

South East Seminar

The South East Regional Seminar held at the Reigate Hill Golf Club, in November, was hosted by the Surrey Section of BIGGA.

The theme for the day was The Decade Ahead. What does the next decade hold for Golf Management and Greenkeepers?

Over 90 delegates enjoyed excellent presentations given by Tracey Maddison, Head of BIGGA Membership Services; Tim Lobb, Course Architect from Thomson Perrit & Lobb; Martin Ward, Symbio; Mark Hunt, Headland Amenity; Lee Penrose, STRI Ecologist, and Laurence Pithie MG From Turf MasterOne.

The day finished with some interesting thoughts for the future during discussions in the question and answer session.

The Sussex Section is due to host the Regional Seminar in November 2010.

Head for the Sun

The CMAE is moving its AGM into Europe for the first time in its history, and partnering with Club Managers Spain, will be jointly staging the International Club Management Congress at the Villaitana Wellness Golf & Business Resort, Benidorm, Spain from 14-17 April.

This move reflects the growing number of CMAE members outside the UK and Ireland, and following feedback received from members asking the Association to consider staging business conferences in attractive tourism destinations.

The CMAE's aim is to encourage club managers, suppliers, owners and operators to gather in Benidorm two weeks after Easter to discuss issues affecting our industry and share solutions and ideas to allow clubs to grow and prosper.

The conference theme is "Lead your Club into the Future."

For full details of the event and to register, please visit the International Congress website: www.gheisagolfconsulting.es/es/infogeneral2

All Sorts of Sports



Speedcut Contractors has been busy with a wide variety of sportsturf projects – including many in the world of golf . . . but also football, rugby, cricket and racecourses.

Among the more recent golf projects have included Foxhills Golf Club and Resort in Surrey where Speedcut has been using its new BLEC laser grader to transform old tees.

And at Tandridge Golf Club in Surrey, under Contracts Manager Barry

Pace, Speedcut has reshaped and reconstructed green surrounds, tees and bunkers, following last year's major woodland clearance and construction of three water storage tanks

Also in Surrey at Lingfield Park Golf Club Speedcut has completed drainage on the 17th fairway, while at Sandmartins Golf Club, Wokingham, bunkers have been reshaped for lining with Sportcrete.

The company also carried out work at Wincanton and Market Rasen Racecourses with their new Gwazae deep probe aerator, decompacting areas of high impact around jumps. Last year Wood Bend at Market Rasen was completely remodelled to overcome an adverse camber.

At King's College School in Surrey, major pitch renovation on three football pitches was carried out and a cricket square relocated.

Directorship for Steve



Golf and Turf Machinery, the Ransomes Jacobsen dealer for Yorkshire, has appointed a well known figure from the turf industry as Sales Director.

Steve Nixon, the former Sales Manager at Bernhard & Co, joins Glen Sawyer and John Passfield on the board at the Mexborough-based company.

He will be responsible for the sales operation across the company's recently expanded territory, with particular focus on new business generation in the golf sector.

During his career at Bernhard's he spent three years at the company's facility in southern Florida and six years as UK and Ireland Sales Manager. Prior to this he spent seven years in the golf industry as greenkeeper/mechanic at golf clubs in South Yorkshire. "Steve has a great understanding of the golf market, both here in the UK and across the Atlantic in the USA. He is able to communicate at all levels and his people skills will certainly be an advantage in his new role. He will be a great asset to the business, especially as we develop in our extended territory in North Yorkshire," said Glen Sawyer.

Steve lives in Barnsley, South Yorkshire with his wife Michelle and their two children, Matthew and Emma-Louise.

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Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Peter Todd, gives his thoughts for the month

Over the past 12 months we have seen many factors at play that affect golf and ultimately our livelihoods.

The end of the booming economy did not come as a complete surprise to me having seen a similar pattern in the early 1990's recession when many new clubs suffered. This time round the downturn in the economy has affected a much broader range of clubs. Household disposable income to spend on leisure is bound to come under pressure during these hardened times and corporate spending on golf is unlikely to return to previous levels until balance sheets are rebuilt.

The Association is affected by the change in the state of the economy and has already had to face up to some harsh realities that resulted in the loss of three positions at HQ in 2009. Many clubs are no different in having to review their operations and shed jobs to try and make ends meet including

the economy will drive everyone to adopt a healthier approach and before making decisions ask themselves - is that really necessary? To my mind this is no bad thing for the golf industry and its future.

Helping members to work through the current difficulties by improving their skills that are needed to tackle some of these challenges is a cornerstone of learning and development. There are numerous opportunities at Harrogate and up and down the country throughout the year to brush up your skills and network with others to discuss these common issues - sharing problems is a much easier way to find the best solution. Professional, up to date, experienced greenkeepers will always be in demand from clubs that continue to need the best people available to help their businesses develop - so make sure you are one of them.

I have often heard the word apathy



Learning and Development for All

some greenkeeping staff. While the politicians would have us believe that recovery is just round the corner we all know that the ongoing impact of the recession is far from over. All businesses will have to continue to adapt and make changes to remain viable, working through the difficulties, meeting the challenges head on and finding ways to progress.

Organisations will emerge leaner, fitter businesses having stripped out wastage and the unaffordable to place themselves in a stronger position going forward. Many new clubs built in the boom period of the late 1980's including my own, went through a change in ownership and adapted their business model following the previous recession. The result was much more focus on marketing to target golfers, making course improvements a regular continual process and finding ways to maintain high standards at a lower cost. Having played my part in this sometimes painful process of transforming an unsuccessful business into one that now thrives, the learning experience has proved invaluable.

Much more emphasis on both financial and environmental sustainability is resulting in lowered inputs to operate golf courses with the return to previous levels looking increasingly unlikely. This correction in

mentioned when we ask why some members don't attend seminars, golf days and Harrogate Week. This is far too general and simplistic an answer. Time is undoubtedly a factor, travelling distances, subject matter/content of training etc. Thank you to all who returned the recent learning and development survey - your replies will help us to understand and tune courses that meet your needs.

If you didn't receive the survey by e-mail then please make sure your e-mail address is up to date. E-mail is the most environmentally friendly way of communicating with members, reliable and cost effective.

Getting back to Learning and Development opportunities it is particularly important that we engage with assistant greenkeeper members, they are the future Course Managers. Many seminars regionally and at Harrogate are well attended by senior staff but considering that assistant greenkeepers make up the larger part of the membership they are under represented on these days. My own thoughts are that we should ensure that there are sufficient regional training days that are specifically aimed towards assistant greenkeepers held regularly but only during the winter months from November to February to ensure good attendance levels.

It is far easier for Course Managers to send their assistant greenkeepers to regional days in winter and while some assistants may be afforded the opportunity to go to Harrogate Week it is beyond the pocket of many clubs and often they can't send multiple members of their teams all on the same day. Assistant greenkeepers rely on their managers to send them on these days and I ask you all to consider whether your guys are getting the right opportunities to learn.

My year as Chairman draws to a close this month - it has been a honour to represent BIGGA both at home and abroad and I look forward to offering my full support to Paul Worster, as Chairman in 2010, working with him and the rest of the board to benefit all the membership. In Paul, I know we have someone with drive, energy and enthusiasm and who is equally keen to see learning and development as the cornerstone of BIGGA.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the BIGGA staff for their hard work and wish everyone a Happy New Year.

**Peter Todd
National Chairman**



Greenkeepers Training Committee



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

Happy New Year – Is it?

Never has this term been spoken with so much hope rather than just a passing annual obligatory greeting!

So what shall we do? Wait and see if something happens to make it a happy new year or actually think positively and contribute to making it a happy new year!

At the time of writing this article pre the festive season, the GTC has no official presence at Harrogate Week, no sponsorship of the Continue to Learn programme, no exhibition stand; all decisions made by the Board, following a savage reduction in funding support from various sources.

Cuts have been made to the GTC's budget and only a few are mentioned above, however, the GTC's work to have a range of nationally recognised qualifications including an apprenticeship scheme, which has benefited many golf clubs and greenkeepers over many years continues and hopefully "new income" is at last on the horizon.

The GTC, since the R&A's decision to phase out its core funding to the GTC over a three-year period from 2005, has explored many avenues to make up over £100,000 per annum in lost income.

We all read John Pemberton's Editorial in the December magazine regarding the golfing industry having to realise that more funding is required for greenkeeping and John, Donald Steel, the GTC Chairman, and fellow GTC Directors (representatives from the Home Unions) are also asking the same question, how do we raise more funds especially from the increasing number of nomad golfers to help provide a better service to golf club employers, employees and give golfers, the customer, better conditions to enjoy their game of golf?

It has taken years for the GTC to establish the structure for greenkeeper education and training in the UK with a set of qualifications, which are the envy of many coun-

tries. However, it wouldn't take it long for it all to collapse.

So, at last a breakthrough for the GTC! All formal education and training courses and the various schemes leading to a recognised qualification attract government funding and this is where employers as well as greenkeepers really benefit from the routine core work of the GTC.

It is Further Education Colleges and private training Centres who access government funding to provide courses relating to the various approved formal qualifications and schemes at a much reduced cost.

The GTC is involved at every stage of qualification development and review from the new 14-19 Environmental and Land based Diploma, through the changes in NVQ's to Work Based Diplomas and Higher Education college based courses/qualifications.

We have to ensure we continue to attract youngsters into the career of greenkeeping and continue to maintain and improve access to the various qualifications including the apprenticeship scheme.

Confused?

I am pleased to report that despite the ongoing changes the Government keeps proposing for qualifications the GTC has, with the support of individuals working in colleges and Centres, maintained the national occupational standards for apprentices to Degree students.

The three skill sets are also maintained for greenkeeper, golf course supervisor and golf course manager.

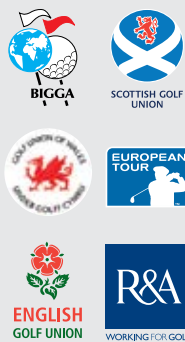
Now for the breaking news:

City & Guilds – NPTC, as the traditional leading Awarding Body for the Land base sector in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, will during 2010 be including the GTC logo on all its Work Based Diplomas for greenkeepers and part of every registration fee will be paid to the GTC.

In Brief

Awarding body agreement gives industry due reward after many years of developing greenkeeping standards - David explains this landmark partnership.

The GTC is funded by:



This fee, to be paid annually, is "new money" for the GTC and while very welcome this proposal has greater benefits to the education and training system.

The GTC training manual will be the only document that approved centres will use and the learning materials will be made available to every learner on the greenkeeper and golf course supervisor training courses.

This is "new income" for the GTC, but I certainly hope readers see this as recognition for the sector after nearly 50 years of determination to establish the sector's own branded qualifications, not only as a financial reward but it also confirms it is in control of its own standards.

There are other Awarding Bodies that will be looking to offer similar Diplomas but the C&G - NPTC - GTC partnership will be the only Diploma that has the industry's full endorsement.

Discussions are also underway with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to mirror the C&G-NPTC - GTC agreement. In principle the branding of the SVQ's has been agreed but a further meeting is planned to finalise the detail of an agreement.

Having attended so many meetings in recent years fighting the greenkeeping sectors corner and finally gaining recognition at the highest level for the standards we all seek, I can finally start to believe in Father Christmas and just hope that 2010 is a very HAPPY NEW YEAR for all of us!

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BREAKING NEWS:

The GTC's Training Manual and Learning Materials to be adapted for use by Groundsmen and women at all NPTC Centres offering the new Work Based Diplomas in Groundsmanship! More to follow...

Learning & Development

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



I trust that you have all had an enjoyable festive period and are raring to go for 2010! Rachael and I are now trying to stick to our New Year resolutions – easier said than done!

For our industry, the year kicks off in grand style with Harrogate Week incorporating Continue to Learn and the BTME & ClubHouse Exhibition providing us all with a much needed pick me up to lead us into the new season.

Delivering an event such as Continue to Learn is a time consuming and costly exercise to ensure that the standard of education is up to scratch and relevant, as well as affordable.

The Continue to Learn 2010 Education Programme is being partially supported by our Gold and Silver Key members, who contribute a great deal of money to the Learning and Development Fund.

The Learning and Development Fund is a ring-fenced fund that supports all of the activities that are undertaken by the Learning and Development Department.

Without this support BIGGA would not be able to offer many of the benefits and services that are available to our Members today.

In 2009 the Gold and Silver Key companies and individuals have supported a number of initiatives:

- Sponsorship of the Continue to Learn article in Greenkeeper International

- Purchase 22 new books for the BIGGA Library
 - Supported the cost of education for 28 members through the Refund of Fees Scheme
 - Subsidised the cost of Section and Region education events
 - Provided new Field Guide folders and dividers
 - Produced an updated Pest and Disease Field Guide
 - Subsidised Microsoft Online Learning packages
- The cost of these activities alone is almost £35,000.

The Gold and Silver Key companies and individuals who contributed to the Learning and Development Fund in 2009 are:

Gold Key Companies



John Deere
Kubota
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Ransomes Jacobsen
Rigby Taylor
Syngenta
Toro

Individual Gold Key contributors

WJ Rogers
Andy Campbell MG, GCGS
Iain A Macleod
Tom Smith
Frank Newberry
Christopher Lomas MG
Lee Strutt MG

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.

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Steve Dixon
Paul Jenkins
Robert Maibusch MG
Richard McGlynn
Stephen Pope
Jason Sarna
Steven Tierney
Neil Whitaker
Graham Wylie

Learning and Development lies at the very core of BIGGA's culture and with many projects in mind for 2010 the continued support of our Gold and Silver Key contributors is vital to allow the Association to keep moving forward and continue to enhance the reputation of its members by promoting best practice in sports turf management.

If you are interested in contributing to the Learning and Development fund as a Gold and Silver Key member, individuals should contact the Membership Department and companies should contact John Pemberton, Chief Executive.

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Thank you to our Golden and Silver Key Sponsors



Golden Key Individual Members: WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, GCGS; 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



Launceston Chooses Massey

Graeme Gallimore, Course Manager at Launceston Golf Club, in Cornwall has selected an MF 1540A compact tractor as being the ideal power unit for the club's demanding course maintenance requirements.

"Our ageing loader tractor had seen better days and the time had come to pension it off and give its loading duties to

another tractor," he explained.

"We decided to fit a front-end loader to an existing model and buy a new tractor of around 40hp that could work comfortably on all parts of our hilly course in all weathers."

As the incoming power unit was to be used on tasks such as deep tine aeration, mole drainage, top dressing, trailer work and spraying, Graeme

and his greenkeeping team wanted a versatile tractor that was able also to satisfy a number of key points.

"It had to have good stability, a high power-to-weight ratio, decent rear lift capacity and be fitted with wide flotation tyres so it could work effectively without compacting our clay-loam greens," explained Graeme.



Honorary Award

The IOG has announced two Award schemes in honour of its late chairman, Alex Millar: The Alex R Millar Award for Pitch of the Year; and the 2012 Fund's Alex R Millar Bursary Fund. Both schemes reflect aspects of the industry that Alex was deeply passionate about.

Alex was IOG National Chairman from 2002 up to his death last year. He also held the post from 1991-1993 and was the IOG representative on football's Playing Surfaces Committee, helping to establish the Football Groundsman of the Year awards. Alex also served as IOG Board member as well as being a former Treasurer of the IOG.

IOG Chief Executive, Geoff Webb, said the Alex R Millar Award for Pitch of the Year would be an annual award open to all professional football clubs throughout Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland.

"The difference with this award will be that it will be groundsman themselves that will vote, in much the same way that the Professional Footballers' Association votes for its player of the year."

He also announced that the bursary aspect of the IOG's 2012 Fund will be renamed. Alex was a fervent supporter of the bursaries, which offer financial help towards students' costs of tuition, fees and materials incurred as part of turf science and grounds care management studies.

Tracmaster Goes to Oxford

Oxford University Parks have purchased two Tracmaster BCS Commander Flail Mowers through Bicester-based dealer, Turney Groundforce.

The University Parks consist of about 70 acres of parkland on the west bank of the River Cherwell. Walter Sawyer, Park Superintendent, and his 34-strong team are responsible for this park on South Parks Road, as well as the grounds of 21 colleges across Oxford.

"We needed to replace our Saxon flail mowers so we contacted our local dealer,

Turney Groundforce, who recommended BCS from Tracmaster," said Walter.

"We opted for the BCS Commander with the 80cm flail mower as the best machine for the job."

The BCS Commander is a professional grass management system designed for those who need adaptable machines. It is capable of operating a number of implements including a flail mower, scythe, rotary mower, hay rake and mini baler. There is also a bank version of the machine for use on slopes up to 40 degrees.



To the Manor Combe...

The Manor House Golf, at Castle Combe, has purchased a fleet of 46 electric E-Z-GO RXV golf cars from local distributor, TH White.

Charlie Gaisford, the Club's Course Equipment Maintenance Technician, was instrumental in the decision making process together with Estates Manager, Paul Bishop.

"We were operating a mixed fleet of petrol and electric golf cars supplied by another of the major manufacturers," said Charlie.

"When it came time to change we had a good look at what was

on offer across the industry. We undertook some detailed evaluation of the major brands and the operating costs of petrol versus electric.

"I particularly like the durability of the RXV; its robust and well put together. The onboard chargers kept the cost of installing the additional charging points in our covered buggy park to a sensible level. The automatic battery fill system not only ensures that the batteries are maintained easily, but that they are topped up to the correct level and not over-filled.

"TH White's loaned us a

demonstration vehicle for a week on two separate occasions so that the management and members could evaluate them extensively. The members have really taken to them and particularly like the regenerative braking system, which combined with the automatic parking brake, provide excellent downhill control and safety.

"The major attraction of these buggies is that they are very cost-effective to run and generate significant revenue for the club. Almost as important, they are certainly a hit with members and visitors."



Chairman Elected

John Deere has elected Samuel R Allen as Chairman of the board, effective from February 24. He will continue as Deere & Company President and Chief Executive Officer.

The decision is another step in the company's systematic process of leadership transition that was announced last June.

Samuel will become Chairman immediately following expiration of Robert W Lane's current term as Chairman and member of the Deere Board of Directors. The board also voted to reduce the size of the board to 11 members, effective at the same time.

In June, Deere & Company announced that it had elected Samuel to become President and Chief Operating Officer

The new Chairman is a 34-year veteran of Deere with a broad range of leadership experience. He has served as a Senior Officer since 2001, was President of the Worldwide Construction & Forestry Division and also led the Deere Power Systems Group, John Deere Credit's global operations and Deere's global human resources and labour relations.

He also had responsibility for Deere's intelligent mobile equipment technologies and for Deere's advanced technology and innovation.

Torrential rain has highlighted compaction and drainage problems on golf courses throughout the UK, sending Terrain Aeration from Hampshire to Birmingham and Hertfordshire to Eastern Scotland.

At Copt Heath and Basingstoke golf course, Terrain Aeration treated all 18 greens with the Airforce Scamper terrallift machine, relieving compaction panning by injecting compressed air. Terrain got to Kirkcaldy GC and treated nine of Head Greenkeeper Mike Ewan's traditional greens while the weather held.

David Green remembers rock hard ground conditions.



Terrain Drains Fore Golf

Make 2010 a Good Year

Those within the golf industry are under no illusion that 2010 is going to be a difficult year... but not impossible. As the year gets under way financial expert, Ian Henderson, and Master Greenkeeper, Les Howkins, give some excellent advice that might help golf clubs through this sticky period.



Photograph of Hankley Common, taken by Gareth Roberts



Keep it Simple

What can be done on the golf course to ensure standards are maintained during a period when budgets are being cut and finance is at a premium. Les Howkins MG, Course Manager at The Richmond Golf Club, in Surrey, offers some advice on how to make a difference without raiding the piggy bank.

It is an accepted truism that the golf course is a golf club's greatest asset, but it will only remain so if it is maintained to the best standard the budget will allow and does not deteriorate.

Master Greenkeeper Les Howkins is well aware of the need to keep quality high but also knows that the need to do so cost effectively is of paramount importance.

"I'm pretty lucky here, we are increasing membership and are bringing in more green fees but I also remember where I've come from, working at golf clubs where budgets were tight and life was a bit more of a struggle," he explained.

With that in mind, and being a northerner, he has a keen appreciation of the value of money and employs many low or no cost techniques which make a real difference.

"Top of the list is to keep things clean and tidy. For example, it doesn't cost money to take a bucket of water and a sponge and wash down the flag pins. It's dead simple. Also for the cost of a can of paint and a little bit of effort you can have the tee markers and the hazard posts looking fresh."

It does sound simple. So simple,

in fact, that you do wonder why you ever seen neglected flag sticks or scruffy furniture on any golf course, but Les has a theory on that.

"I believe that a lot of greenkeepers think about tees, fairways and greens, first, second and last. I remember when I went to college it was all about turf quality and never once was I told of the importance of keeping the golf course neat and tidy. Keeping markers painted and paths weeded etc is still not part of the NVQ system.

"People tend to focus on the element that they spend a lot of money on – fungicide, fertiliser, top dressing, aeration, cutting and put all their effort into that. However, they could have the best greens in the world but if nothing else is up to scratch people won't go and play it," said Les.

"They are all things that don't necessarily stand out when they are done well, but they certainly do stand out if they are not right."

Another area where resources can be shepherded more effectively is cutting regimes.

"There is no point in diamond cutting a fairway that takes however many hours when you can get just as good a quality of surface by block cutting half and half in a frac-

tion of the time which then frees up manpower to weed paths and edge bunkers.

"It's also fantastic if you can hand mow greens but if you have had to make a member of staff redundant if you have a ride-one use it as it saves a lot of time and manpower which can be used elsewhere on the course."

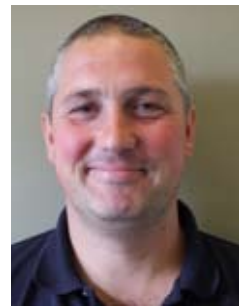
However, Les is quick to put something else into the equation if changes to course management procedures are to take place.

"Communication is the key. If you are making changes to the way you cut, or have decided to rake the bunkers three times a week instead of four, it is important that you inform the members and explain the reason to them."

And ideally this doesn't just mean sticking a notice up in the locker room.

"Emails are great. Most clubs have a database of emails addresses and it takes seconds to send a message to all the members and costs nothing. If it's chucking it down and the course is wet, we'll inform them. If it's frosty, we tell them. It's a really good way of communicating and makes the member feel he or she is being considered."

Les is also an advocate of having



Les Howkins MG, Course Manager



A marker post in need of a coat of paint