



SCOTTISH EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The BIGGA Scottish Greenkeeping Conference was held at our customary venue, the Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

This year the attendance was the highest ever with 180 delegates. Greenkeepers came from the far North of Scotland and delegates from as far south as Darlington.

After the usual welcome speeches we began with a presentation from Greg Evans, of Ealing Golf Club. This was Greg's first presentation in Scotland and his talk was warmly received and, importantly, initiated great debate during the Conference and lunch break.

Following Greg, we had the full weight of the STRI with Richard Windows, Jay

Dobson, Christian Spring and Henry Bechelet. The subjects from the diversity of speakers discussed the scientific approach and the new agronomy all of which was delivered in their own imitable style.

Prior to the afternoon session John Geddes, Scottish Chairman, had the very pleasant task of presenting the "The Harry Diamond Quaich" to the Student of the Year in Scotland in 2009 and the recipient this year was Richard Jenkinson, West Gleneagles. Congratulations to Richard on his well deserved award.

Then Gordon McKie, Course Manager, Old Course, St. Andrews Links, delivered a fine talk on the lead up to The Open and

the changes that are taking place for the event this year.

To finish we had Paul Kimber, Golf Course Architect, who along with Lee Strutt, Course Manager, West, Ochil Developments gave a joint presentation on the course under construction at West Gleneagles.

Paul spoke of the design and construction involved and Lee spoke about the heather regeneration and the work involved in such a project.

BIGGA Scottish Board thanks the speakers for taking the time out to present their talks and grateful thanks to the delegates who made it such a success.

Peter J. Boyd, RA, Scotland



BIGGA Golf Day 2010

Monday 14th June 2010
at Aldwark Manor

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Chairman's Word

This month BIGGA Chairman Paul Worster turns his attention to young people, in the profession, and game

“If we truly wish to change things – we must start with the young in our society”. Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi. Indian Statesman (1869-1948)...

I recently attended the student graduation ceremony at Bridgwater College to see my son, Rob, graduate.

Over 200 students from the University of Bournemouth (to which Bridgwater College is affiliated) were congratulated by College Patron Sir Harry Studholme – Chairman of the South West Regional Development Agency and himself a student back in the 1970s. There was a terrific sense of pride among the students, lecturers and parents. Sir Harry spoke of the importance of education and development and how the two should never really cease. “Quality learning stays forever” and “Knowledge overcomes challenge” were two quotes that really struck chords with me.

My interest also sparked back in November last year when I heard an emotive speech from Mike Darby, President of the Gloucestershire Golf Union, at the 2009 County Dinner. Mike talked about the importance of youngsters in golf clubs and how golf really needs them. He made the point that we must not write young people off, “just because they look and act differently to the established norm, and we feel challenged as a result”. He looked back to his own youth musing - “How on earth did an ex-punk rocker like me from Frampton Cotterill (close to Bristol) ever rise to become President of the County Golf Union?”

“The answer is that people believed in me – people didn’t treat me with mistrust just because I looked and sounded different – people made allowances, and gave me a chance”. “In all honesty - I’ve never looked back – and this is what we need in golf. We need to encourage the junior golfer, and not be put off or taken aback just because he perhaps doesn’t fit our perception of the ideal young person.”

I am in full agreement with Mike. Golf may not fully thrive again until it fully embraces the family and the

youngster and is no longer seen as an elite sport.

Greenkeeping is no different. We have to give our young people a chance. This profession and this Association need young people. They are our future Course Managers and Association Leaders. They have so much to give and so much energy. We must help this energy to be channelled into something really special.

We should celebrate that they think differently to the way some of us did at a similar age. They may have different values but that is all the more reason for us to engage with them fully for the benefit of our profession.

How? Well the BIGGA Board is actively considering proposals for a Regional Assistant Greenkeepers’ Day at a golf club in each Region. This special day for our youngsters would help them to be better at:

- Preparing a CV
- Climbing the career ladder
- Bullet-proofing their career with continuous professional development (CPD)

This day would give all Assistants attending:

1. The opportunity to participate in a series of activities and interviews to gain vital experience.
2. A tour of the club’s facilities and a ‘Question and Answer’ session with the Course Manager.
3. The opportunity to compete in an afternoon golf tournament.

I often hear the question: ‘Where is the next generation of Course Managers coming from?’ An Assistant Greenkeepers’ Day is perhaps part of the answer. Those of us in management positions provide the rest of the answer – we can and we must give them the opportunity to prove themselves. We have to help them on the way.

BIGGA will always provide networking and skill development opportunities but BIGGA will also help Assistants to develop the key

attributes needed to advance from Assistant to Deputy Course Manager and beyond.

I know that this focus on Assistants will also contribute to the advancement of the profession because employers will see how value has been added at Assistant Greenkeeper level. There are many articulate and thoughtful young men in our profession who could probably teach us elders a thing or two – particularly about modern communications, IT and Internet use!

Interestingly – Assistant Greenkeepers have been identified as the group least likely to renew BIGGA membership after their first year. The BIGGA Board will respond to this by ensuring that what we do is as relevant as possible to their careers.

If you are an Assistant reading this – I would ask you to be patient. A career in greenkeeping is very rewarding and enjoyable - but it can take a while to progress. It can take a while to climb the ladder. There are things you can do – and there are things BIGGA can do to speed the process.

Take part in as many Section events as possible: offer to help out; offer to greet people at the door, thank people for attending at the end of the event. Volunteer for the Support at the Open Championship or BMW Championship. Enroll for the Assistants Day!

Get yourself noticed. There will be training specifically aimed at helping you to do this. You will quickly increase your knowledge and confidence. We cannot do it for you of course, and it will take some effort on your part, but it will be immensely rewarding.

Let me close with another quotation: “The more we increase the active participation and partnership with young people, the better we serve them”. Carmen Martinez. American Politician.

Finally my thanks to all who have been in touch via talktopaul@hotmail.co.uk. Good ideas are being shared and acted upon right now as a result. More please!



Greenkeepers Training Committee



GTC Chairman, Donald Steel, highlights the welcome words of the new USGA Chairman who wants to make “brown the new green” and move towards a more sustainable game

Those leading the crusade for sustainable golf will have a fight on their hands converting the Augusta National Golf Club.

It might be easier to abolish baseball as America’s primary sport.

British greenkeepers have long held the view that The Masters sends all the wrong vibes where course preparation is concerned but they may perhaps be surprised that they have an ally in the new President of the United States Golf Association, Jim Hyler.

In a keynote address in February, he led the charge to make “brown the new green”, amplifying his message by contending “many of the standards by which we construct and maintain our courses have become, quite simply, unsustainable”.

Hyler focused principally on the environment, noting that maintenance practices that are environmentally friendly are also cost efficient, a crucial consideration for the survival of some courses in these economic times.

In a Press Release, “Back to Basics” (where have I heard that before?), he highlights the myth that a great golf course has to blind the eye with greenness.

“I believe that our definition of playability should include concepts of firm, fast, and yes, even brown, and allow the running game to flourish”.

He rightly applauded the USGA’s Green Service staff who, in the teeth of the recession, published a report last year entitled “Dollars and Sense: making it in a tough economy”.

This listed 14 different areas in which courses can be more cost-efficient, including water use.

He also referred to the USGA’s Green Section as “our best kept secret” but here his admission should have been consumed by embarrassment.

As long ago as 1977, the then National Director of the USGA

Green Section, Dr Alexander Radko wrote a scholarly article in the now sadly defunct USGA Journal that was both eye-opener and trail-blazer.

Under the banner “Green is not Great”, it punctured most emphatically many of the beliefs among golfers who are self-appointed technical experts- a large majority of those playing the game.

It was for a while compulsory reading and can be found on the GTC website. It is well worth devouring.

For the good of the soul, I hasten to quote extracts such as “Many people have the mistaken notion that the greener the grass, the healthier the turf.

Unfortunately, this notion is especially strong among golfers.

They equate dark green with good playing turf, and they often refer to it as beautifully lush turf!

Those trained in the study of turfgrass cringe at this description. To them lush means undesirable, soft, succulent, out of condition”.

Radko was critical that too often things are done for cosmetic reasons rather than because it is the best thing to do, adding:

“The pressure of membership has great bearing on the golf course management scene.

“It has spawned poa annua (annual meadow grass) oriented thinking because, in reality, that is what some memberships want.

“Poa annua, an unreliable annual grass, is considered a weed by some but a good turf cover by others”.

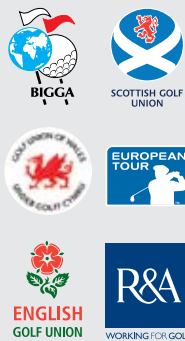
Experts all over the world agree poa annua is the most common problem in greenkeeping, shallow rooting and requiring more water and fertiliser to survive that other grasses but, as Radko went on, “the result is a forced growth of grasses that makes them uniformly greener but this does not mean the condition is better for golf.

A forced growth is not a healthy

In Brief

The new USGA Chairman has called for a Back to Basics approach to course management and applauded the work of his own USGA Green Section. Donald Steel welcomes this approach but reveals that we have been here before.

The GTC is funded by:



one. Over-watering is one of the cardinal sins of turfgrass management”.

One of the sadder aspects of the saga is that Radko’s article was written by an American for an exclusively American readership; and yet, here 33 years later, the President of the same organisation is “preaching” as though theories on sustainability are something new although it is not the first time our governing bodies have failed to drive home powerful issues.

In 2003, Bill Campbell, former President of the USGA and former Captain of the R&A, and a universally respected figure, commented that “ongoing increases in driving yardages are indefensible and not in the game’s interests” but his influence in getting something done has been no more successful than Radko’s.

Golf has a habit of not listening to its experts but Campbell also had wise words to say in 1983 in addressing the Golf Course Superintendents of America – words that have gone largely unheeded as well- certainly over here.

“Communication is important in any endeavour, but it is crucial for golfers to develop a close relationship with their Golf Course Superintendents.

If the Club has a Green Chairman who is really effective, really trusted, and works well with the Superintendent, the club ought to keep him in that position for as long as it can”.

The formula that doesn’t work is a change of Chairman annually but now that Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers are so highly qualified, Green Committees are surplus to requirements.

Campbell believed that “the ideal solution would be one where all golfers are educated enough to appreciate the role of the Golf Course Superintendent”.

If only it were true. To read Al Radko’s article visit:

www.the-gtc.co.uk

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Learning & Development

Head of Learning & Development, Sami Collins, continues to tackle that huge pile of projects...



As I alluded to in last month's article, I'm finally back in the office and working on all the projects that have been piling up on my desk since before Christmas!



Master Greenkeeper Certificate

The Master Greenkeeper Certificate was devised and introduced in the late 1980s, with the first Certificate being awarded in 1991 to Laurence Pithie MG. Since that date the criteria of the Certificate has remained much the same with some minor alterations to try and keep it current.

At this year's Master Greenkeeper AGM, it was agreed that the time had finally come to do a full review of the Certificate, so we're now heading towards the first meeting of the Master Greenkeeper Review Panel.

The panel comprises Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Eric Foerster MG, CGCS; Walter Montross MG, CGCS and Lee Strutt MG, AGS. Eric and Walter have experience working with the GCSAA on the re-development of the Certified Golf Course Superintendent and we hope to tap into their knowledge during the review.

Andy and Lee have extensive experience working with the current Certificate and have also benefited from achieving either CGCS

designation or AGS (Accredited Golf Superintendent) awarded by the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association.

There's a great deal of work to do and I'll endeavour to keep you up to date with our progress.

CPD

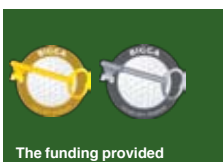
Continuing Professional Development

Also high on the 'Projects' list is a review of the Continuing Professional Development scheme. Introduced in 2000, the CPD scheme was designed to allow members to record the training that they attended and receive an annual Certificate of Achievement or a Diploma after five years of Achievement.

Continuing Professional Development has become much more than a point counting exercise in recent years and the current system is no longer standing up to the requirements of the industry. As part of the alliance between BIGGA, GCMA and The PGA, CPD has been placed high on the agenda to help in the development and recognition of our members.

We have put together a small working party to develop ideas for a new scheme.

The working party alerted the Board of Directors in December 2009 that there would not be a 'quick fix' to the scheme and that a thorough review would take place to ensure that the final product was



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.

robust and serve the purposes of the Members.

Again, there's a great deal of work to be undertaken to deliver this project, but I'll keep you up to date with our progress.



Continue to Learn at Harrogate Week 2011

Believe it or not, Harrogate Week 2011 is looming!

Planning has commenced on the Workshop and Seminar programme and we are also working on the development of a one-day conference for Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers.

As ever, it is a massive jigsaw puzzle that has to be completed by August to ensure time for it to be written, designed and printed in time for the marketing of the event which commences in October.

Watch this space for announcements.

Higher Education Scholarships



Supported by Ransomes Jacobsen

The most recent scholarship has been awarded to:

Timothy Johnson – BSc in Turfgrass Science (Online)



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PROMOTIONS AT ABBOTTS

MJ Abbott Limited has promoted two members of its management team.

Steve Briggs joined the company as a Contracts Manager in 1995, and has worked alongside current director Nigel Wyatt to build the company's reputation in the golf market.

Mick Regan was appointed as a Construction Manager in May 2000, and then took over responsibility for the company's day-to-day

operations from Michael Abbott on his retirement in 2005.

"We are delighted that Steve and Mick have demonstrated their long-term commitment to the company by accepting promotion to Contracts Director and Operations Director respectively. We now have a superb management team in place to ensure the continuing success of the business," said Managing Director, Jonathan Abbott.



Wipe Away Thistles with No Tears

Creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) are two of just five weeds labelled 'injurious' under The Weeds Act 1959. Both are strong spreaders and competitors which invade a wide spectrum of environments in the agricultural, horticultural, forestry and amenity grassland sectors.

Thistles generally grow in isolated patches so blanket spraying with boom sprayers or knapsack sprayers is wasteful, as well as causing an unnecessarily high risk for the environment. Spot treatment is a targeted and environmentally friendly solution.

The hand-held Microwipe from Micron Sprayers, is the thistle wiping weapon of choice.

Operators walk through the field moving the Microwipe over the target area. This will deliver a lethal dose of herbicide onto and into target weed leaves. Micron also offer a vehicle mounted WeedSwiper for rapid treatment of large areas.

Ideal timing for treatment with the Microwipe is during early spring when thistles are still relatively small. Plants 'stand out' in the sward and therefore make easy targets because the grass is only just starting to grow.

Visit www.micron.co.uk

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All Massey Ferguson 1500 Series compact tractors now come as standard with an extended warranty spanning two years, or 1,200 operating hours, whichever occurs first.

Provided to customers as part of Massey Ferguson's after-sales Manager package, the extended warranty covers all of the tractor's major mechanical components against failure or breakdown.

To satisfy the extended warranty's conditions, customers must have their MF 1500 Series tractor serviced by a Massey Ferguson dealer in accordance with the specified maintenance schedule for the tractor.



Multi Purpose Multihog



Since Multihog launched its multi-purpose utility vehicle in the autumn of 2009 the Irish manufacturer has been signing up dealers across Europe, and its first demonstration machine for the German market was delivered on St. Patrick's Day.

Fahrzeugbau Schaefer the Multihog dealer for Northern Germany hosted two open days at its premises near Hanover to show the machine's capabilities to representatives from local authorities and subcontractors as well as potential sub dealers in the area.

Director, Ruth McAdam, officially handed over the 4WD 90 Multihog to Owner, Henning Schaefer, and was on hand to evaluate initial feedback from the demonstration.

"Aside from the obvious advantages of the Multihog's versatility and all year round operational capabilities, visitors were particularly impressed with the robust build of the machine and its driver friendly features such as its easy operation and the roomy dimensions of the cab."



TMSystem Moves to The Grass Group

The Grass Group has picked up the sole UK sales for Advanced Turf Technology's TMSystem, the world's only complete modular fine turf management tool. With eight individual cassettes, it is fully interchangeable between all main stream makes of triplex greens mowers and light weight fairway mowers.

John Coleman, of ATT, in announcing the tie-up, said "I'm very pleased the product line has gone to Tim Merrell and his Grass Group. We had discussions at BTME and I was impressed with his understanding of the market and his approach to business."

Tim was equally as happy by saying, "The TMSystem is a unique and an extremely well made UK product."

The TMSystem was previously sold in the UK under the TurfWorks banner, with several systems in use across a number of Golf courses. The Grass Group will also be the contact for spare parts and additional cassettes for those TurfWorks badged units.



“The golf course is built on the biggest land slip in Europe. The fact of the matter is that the sea erodes the blue lias clay, pulling it out as though it’s on ball bearings,”
Course Manager, David Everett

MAIN ABOVE: The 16th hole and the glorious scenery beyond.
INSET LEFT: The consequences of sea erosion.

Photography by Stuart Broom, winner of the 2009 Photographic Competition

The earth *moved*

Scott MacCallum headed to the edge of Dorset to visit Lyme Regis, a town whose golf club featured in the winning picture from last year's BIGGA Photographic Competition, sponsored by Syngenta

Picture the scene. You're in a buggy carrying out the regular early morning chores when you happen to raise your gaze and look over to a familiar corner of the course. Instead of seeing the hedge which borders the 16th hole there is nothing. A closer inspection uncovers a spectacular sight – 25 metres of the course, including fully grown trees, slowly sliding down the cliff.

Nine years on Lyme Regis Course Manager, David Everett, can still

recall vividly the memory of watching part of his golf course disappear down the cliff and he can point to the trees, which are still alive and growing, half way down.

Such an event didn't come as a shock to David, however, as the beautiful course, set 500 feet above sea level and looking down on the lovely seaside town of Lyme Regis, has a bit of a history.

"The golf course is built on the biggest land slip in Europe. The fact of the matter is that the sea erodes the blue lias clay, pulling it

out as though it's on ball bearings," explained David, who has been at the club since 1986.

"Just before I arrived there was a massive land slip and I did wonder what on earth I'd done taking on the course but the club said it was not unusual and you do get used to it. Throughout history they've had small land slips but also big ones as well," he said, in a matter of fact manner that demonstrates how he has come to view the situation.

That 2001 slip was particularly dramatic – the coast guard



ABOVE: Irrigation on the 9th green

scrambled helicopters to clear the beaches, the golf course was closed until it could be declared safe while television crews vied for the best pictures.

“As greenkeepers we’d been unaware of it when we came in on the morning and were out and about doing various duties when we happened to look out to sea and thought ‘Where’s the hedge line?’

“We went over to the cliff edge and in a couple of places as much as 25 metres had started to drop and over a period of 48 hours all that ground disappeared. We watched mature trees sliding down the cliff in situ and nine years on these trees are still growing halfway down the cliff. It was a remarkable sight,” recalled David.

But what of the day to day pressures of working on a golf course that might just fall away from beneath your feet? Well, it’s not quite like that.

“As greenkeepers we do see land beginning to fall away and slopes becoming a little more severe. Then, perhaps a couple of years

later, you start to see a couple of fissures appear – just very fine hair line cracks which you can see on the shorter turf. They eventually grow until they become as much as a metre wide, and the next stage is that they start to drop. It might be two or three inches to begin with, it might be a foot. You know then that the inevitable is going to happen and that the land will fall.

That said, it is anything but predictable.

Some areas that look like prime candidates to be the next to go still remain.

“Around 18 years ago the club took the decision to move away from one area of the cliff and relocate two holes onto the practice ground thinking that it was the most active part of the landslip. I thought it was the right decision but all that time on we could still be playing those holes. So you just never know.”

The club has spoken to eminent geologists and while they have given their best advice they have all said that you never quite know what is going to happen other than the fact

that the club is staring at the inevitable and that eventually, probably a number of decades down the line the course, in its current location will disappear.

With that in mind the club engaged Donald Steel who in addition to offering advice on some subtle changes to the course also looked at a more drastic rerouting plan should the speed of the landslip require it.

“We have the plans locked away but they involve rebuilding 11 of the greens so it would be quite a big hit for the golf club. We do have 120-130 acres wall to wall so there is room” explained David, who added that the R&A had previously given assistance in the shape of interest free loans to help fund erosion protection work.

The town is a magnet for both film buffs and fossil hunters. A hooded Meryl Streep, memorably stood on the narrow breakwater off the town’s beach in an iconic scene in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, while the discoveries of Mary Anning, a 19th century fossil