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GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL

The official monthly magazine of the
British and International Golf Greenkeepers
Association Limited.



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information that may appear. Circulation is by
subscription. Subscription rate: UK £50 per
year, Europe and Eire £65, Rest of the World
£95. The magazine is also distributed to BIGGA
members, golf clubs, local authorities, the turf
industry, libraries and central government.



ISSN: 0961-6977
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Greenkeepers Association Limited



The Toro final three

Toro youngsters shine

Congratulations to our cover star Thomas Flavelle of Lingdale Golf Club who triumphed over a very impressive field of fellow student greenkeepers to take the coveted Toro title last month.

As ever it was incredibly inspiring to spend time with the six finalists who are all clearly going to have very successful careers in course management.

I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the Toro company for their continued long term support of the Student Greenkeeper of the Year award. Thomas is the 24th recipient of the award and joins an illustrious Roll of Honour.

There is no doubt that all of the greenkeepers that entered the process have made a key conscious decision to make course management their career rather than it being just a job.

This decision is undoubtedly the first step on the road to success but unfortunately choosing the next one is not always easy.

I'm delighted therefore that within these pages are details of a series of seminars which will be held around the Regions entitled 'So You Want to be Promoted – Essential Skills for your Career Development' which aim to provide aspiring greenkeepers with advice and assistance in developing their careers.

The seminars are being led by a number of successful Course Managers who have all made the journey from novice to expert and I am sure they will be hugely beneficial to all who attend.

The recent Saltex exhibition in Windsor provided many BIGGA members with the opportunity to attend seminars put on by the Association.

We are grateful to the Institute of Groundsmanship for facilitating this opportunity to put on quality education during their event. Attention now turns to BTME in Harrogate and the associated Continue to Learn education

programme. The brochure, to be found within this magazine, contains full details of the Turf Managers Conference, the one and two day Workshops, our new 'Focus On' sessions and the free Seminar programme.

The programme has been put together taking into account delegate feedback from previous years so I expect it to be very popular, don't delay in returning your booking form!

You cannot fail to be impressed by the innovative means that BIGGA members find to effectively manage their facilities and to provide better, more consistent playing surfaces for their customers within budgets that are constantly under pressure.

This edition contains a prime example in Karl Parry from Denbigh Golf Club (page 28) who has not only found an innovative solution to green consistency, he is turning that in to a thriving business opportunity.

We are very keen to feature other examples of innovative or unusual practices that our members are successfully implementing, please let us know if you have stories that will be of interest.



Jim Croxton
Chief Executive

OCTOBER 2012

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FEATURES

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No doubting Thomas

TORO

Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2012 is Thomas Flavelle, greenkeeper at Lingdale Golf Club in Leicestershire. Steve Castle spoke to him hours after the 23-year-old scooped the award...

Thomas Flavelle tucks into a well-deserved fried breakfast as he attempts to find the words to describe winning the coveted prize. Thomas, and the other six Student of the Year finalists, endured 24 grueling hours during which they were interviewed by experts, completed an 18-hole course report to a tight deadline and faced an agonising wait to see if they had emerged victorious.

"Wow, it was unbelievable. I was shocked. I was aware there were five other lads who were more than capable of winning the award, so it could have gone to anybody. It's nice to come out on top, but they were all so good - they wouldn't have got this far if they weren't - and I know they'll go on and do great things in their careers.

"Now it's all about looking forward to America. That's a really good chat with last year's winner, Matt Pells, and his advice was just to throw yourself into it and make the most of every minute. It's going to be

fantastic for me on both a personal and professional level.

"In under an hour, it's going to be a very, very intense few weeks of incredibly hard work going into highly technical detail. But I can't wait to take on the challenge, it will help my education massively."

Thomas joins an illustrious group of winners who have gone on to work on some of the UK's finest courses.

His attitude and outlook before his 23 years, and it's immediately clear how seriously he takes both greenkeeping and the sport of golf - he has a handicap of two.

His father Dave is a highly experienced greenkeeper, and while he's pleased to follow in his footsteps he's pleased to be making a name for himself away from his family connections.

"It does help that my dad is a greenkeeper, and it also means that people come up and talk to me instinctively because they know him, but I've never actually worked with him and I'm making my own way in the industry.

"I always wanted to work outdoors, and I've spent most of my life on golf courses either working or playing."

He studied A Levels but admits he was distracted because he was so intent on becoming a greenkeeper, and after completing his exams he started a trainee position at Lingdale. He then took his Level Two qualification and is close to completing Level Three at Mervinough College.

"After I've completed Level Three I'm going to probably look at doing a Foundation degree and also consider other options to progress my career."

So why did he enter the competition?

"I used to look at the faces of the winners on the front of the magazine and think 'I'll never, ever be good enough for that'."

"But, in the last 18 months, I feel I've really progressed as a greenkeeper. I now know where I'm going with my career and just entering the award was a fantastic opportunity. There's a nomination stands out

Message from Thomas

"I'd like to thank both my Level Two and Level Three tutors - Kay McAdams and Jonathan Knowles at Mervinough, who have helped me so much. Lingdale Golf Club have given me time and the support I've needed to enter this competition, as well as now having to allow me two months off to go to America! They've also helped me immensely right from the start of my career as an 18 year old."

"I'd also like to thank TORO and IFGPGA, and I have to mention Lingdale's Head Greenkeeper Andy McEneaney. He's pretty much taught me everything I know since I joined the club and he's helped me with my college work, preparing for this competition and has always been there for me. He's very realistic and knows what we have to do to make the absolute most of the budget we have at the club. I wouldn't be the greenkeeper I am now without him."



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The official monthly magazine of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association Limited.

GI NEWSDESK

The latest news from around the globe



John Deere Present £5K Gift to BIGGA at Slaley Hall

John Deere kindly donated £5,000 to BIGGA at their latest Team Championship amid the spectacular surroundings of Slaley Hall in Northumberland.

Richard Johnson, John Deere Limited managing director, presented the cheque to BIGGA Chief Executive Jim Croxton.

John Deere, a BIGGA Gold Key member, works closely with BIGGA to support its educational activities. Team championship donations at previous tournaments amount to over £50,000.

The Slaley Hall final was the culmination of 24 regional finals held around the UK and Ireland that were supported by local John Deere dealers. Teams of three consisting of the Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper along with two further senior members of the club management compete in a Texas scramble format to reach the final. They are then joined by a dealer representative making a team of four.

The teams battled it out

and after a wet start, the skies cleared for a glorious afternoon of golf on the superb course, expertly prepared by Course Manager Steve Cram and his team.

The format proved popular and after a highly competitive day's golf, the winners with a net score of 58 were West Lancashire Golf Club.

The team were greens chairman Nick Jones, Kevin Pickering of Turner Groundscare, first assistant greenkeeper Jamie Whittle (a late substitute for course manager John Muir) and committee member Ian Kearney. The team (with John) now have the fabulous opportunity to compete in the World Championship at Myrtle Beach, South California in November.

Second on countback with 59 were Royal North Devon Golf Club followed by Selby Golf Club.

Jim said: "We are very grateful for this generous donation from John Deere

who are great supporters of our association and our membership. The funds will be utilised to improve our lending library service and to kickstart a new 'Careers in Greenkeeping' project which we hope will provide a great service to prospective and current greenkeepers.

"It was a privilege to attend the John Deere Team Championship and witness so many golf clubs competing to win the remarkable opportunity to go forward to the Myrtle Beach Grand Final. The format of the Team Championship is superb as it encourages teamwork and communication between the senior management of golf clubs, John Deere are to be congratulated on their support of the event."



BIGGA Commercial Manager Appointed

The recent activity at BIGGA HQ has continued with the appointment of James Cadwaladr as Commercial Manager.



James joins the Association from a similar position at a sports marketing agency, where he worked closely with rights holders in the sports industry advising on commercial opportunity. His arrival completes the management team at BIGGA House.

James said: "My focus is to coordinate sales, marketing and communications, ensuring these areas work together to serve the needs of our membership whilst delivering first-class support and value to all of our partners and clients."

He has extensive experience in the commercial side of the sports industry, in establishing strategic partnerships and appreciating client needs.

James is a keen golfer, and a passionate supporter of Everton FC.

LATEST BIGGA RECRUIT

Everyone at BIGGA extends a warm welcome to our new Commercial Administrator Susannah Williams.



Susannah - known as Suz - has an impressive 12 years of administration experience, including working as a Personal Assistant to The Ministry of Education's Director General in the United Arab Emirates, and more recently as a Commercial Administrator for a construction company.

Outside of work she enjoys walking through the glorious - if frequently wet and windswept - Yorkshire countryside, and lives in York. She said: "I'm delighted to be joining BIGGA at such an exciting time for the Association, and am particularly looking forward to putting my experience to good use assisting the Commercial team and the rest of my new colleagues. Everyone's been extremely welcoming and supportive."

STRI Research 2012

STRI Research 2012 once again took place in Bingley and featured a range of fascinating presentations to turf professionals from across the UK.

The Institute works with a number of companies each year on Research & Development projects for the sportsturf industry and invited a selection of these companies to support the free two-day educational event.

This year Bayer, Everris, R&K Kensett & Rigby Taylor, Ransomes Jacobsen, Sherriff Amenity & Plant Impact and Syngenta were in attendance.

Seven demonstrations took place on the fields overlooking West Yorkshire including a Frequency of Cut demonstration from Ransomes Jacobsen. This was presented by Matt le Brun – who we profiled in last month's Greenkeeper International.

A particularly popular presentation was a look at the STRI's work at Wimbledon and the Olympics, featuring an explanation of the science behind grass selection.



Other interesting discussions arose from Syngenta's lively introduction to their new Turf Nozzle system, Sherriff Amenity & Plant Impact's new liquid turf fertiliser 'iNTrench' and a sneak preview of Bayer's new turf fungicide – officially to be launched at BTME 2013.

Over 250 delegates attended including greenkeepers, course managers, fine turf managers and ground staff. Gordon McKillop, STRI Chief Executive, said: "The event provided sportsturf managers with invaluable insight and knowledge from industry experts to improve and sustain the quality of their turf.

"Attendees learnt firsthand how STRI's long term research has helped to optimise the performance of sports surfaces at many of this year events including Euro 2012 and the Olympics.

"The event also enabled delegates from a whole host of sporting disciplines to see the commitment and dedication of STRI and all the supporting companies."

Brian Story, Course Manager at Silloth on Solway Golf Club, commented:

"The information we gained stimulated much debate and gave us a bit of much needed inspiration".



RETIREMENT

After 44 years of employment, David Wilson has retired from the Greenkeeping team at St Andrews Links. When he started in 1968, things were very different from what they are currently with only 16 green staff looking after the 4 courses that made up the Links.

As he recalled, his job that summer was cutting tees, from May until the end of the season. With another member of staff, they would begin on the 1st tee of the Old and when they were finished the Old Course they would move onto another course. The following day they would start back where they finished off until the tees on all 4 courses were cut, then begin on the 1st of the Old again and repeat the process all summer!

David was one of the first greenkeepers in the UK to gain a recognised qualification in greenkeeping which he obtained at Elmwood College in Cupar, where they started a greenkeeping course with the assistance of the then Links Supervisor Mr JK Campbell.

During his time on the Links, David worked on all the courses. He was a foreman on the Eden Course for a spell but the longest period of time he spent on one course was as head greenkeeper on the Jubilee. This spell included during the major alterations in the mid 1980's until 2007. He was also head greenkeeper on the New Course and latterly was course manager on the Straththrum and Balgove courses. He has also probably been involved in The Open Championship more than any other Greenkeeper on the Links.

A large group of colleagues and friends turned up to wish him a happy retirement including past employees and Greens Committee Chairmen.



SALTEX Support

BIGGA were once again delighted to support the IOG SALTEX event at Windsor – and even happier to enjoy the exhibition over three days of glorious late summer sunshine.

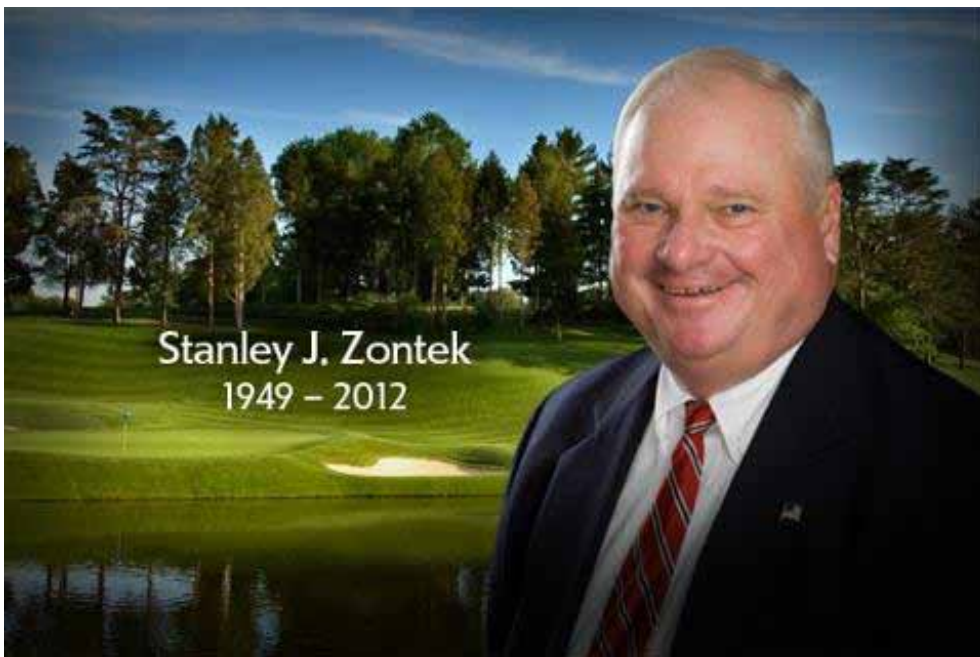
We were inundated with positive feedback from our seminars which featured three of our most popular experts from Continue to Learn at BTME 2012.

David Cole, left, Course Manager at Loch Lomond Golf Club, kicked off with an inspirational and informative session on managing winter kill after his club was severely affected by this in 2009.

Next up was Chris Haspell, Course Manager at Castle Stuart Golf Club, who entertained the audience with his experiences of building a links golf course and hosting the rain-lashed Scottish Open in 2011.

Paul Lowe, Technical Sales Manager from Symbio, rounded things off with a debate entitled 'Organic Matter – Friend or Foe?' analysing how to decipher between thatch and organic matter.

All in all, a highly enjoyable and worthwhile few days – and attention now switches to BTME in January.



Stanley Zontek

It is with regret that we have been informed of the death of BIGGA member Stanley Zontek, director of the USGA Green Section's Mid-Atlantic region, at the age of 63, after suffering a heart attack.

Stanley was the son of a golf course superintendent – playing his first round aged just five - and graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Agronomy and Turfgrass Management.

He became one of the most respected agronomists within the industry and was a frequent speaker at BTME as well as other seminars in the UK and worldwide where he delighted audiences with his knowledge and enthusiasm. One of his more unusual responsibilities was maintaining the putting green at the White House.

He also received many awards including the GCSAA Distinguished Service Award, the GCBA Don Rossi Humanitarian Award and the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at Penn State – recognising his outstanding lifelong contribution to greenkeeping.

Everyone at BIGGA would like to extend their deepest condolences to Stanley's family and friends at this sad time.



FLOODING HITS THE UK

The Indian Summer was sadly brought to an abrupt end in mid-September by a three-day deluge which swamped courses across the UK.

Nowhere was this more evident than at BIGGA HQ, where the River Ure burst its banks and flooded half of the Aldwark Manor course.

This amazing picture shows the 4th green at the height of the flood.

Norman Fenwick

It is with great regret that we have been informed of the death of Norman Fenwick, Course Manager at Ipswich Golf Club.

Norman, who leaves partner Julie and sons Alan and Jacob, was taken ill while cycling. He was a hugely popular and well-respected member of BIGGA and tributes have poured in.

Neill Ellice, General Manager at Ipswich Golf Club, said: "We have been very fortunate to have benefitted from Norman's passion, skills and knowledge since he joined us 13 years ago from Sandford Springs Golf Club..

"It has been a privilege to work with him. One of Norman's great qualities was that despite having led the team that has produced one of the finest courses in the east of England he was never satisfied with its progress and was always looking for ways to improve the course and its environment yet further.

"He was also determined to develop the next generation of greenkeepers by giving his team ample opportunities to undertake training

and educational courses. His enthusiastic leadership inspired his team to take up the challenge of improving their skills and knowledge, leaving us in a strong position to deal with the aftermath of his tragic and untimely death.

"Norman will be sorely missed but his legacy will live on not only in the form of two fine golf courses but also with a team of greenkeepers dedicated to building on his outstanding achievements".

Mick Lathrope, Head Greenkeeper at Eaton Golf Club, added: "We shall miss him a lot – a true gent and a first class greenkeeper. He would always have a laugh – sometimes a translator would have been handy (that's rich coming from me, but you know what I mean!). I'm sure his skills would have been passed on to the youngsters at Purdis and they will remember them, and him, forever. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family at this sad time."





NORTH SECTION SCOOPS NORRIE WHYTOCK TROPHY



Robert Patterson accepting the trophy of behalf of Royal Aberdeen Golf Club

Norrie Whytock was a trade representative for a Scotland Region patron who passed away in 1997. In memory of Norrie, the patron provided funds for a Trophy to be established in his honour with Bayer CropScience now firmly established as the sponsor of this competitive and enjoyable team event.

John Young, BIGGA's Regional Administrator for Scotland & Northern Ireland, fills us in on this year's contest;

"The 2012 competition was held on Thursday 16 August at its spiritual home of Auchterarder Golf Club. Teams of four members represent each of the five Scottish sections in this stableford competition. Team members qualify through their participation and subsequent success at sectional outings along with representation from the section's committee.

"Competitors were provided

with a bright yet breezy start to their round. However as has been experienced by many this particular summer, the optimism for a dry round of golf proved unfounded with heavy rain, thunder and lightning disrupting play over the last six holes. Indeed, the course began to flood and the 15th green was unplayable for the last couple of groups.

"The weather during 2012 has certainly not been the greenkeepers' friend but it is testament to the dedication of all our members that the care and attention to detail is present everywhere we look. Archie Dunn and his team must be congratulated for the excellent course provided for this competition. It was in immaculate condition as commented by all participants with Stuart Taylor, Scottish Regional Chairman singling out the manicured shape to the fairways as one of the many

highlights on the course.

"Scoring was excellent even with the unfortunate restriction of only counting the scores over the first 14 holes. The best three scores from each team are combined to determine the competition results. Only one point separated the top three teams with the Central Section just missing out on the top two places with a combined score of 77 points.

"Reigning champions, the North Section and the West Section, both returned a score of 78 points resulting in the 4th team member's score to be counted to determine the winner but they could not be separated on a total of 102 points. In this situation, the winner is determined on countback from combining all scores over the last five holes with the North Section being crowned Norrie Whytock Trophy winners for 2012.

"Congratulations are due

to the winning team of Robert Patterson and Stewart Brown (both Royal Aberdeen Golf Club), Douglas Elrick (Newmacher Golf Club) and Scott Ribbeck (Kings Link Golf Club)."

Stuart Taylor, Scottish Chairman, thanked all competitors for taking part and their continued support of the association. The chairman thanked Bayer, represented by their National Accounts Manager Eleanor Jenks, for their continued support of this prestigious event in the Scottish Region's calendar. He concluded his comments by thanking the host club for the courtesy of the course and their excellent hospitality.

Winning team captain, Robert Patterson, concluded the proceedings by accepting the Norrie Whytock Trophy and passed on his team's thanks to all concerned with running the event and to Auchterarder Golf Club.



ANGUS TAKES UP DREAM POST

Angus MacLeod, former Course Manager at Belton Woods Golf Club, has been appointed Director of the Golf Course at The Belfry.

The born and bred Scot follows in the footsteps of the legendary Kenny Mackay.

Angus, 45, said: "I'm really excited, I'm still pinching myself that I've been given the opportunity to work at this legendary venue. Kenny's left a superb legacy and it's up to me to carry it on.

"I had to make a presentation to the board of directors, that went well and it came down to a choice between me and another lad so it was a nerve-racking few weeks, and I was just delighted when I found out I had been successful."

Angus will have responsibility for all three courses at the world-famous location – the Brabazon, the PGA National and the Derby – and everyone at BIGGA wishes him the every success in his new role.



GREENKEEPERS HELP THE HEROES

Four intrepid greenkeepers recently completed a unique challenge as they walked over 130 miles from coast to coast...while pushing hand mowers!

Gutsy Stuart Yarwood, Eddie Ainsworth, Tim Johnson and Gordon Irvine amazed onlookers as they 'mowed' three Ransomes Jacobsen pedestrian machines from Liverpool to Hull over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

The bizarre idea, the brainchild of Tim, Greenkeeper at Wilmslow Golf Club, has (at the last count) raised almost £2,000 for Help for Heroes and you can still donate at www.bmycharity.com/TimJohnson

The group, plus two non-greenkeepers, battled steep hills in the Yorkshire Dales, terrible weather and even mechanical problems to complete the challenge in an impressive four days.

They began at Liverpool docks and pushed the mowers – christened 'Trish 1', 'Trish 2' and 'Trish 3' - to Manchester on the first day.

The next day was one of the toughest with the team setting off at 6.30am and arriving, sore and tired, in Wakefield at 7.30pm.

The next leg saw them arrive in Goole before Tracey Maddison, BIGGA's Head of Membership Development, gave them a much-needed morale boost by supporting them in Howden en route to Hull.

Tim said: "The idea came to me at work when we were tining the greens, don't ask me where it came from but I immediately thought 'we can expand on this'.

"So I put an appeal on Facebook for other greenkeepers to get involved, Stuart was the first to count himself in and it all went from there."

Stuart, Course Manager at Lymm Golf Club, said: "Tim suggested that we do something bizarre to raise money for charity a few months ago. I'm a firm believer that if you don't do something crazy every year you'll go insane, so I agreed.

"The first day was demoralising. We were pushing these mowers at 3mph on the East Lancs Road which is the longest, most boring straight road you can ever imagine.

"On the rest of the days we had to contend with long, steep hills. Funnily enough, going up wasn't a problem because you get the momentum going with the machine – it was going down them that was the worst because you're pushing a dead weight down a hill.

"Towards the end through the Wolds we had some great focal points and when we saw the Humber Bridge we thought we'd done it. However, it was still 15 miles away which meant five more hours of pain."

He added that the highlight was the camaraderie that developed between the gutsy lads – who did not all know each other prior to the challenge.

He said: "You get by on Ibuprofen and adrenaline, but at any one time there will be someone who's struggling so you need to pick them up.

"Failure's not an option, so even though you're in pain you don't think about it because you don't want to affect morale. I had no idea how emotional it was all going to be.

"Ultimately, we were pushing hand mowers. You think it's tough but we wanted to raise money for people who are pushing minesweepers."

The lads would like to thank Tim's dad

Stuart who shadowed them and helped them immensely during the challenge, and also sponsors Symbio, Rigby Taylor, British Seed Houses, Prestige Garden Services, Ransomes Jacobsen and Banks Amenity. They were also hugely grateful for the support along the way of Lymm, Wilmslow and Avro Golf Clubs plus Chris Sheehan and Tracey Maddison.

Watch this space for the lads' next bizarre challenge next summer!

