

The 2011 BIGGA Delegates pictured with Stephen Bernhard (left) and Bob Buckingham (right)

A trip worth the wait



The BIGGA Delegation to the Golf Industry Show (GIS) & GCSAA in the USA, is an annual trip sponsored by Bernhard and Company Ltd, as part of an exchange programme to forge and maintain professional and friendship links between British and American golf greenkeepers. Delegation member, Jim Brown, reports on an enjoyable week

The 2011 delegation was originally selected to travel to the GIS, in New Orleans, in 2009, however due to a general 'tightening of belts' throughout the UK, the trip to the USA flagship greenkeeping show was postponed for two years.

The announcement to recommence the trip to the USA, starting with a visit in February 2011 to Orlando, Florida, was met with delight by the delegation originally selected.

**Tuesday, January 18
– Harrogate BTME**

Beyond the interviews, the whole experience started properly at the Bernhard Reception which this year was held at the Old Bell Tavern in Harrogate. Delegates

were introduced to each other and were given the opportunity to meet with past delegates, and of course selected members of the GCSAA and our hosts in Florida. It was a great occasion, in an excellent atmosphere and an opportunity to put faces to names. Information packs were distributed and introductions made, anticipation was high.

**Saturday, February 5
– Marriott Cypress Harbour,
Orlando, Florida**

With the flight from London Gatwick behind us, we arrived at the Marriott Cypress Harbour, south of downtown Orlando. A fantastic hotel including self-catering lodges which we shared. Once settled we used the remainder of the evening to get to

know each other and, of course, sample the local brews – A typical American Sports Bar - Orena, was highly recommended by one of the hotel staff and was an excellent choice, soon to become our second home for social downtime.

Sunday February 6

Sunday morning was free time; enabling the more familiar with Orlando to introduce the new visitors among us, to the sights and sounds on what was a quite cool morning. Wandering around with cameras photographing upturned buildings and American menus among other things. It really is an assault on the senses.

In the afternoon we were joined by Andrew Mellon, BIGGA Chairman, and transferred by our hosts, Bernhards, to the parent's

**The 2011
BIGGA Delegates:**

John Kenaghan – Chipping Sodbury Golf Club; Richard Cutler – La Moye Golf Club; Andrew Boyce – Bath Golf Club; Derek Robson – The Dukes, St Andrews; Stephen Chappell – Neath Golf Club; Graham Pickin – Thornhurst Park; Robert Sandilands – Elsham Golf Club; Nick Miles – Market Harborough Golf Club; Chris Haspell – Castle Stuart Golf Links; Jim Brown – De Vere Oulton Hall



house of one of our chaperones. Gina Putnam's parents live in a stunning home within a golf course estate and it was clear as soon as we were all invited in and through the patio doors, overlooking the immaculate golf course, we were in for an excellent evening of Super Bowl and spirited conversation. A fantastic night was had by all and a big thank you to our hosts Mr and Mrs Putnam.

Monday February 7

With the jetlag dealt with and friendships confirmed, we set off early to visit two golf courses. First on the agenda was the Orange County National – Panther Lake, followed by Marriott Grande Pines.

Chris Brocious, the Equipment Manager at Orange County National – Panther Lake, was our guide around this extensive 45 hole golf course and golf facility. With over 1000 acres of land and what appeared to be the largest practice area we have ever seen, Chris took us through the maintenance schedule for the three golf courses, which included the responsibilities he and his fellow 43 staff have to meet to maintain this extremely busy golf facility. With over 90,000 rounds of golf throughout the year, they are kept busy delivering a very well presented golf course 365 days of the year.

Onto Marriott Grande Pines in the afternoon and more significantly, the golf

course situated around our accommodation, where we were introduced to Superintendent, Chris Flynn CGCS. Chris led us through his immaculate maintenance facility and with a refreshing honesty, answered all our many questions including nutrient programmes, irrigation techniques and his environmental aspirations. Grande Pines dating back to the 1960s, was re-constructed in 2002 and is currently maintained by a modest team of 18 staff – with over 42,000 rounds per year, the 7012 yard golf course is maintained within a \$1.2m budget.

While out on the golf course Chris explained the processes of over seeding during cool temperatures and the transition between Bermuda and Perennial Rye and including some of the many challenges Superintendents face every year in a changing climate.

With the tour of Grande Pines complete we took the short journey to the Faldo Golf Institute, which is also managed by Chris. A staggering 'practice facility' with a 'family fun' 9 hole golf course – all managed with 10 staff and with a budget of \$750,000.

On our return to Cypress Harbour, we readied for the evening and joined the John Deere Golf VIP Event. All ten delegates joined well over 1,000 international guests at The Cuba Libre, at Pointe Orlando, for drinks and an excellent opportunity to meet with



MAIN ABOVE and BELOW: Orange County Panther Lake
INSET ABOVE: On the 17th hole at Grande Pines with Chris Flynn





Field trip seminar at Shingle Creek



The quite magnificent Ritz-Carlton

friends and colleagues from across the world – a thoroughly enjoyable evening which was completed with a few games of pool, table tennis and an opportunity to show the locals how to play their own game of Cornhole – (You'll have to Google it).

Tuesday 8 February – Field Trip

Tuesday we were off on our first field trip seminar. We joined a group of over 200 Superintendents, Golf Course Managers and Greenkeepers from across the globe.

The trip took in four golf courses among which were: Shingle Creek, Bay Hill Golf Club & Lodge (Hosts of the Arnold Palmer Invitational), Marriott Grande Pines and The Faldo Institute for a closer look and the quite magnificent Ritz-Carlton Golf Club.

It was widely agreed that the Greg Norman designed Ritz-Carlton was by far the most impressive golf course we have seen to date. Staggering attention to detail and perfectly presented, the quite modest team of 26 deliver an unrivalled level of quality. All the four golf courses we visited operated on well over \$1 million budgets, with recently constructed (2003) Ritz-Carlton an enviable \$1.4 operational spend.

Deputy Superintendent, Josh Kelly, led us through the entire operation, again answering all questions with patience and clarity. All three

Superintendents and, of course, Deputy Superintendent, Josh, were excellent ambassadors for American golf greenkeeping, speaking with confidence and with a very high knowledge of their respective golf resorts and profession.

Early evening we made our way to the Convention Centre to attend the opening ceremony of the GCSAA Show. During the proceedings, we were introduced to the many different officers which make up the management of the GCSAA including, the new President, Jim Fitzroy CGCS. Jim talked about his aspirations for the GCSAA for 2011 and beyond and along with new CEO, Rhett Evans, delivered various awards to golf course Superintendents from across the US and to our delight, a very proud David Cole, of Loch Lomond Golf Club, for and in recognition of his commitment to environmental stewardship – congratulations to all but more especially to David.

Wednesday – Thursday 9 & 10 February – Showtime

9am, the Golf Industry Show, Orlando, Florida, officially opened its doors.

Dressed in full BIGGA regalia, the 2011 BIGGA delegates walked into the Orange County Convention Centre.

It is a huge building, which was now home to everything golf greenkeeping.

All the four golf courses we visited operated on well over \$1 million budgets, with recently constructed (2003) Ritz-Carlton an enviable \$1.4 operational spend



ABOVE: Getting a closer look at the Faldo Institute with Chris Flynn

All the main players were represented and of course many we had never heard of.

Without a BIGGA stand at this year's show, we used the time wisely to talk to the many companies and vendors, collecting information, product brochures, exchanging business cards and of course, discussing the business of golf course management.





There are obvious basic fundamentals between both countries and how we deal with the everyday challenges on the golf courses, however, the demand for perfection on the US resort golf courses and almost at any cost, can often create problems of its own – from this has developed an industry of fixers and problem solvers. It cannot, however, be argued that the Superintendents on high end resort golf courses, deliver anything other than exceptional standards and under incredible pressure.

What came as a very pleasant surprise was the amount of people

who travel from the UK to visit the show. As we wandered around the various hallways and booths, it was great to meet up with familiar faces, have a coffee and share experiences.

With 3.30pm approaching, all the delegates made their way back from the various conversations and meetings, to meet at the Bernhard & Co stand for the customary photo call and then on to meet Golf Course Superintendent of The Old Collier Golf Club, Tim Hiers.

Tim led the effort to achieve the designation of the first Audubon International Gold Signature Cooperative Sanctuary and more recently became recipient of the 2009 GCSAA Excellence in Government Relations Award. Joined by Stephen Bernhard, we joined Tim in a conference room within the convention centre whereupon we listened carefully as Tim spoke.

Throughout the hour we heard about Tim's experiences and opinions on everything from member communication, maintenance facilities and budgetary control including resource management. Unfortunately the opportunities

for questions were limited however, the few considered questions put to Tim he took the time to answer based on his considerable experience.

At 5.30pm on Wednesday afternoon we all made our way to Tommy Bahama's, for the Bernhard reception. This event was very well attended by many of Bernhard & Co's past US delegates, friends and associates. Once again, this was an excellent opportunity to meet with many experienced colleagues from around the world and very well organised by our friends from Bernhard & Company. With a Who's Who of British and American greenkeeping in attendance, opportunities were plenty to discuss the differences between the two countries and the way we manage our golf courses and resources.

While many Superintendents were familiar with our efficient golf greenkeeping operations, there were those who weren't – many staggered by the available resources, available manpower and results we, the British greenkeepers, achieve year in year out. With Bernhard & Co

Turf disease protection that

after cut... after cut... after cut... after cut... after cut...



facilitating the introductions, again many friendships were made which will be maintained for longer than the week spent in Orlando.

Friday 11 February – All day seminar

Transferred by Kim and Gina, from Bernhards, we once again attended the Orange County Convention Centre, this time to attend a seminar titled: The Science of Physical Properties in the Real World – Beyond the Textbooks.

It was clear from the prior early night, that all delegates were well prepared for this opportunity to gain a further understanding into the management and the philosophy of our American cousins and how they meet the needs of the golf courses they manage. Our lecturer, Mr. David L. Doherty, of The International Sports Turf Research Centre, introduced himself as an individual who concentrated on rootzones and growing mediums, the aeration practices employed to maintain healthy turf & drainage challenges. David delivered a very comprehensive talk which

identified many best practices based on his experiences and his significant career in managing the physical properties of growing mediums. Using anecdotal evidence, slides and video, he offered sound practical advice on how to deliver consistent surfaces on any golf course. All delegates were given a comprehensive pack with all the information within the seminar and with that, returned to the hotel to prepare for our last night in Orlando.

Friday evening we all attended the Jacobsen International Reception at the Universal theme park. Again in attendance were many British greenkeepers and associates of our industry. A fantastic evening was had by all and with us all meeting later for one last night at 'our' local bar, we enjoyed a couple of beers and chatted about the whole experience in Orlando at the Golf Industry Show. With Saturday being a free day before flying home, the discussions, laughter and drinks carried on well into the night.

The 2011 BIGGA Delegation brought the number of British delegates who have travelled to

The Golf Industry Show to 90 delegates, and with 20 delegates travelling from the US to BTME, Bernhard & Co need to be thanked for their unwavering support and service to greenkeeping and golf course management.

With the backing of Stephen Bernhard, the incredible hard work displayed by Kim Furnell & Gina Putnam, all delegates who have been fortunate enough to attend the trips to the industry shows, have benefited hugely.

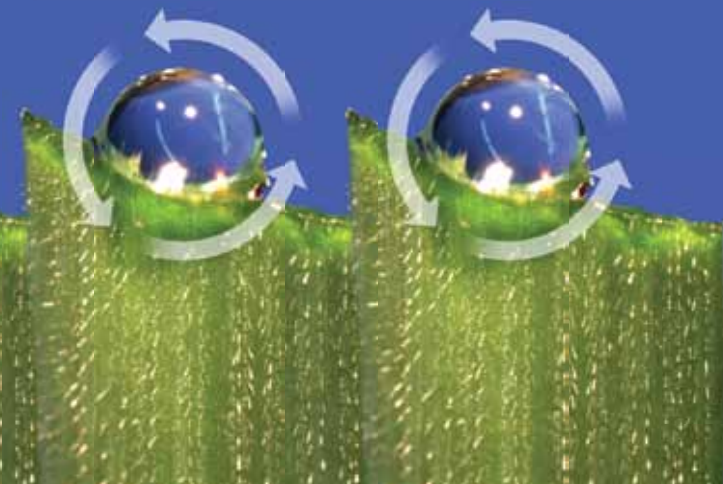
The whole process for the 2011 BIGGA Delegation has been educational, warm felt and appreciated and brought together ten like-minded individuals who are better people and golf greenkeepers for the whole experience.

On our return and since we attended The Golf Industry Show, emails have been exchanged between delegates themselves, with our US contemporaries and some of the many people we met along the way – all which proves, the BIGGA British Delegation really works and for which, Bernhard & Co should be suitably thanked and rewarded for their self-less efforts.



ABOVE: At the show with Kim and Gina from Bernhards, and some of the delegates

stays cut...
after cut... after cut...



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A QUICK GUIDE TO...

MAKING THE MOST OF MACHINERY

Stuart Hall, of John O'Gaunt GC and the IGCEMA, offers advice on making the most of your machinery

We all understand the importance of looking after machinery and the reasons why, but sometimes with all the pressures from all around us we sometimes forget the basics

1. Operator Training

Probably the most important part of the workplace safety, ensuring all operators young and old, experienced or not, have regular reviews in machinery operation and safe practices.

2. Pre and post operation checks

With the constant pressure of an ever increasing workload sometimes pre start check get overlooked, not only does this risk operator safety it also reduces machine performance and increases the possibility of expensive machinery damage.

Washing down machinery after use not only helps retain the value of the machine but can show up oil leaks or damaged parts before they lead to untimely breakdowns or turf damage.

3. Storage

Safe and secure storage is a must, not only for safely getting on and of machinery but with the global economic downturn expensive machinery becomes even more susceptible to thieves, simply marking

machinery with some sort of identification to your club is enough to deter the opportunist thief, while chaining together the smaller, easy picking items like chainsaws and strimmers can put them off too.

4. Scheduled maintenance

Routine maintenance through the cutting season can be neglected due to busy periods, staff shortages and cost, but cutting corners on routine maintenance can lead to serious and expensive issues with machinery, in the short term it may save money but in the long term can lead to catastrophic failures and large repair costs.

5. Equipment replacement plan

A rolling replacement plan is easy to set up, not only does it help forecast replacement costs over a five or ten year period, run side by side with machinery maintenance costs can be a useful tool in managing your golf clubs machinery purchases.

6. A good work place attitude

Everyone wants to work in a positive and happy environment. No one wants to work at a place where everyone is bickering and just putting in their time just to get paid. If you work in a company that is



happy and has the necessary equipment and materials to make a job easier to do, then staff can do their job more proficiently and correctly.







A company that is constantly having down time because of outdated equipment or shabby materials will see a decrease in performance and staff morale.

Stuart Hall
Workshop Manager
John O Gaunt Golf Club
IGCEMA Board Member
www.igcema.org

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Hedging your bets

Steve Moul makes the case for considering a traditional hedge as opposed to a fence or a wall when looking at boundaries

Fence, wall or something else? Choosing the right solution for a boundary has long caused headaches and on occasion heartache. Sometimes people, including the 'expert' landscape architects, planners and designers overlook what could easily be the best solution of all – a hedge.

Hedging offers many benefits, among them:

- **Practicality and privacy**

A wall or a fence can normally only provide cover up to six feet. Planning laws and at times, those of Physics may prevent any fence or wall from being over six feet tall in order to avoid a potential eyesore.

The right kind of hedge can start at six feet or more and will gradually increase your cover until it reaches the desired height. It goes without saying that a well maintained hedge should last a lifetime, whereas many fences will need replacing every few years and walls will need re-pointing and repair.

- **Natural beauty**

Hedges offer a softer, more natural boundary than walling or fencing. Where a boundary

extends along the entire frontage of a large estate or golf course, perhaps several hundred metres in length the contrast between hedging and a hard landscaped boundary can be huge. Who wants a prison wall look?

- **Security**

Choosing a prickly hedge such as Holly, Hawthorn or Pyracantha can be an amazingly effective deterrent to someone who wants to enter your property unlawfully.

- **Nature and wildlife**

Hedges can be an excellent habitat for many creatures and can give shelter and food throughout the seasons. Birds especially love to pick on the berries of holly and hawthorn and the invertebrates that thrive in hedges.

- **Noise and wind shelter**

Solid walls and fences simply deflect the wind upwards and over, hedges absorb the wind and calm it.

The extra height and thickness of a hedge is an extremely effective way of filtering out high noise levels and providing increased shelter from cold winds.



• **Planning**

It may be your only option as many planners are now insisting on hedges instead of walls or fences in order to soften the effect of any new development on the environment. Planners will also stipulate a minimum initial height and may even specify the type of plants to use.

Once you have decided to install a hedge, there are many other things to consider before planting. The choice of plants is critical and making the right decision depends upon a number of factors.

Key factors that should be considered are:

- 1. Function of the hedge**
Is this a formal hedge, what is its primary purpose and at what height will it ultimately need to be maintained at?
- 2. Evergreen or deciduous**
Consider the desired appearance and function of the hedge throughout the year.
- 3. Budget**
This could easily be the number one factor to consider for many people as we all have

to work to a budget. However, beware the false economy of buying cheap, poor quality plants.

Ask the supplier to show you evidence of the quality of plants you can expect to receive.

4. Soil type and location

Most common hedging plants are very hardy and tolerant of a wide range of conditions, but some will do better than others in certain soils and aspects.

Light levels and any overhanging foliage will have the biggest effect on the plants.

Ask for advice on how to improve the soil from your supplier.

5. Nearby trees, foundations and waterways

Any of these things can affect levels of moisture that make it to the roots of newly planted hedges.

Concrete footings and tree root systems can reduce water levels, but nearby streams and rivers can raise water tables in a way that may not be visible on the soil surface.

Good knowledge of local conditions is advised in order to ascertain whether a hedge is the correct option.

The extra height and thickness of a hedge is an extremely effective way of filtering out high noise levels and providing increased shelter from cold winds



6. Are you planting the hedge?

Planting a large hedge is labour intensive. Large root-balled trees can weigh up to and above 100kg each. Do you have the right equipment to unload the plants, dig a trench, move the plants around and lift them in?

Plants can easily be damaged by mishandling. This could require at least two pieces of specialist equipment such as a Manitou forklift and a large excavator. Some hedge suppliers will offer a planting service which includes all of the appropriate machinery and knowledge involved in giving the hedge the best start possible.

Once the decisions have all been made, it will be time to start looking for the right plants. Where to start looking? Local nurseries are probably not your best option. It could take days or weeks to trawl through them to find anything remotely like what you're looking for, assuming they can even offer the right quantity, size and quality. That could become a never-ending task.

Turning to the internet would seem like the obvious thing to do, but Google 'Mature hedging' and

you are faced with the opposite problem. You will find dozens and dozens of websites all apparently offering the product you want, but the prices vary enormously. Also, how do you know what to expect in terms of quality and how do you go about sending back a lorry load of plants if they turn out to be the wrong size or type?

Current Distance Selling Regulations (2000) provide the buyer with a seven day cooling off period, which puts the onus on the supplier to get it right first time.

It would seem that this old fashioned industry is moving fast into the 21st Century and suppliers are embracing this to great effect.

The biggest bonus of internet competition is that quality is improving in order for suppliers to win more business. Discerning customers will always be after better quality plants and service. The competition is only ever a couple of clicks away.

There is no reason to accept anything other than top quality plants now and they are available at competitive prices. A mature box or yew hedge would have seemed like a major investment some years

ago, but they have become much more affordable and commonplace in recent years thanks to internet competition.

The internet is not the only way that this business is moving forward. The product itself is changing fast, in order to respond to the growing demand for 'instant results'. While one has always been

Many growers are now offering very high quality, instant hedging plants or 'elements' which would fool most people that the hedge has been growing in that spot for a number of years

able to buy box, yew and beech hedging etc in a range of sizes, it is now also available in a range of shapes too.

Growers are now innovating in order to satisfy demand for instant hedges, and they are using sophisticated technology to do this. Some even go as far as to plant their crops using unmanned robotic tractors, guided by GPS

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