chainsaws and polesaws; plus the Helion hedgecutter and Treelion powered secateurs. It is the first time that the parent company of Etesia has allowed its UK subsidiary sole discretion in trading in a brand outside Etesia's own product range.

Etesia is looking for new specialist dealers for its Pellenc business, which will also be offered to selected existing Etesia sales outlets.

Etesia's managing director, Patrick Vives, is very enthusiastic about the positive contribution this initiative will make to the industry.

"From both an environmental and operational point of view, these no-emission products offer an enormous number of benefits and are the way forward for end users," he said.

Ernest Doe takes on Case IH Franchise in Esher



The Ernest Doe Power sales team at Esher. From left; Grant Buckingham, sales representative, Robin Martin, sales representative, David Watson, branch manager, and Steve Alabaster, sales representative.

Following the awarding of the Case IH franchise to its Esher location, the Doe Group has re-branded the branch under its Ernest Doe Power banner. In East Anglia, the Doe Group markets Case IH products through outlets branded Ernest Doe Power, so the name change at Esher brings the branch in line with other parts of the Group.

Colin E Doe, Managing Director said, "The company and staff remain the same, so it's business as usual with the extra benefits of the Case IH franchise, but with a change of trading name. We will still be supplying the parts and services for any tractor previously supplied. Our vehicles

and showrooms however will be brought in line with the Ernest Doe Power branding.

Commenting on the awarding of the new franchise, Branch Manager David Watson said, "We are really pleased to have gained the Case IH tractor franchise because they have such a large, strong product range from 65hp. These tractors are favourites with local authorities as well as organisations operating in the sports and leisure market. They will complement perfectly the tractor range from Iseki, and the groundcare products from Ransomes Jacobsen, with which we have had a lot of success."

East Ayrshire Council adds to Zero-turn Fleet

East Ayrshire Council has just taken delivery of 12 new John Deere 997 Z-Trak zero-turn mowers equipped with 60in rear discharge decks from Glasgow dealer Nairn Brown Ltd, which brings the fleet size to 20 models in all.

The council was the first in Scotland to buy the 997 mowers shortly after their launch in 2005, and was immediately impressed by their road speed, general productivity and reliability compared with previous front rotary mowers.



PESTICIDE GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

Whether you grow fruit or crops, trees or sports turf or are faced with controlling insect or rodent pests, you know that to spray within the law you need to have access to the most up-to-date information on pesticide use.

With a 23 year history of providing comprehensive and valuable information about approved pesticides, plant growth regulators and adjuvants, that can be legally obtained in the UK, The UK Pesticide Guide 2010 is a 'must have' publication. The 2010 data are also available through the online subscription resource plantprotection.co.uk.

Featuring over 1,300 products The UK Pesticide Guide 2010 includes three new actives: *Bacillus subtilis*, cinidon ethyl and spirotetramat, as well as several novel mixtures of existing actives. However, 11 actives and mixtures have been lost since the 2009 edition including isoproturon and trifluralin.

For further information contact BCPC Publications Sales: Tel: +44 (0) 1420 593 200 Email: publications@bcpc.org.

Shropshire Groundcare Dealer Scoops Top Award



The groundcare division of Shrewsbury-based Oakley's Ltd has been named Allett Mower's Dealer of the Year for 2009.

The award was made during Harrogate Week by Allett's parent company, Turfmech, in recognition of the sales achievements and high level of service provided by Oakley's in 2009 to owners and users of Allett pedestrian mowers and turf maintenance equipment.

Presenting the award to Oakley's staff, Turfmech and Allett sales director, Leigh Bowers, said that Oakley's had produced consistently strong results over many years as an Allett dealer. However, 2009 had proved exceptional for the business, culminating in the firm securing the Allett Dealer of the Year award.

PHOTO ABOVE: Turfmech/Allett sales director, Leigh Bowers (centre), presents the 2009 Allett Dealer of the Year to Richard Jones, sales director of Oakley's groundcare division. Also pictured is Paul Bennett, professional sales representative with Oakley's.



New Role for Alan

Alan Sharp has joined Symbio as its Regional Technical Manager for Kent, Essex, East Anglia and Cambridgeshire.

Alan has 25 years experience as a Course Manager latterly at Scotsraig and Chigwell.

"I have great belief in more natural plant management and I am committed to reducing applications of inorganic fertilisers and fungicides on golf courses and sports grounds," said Alan.

Symbio's Managing Director, Martin Ward, said, "We see key industry professionals like Alan with their wealth of experience as crucial to the service and support we want to offer our customers."

Alan can be contacted on 07973712275

or alan@symbio.co.uk



Phoenix from the Ashes

Muswell Hill Golf Club suffered a horrendous arson attack just before Matt Plested took over as Course Manager. Since then, as Scott MacCallum found out, things have got a lot better...

There can be few more stressful experiences in life than changing job or getting married so spare a thought for Matt Plested who combined those two activities in the space of a couple of weeks two and a half years ago.

While I soldier on the certain knowledge that a wave of “So what’s!” will be the response of many who have been in a similar position, let me give you more information which might just make you a little more sympathetic to Matt.

While he was serving his notice at Old Fold Manor Golf Club, in north London, and about to march down the aisle with his beautiful bride, Matt got a phone call from the Chairman of Green at Muswell Hill Golf Club to say that the Maintenance Facility had burnt down.

“It was a real shock. When I asked him what had survived he told me, ‘a shovel,’” said Matt, as we sat in his fantastic new facility, a clue to the fact that the harrowing start to his career at Muswell Hill was not to last too long into his married life.

“As well as every machine, all the paperwork – drainage and irrigation records – went, and we did indeed have nothing but a shovel.”

The fire, in June of 2007, was truly horrific. A total of 55 fire fighters from all over London attended and with a 5,000 litre delivery of diesel that day, and a school just a few yards from the scene frantic efforts were made to ensure that it didn’t spread beyond the boundaries of the golf club.

The culprit, of this deliberate act of arson, was found to be a 14 year



MAIN PHOTO: The 11th hole at Muswell Hill looking splendid.

INSET ABOVE AND LEFT PAGE: Damage caused by the fire



old boy who was caught after he boasted of his “achievement” to a friend on the bus home from school the next day and was overheard by the Course Manager of another local golf club. He contacted the police who apprehended the boy when he got off the bus.

“He got a caution, and a year later burnt down the cricket club,” said Matt, ruefully.

So, with his wedding imminent, Matt took stock of the situation. No maintenance facility; no machinery; no staff – the two green staff who Matt was due to inherit when he started work left a short time after

the fire, and, perhaps the biggest worry of all, no water.

“The fire melted the irrigation tank, even though it was full of water at the time, and the pumps had burnt inside out and melted to the floor.”

Having hit rock bottom there was only one way to go for Muswell Hill Golf Club and thanks to a sound policy by the club itself; a welcome turn around in fortune and Matt’s success in recruiting a team, that’s exactly where the club headed.

“The club was very well insured, with a new for old policy on the machinery, while we prayed for,

and were rewarded with, one of the wettest summers in years. That meant that, without any means of irrigating the course for that first few months, we survived!

“We couldn’t even hand water as we had absolutely nothing and that was the biggest stress for me because had I lost the greens it would have been disastrous. That winter we put in a temporary irrigation tank and a temporary pump house while the new facility was being built.

The stunning new compound is the result of numerous meetings between Matt, who had a real vision



INSET ABOVE: Damage caused by the fire to a triple



LEFT: Beautiful, diamond cut fairway on the 15th at Muswell Hill



ABOVE: The new facility with its new fleet of Toro machinery



of what he wanted, and architects who attempted to incorporate those ideas but also add some of their own.

“The first quote was for £750,000 and including things like Dyson Hand dryers and sun tubes but we didn’t need that. I’ve never been in as many meetings in my life while I also took the architects to see facilities at other golf clubs including Walton Heath, Old Fold Manor, Finchley and Hendon.”

The end result demonstrates that those meetings were hours well spent. There is a drive-in storage area which removes the need for

any manual handling – an idea taken from Walton Heath; a Mezzanine floor for additional storage and a superb workshop area.

Having taken advice from a security advisor, as well as the demands of the insurance companies, the site is now surrounded by 10 foot high fencing with iron gates, cameras, a security system linked to the local police station and bollards. Machinery and equipment is kept in separate locked rooms with high security doors.

“I requested that we put grills on the windows which we close at the end of each day. The facility is

large but I said that we’d only have one chance to get it right as we had no more land and that we would certainly grow into it.”

It all came in at a fraction of that initial quote but still much more than the existing building had been insured for, a shortfall which was covered by the club’s contingency fund and a levy which the members are currently paying.

To compound matters further the building was delayed, however, the consequence of another complication, which would go on to have repercussions for the club and course as a whole.



INSET AND ABOVE: Matt Plested, Course Manager.

ABOVE: The greenkeeping team during the recent snow.

“There were extended talks with the local authority about where the new facility would be sited.

“This caused a delay of a year before work could get underway and all this time we were living out of 18 containers which sat in the club car park, much to the consternation of the membership.”

The final decision placed the maintenance facility on the existing putting green which, in turn, meant that it had to be moved to a new location which impacted on the 17th hole, which then meant that the 17th tee had to be moved which meant that the entire hole had to be realigned.

As you can see, Muswell Hill Golf Club had a mountain to climb.

But back to the near beginnings of this saga, when Matt was still young, free and single, he started his recruitment drive with nothing but promises to offer prospective staff.

He struck gold straight away however, in the shape of Kevin O'Neill.

“Kevin originally came as an Assistant, but I met him before my wedding and we walked around the course.

“He'd worked at Gleneagles and was clearly very clued up.

“I spoke with people he'd been with who told me what a good worker he was and it turned into the easiest Deputy interview in history.”

Kevin, as it turned out, started three weeks before Matt went on honeymoon and, using just a greens mower and a fairway mower lent to the club by other clubs, he started the long process of recovery before being joined by his newly-married boss.

“I must admit I did have a few sneaky phone calls to Kev while I was away. I'd go for a walk and ring him to see how he was getting on,” revealed Matt, who had completed the new £350,000 machinery deal with Toro two days before he left.

On his return Matt became a key part of an Extraordinary General Meeting called by the members unhappy with the state of the golf course with around 100 threatening to resign.

Muswell Hill Golf Club has a rich history. Bobby Locke and Ted Ray regularly played challenge matches over the course and Frank Sinatra

often played there while staying at the Savoy. Among the current members is John Paramor, The European Tour's Chief Referee.

“I didn't know I would be so heavily involved until I got there, but I stood up at the meeting and asked them to give me a year and that I would guarantee that those who did decide to leave would kick themselves. I told them it was not going to take rocket science to get the course back on track but just a bit of hard work.”

Two and a half years on Matt, Kev, First Assistant, Lee Brady, and the rest of the hand picked team, have been as good as their word.

“Just by cutting the course well - diamond cutting the fairways and adding definition -and setting it up properly the members thought we were heroes,” recalled Kevin.

“Our first priority was to improve grass coverage and work on increasing the amount of light so we removed a large number of poplars. John Nicholson, of John Nicholson Associates, visited and told the committee that they club was at a cross roads and that if they didn't do something about it they would lose the course.



INSET ABOVE: Carnage caused by the fire, and a barely recognisable Kubota tractor.

Turf disease protection that

after cut... - after cut... - after cut... - after cut... - after cut...

