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BIGGA General Manager
Tracey Maddison
traceymaddison@bigga.co.uk

BIGGA Learning & Development Manager
Sami Collins
sami@bigga.co.uk

Contact Us
BIGGA House, Aldwark, Ane, York,
YO61 1UF
info@bigga.co.uk
www.bigga.org.uk
Tel – 01347 833800 | Fax – 01347 833801

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Production
Design & Brand
Executive
Tom Campbell

Tel – 01347 833800
ext 513
tom@bigga.co.uk



Editorial
Communications
Executive
Steve Castle
Tel – 01347 833800
ext 510
steve.castle
@bigga.co.uk



Advertising
Business
Development
Executive
Jill Rodham
Tel – 01347 833800
Fax – 01347 833802
jill@bigga.co.uk
ext 519

Printing
Warners Midlands Plc, The Maltings, Manor
Lane, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH
Tel – 01778 391000 | Fax – 01778 394269

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The Carrick at Loch Lomond, Course Manager Jim Brown (left) with Head Greenkeeper Paul McClearn (right)

Firstly I'd like to thank all those BIGGA members who took the time to respond to the Greenkeeper International reader survey recently. This magazine is an important activity for the Association on many levels but its primary purpose is to be a true benefit of BIGGA membership. It was heartening to read a great deal of positive feedback in the survey but of more importance were the many excellent suggestions for ways to improve the quality and relevance of the magazine's content. All these suggestions are being taken on board and some changes will start to filter into the publication from next month onwards.

April signifies the traditional start to the golfing season as the familiar verdant hues of Augusta National are beamed into our living rooms. This brings increased golfer interest alongside sometimes wildly ambitious course presentation expectations (see The Back Nine article on page 66). With winter still hanging over large parts of the UK as I write, these expectations will need to be managed even more carefully than normal. It is encouraging to see just how many greenkeepers are now being proactive on this front through the use of blogs, Facebook and Twitter as well as old-fashioned methods such as newsletters and member gatherings. The industry needs events like The Masters at this time of year; they get golfers excited about playing the game after such a long winter. The challenge is to ensure they appreciate that Augusta-like perfection is largely unachievable in the UK climate with regular budgets.

To illustrate this point in this month's magazine we hear how Jim Brown and Paul McClearn (see page 20) have set about dealing with the effects of over two metres of annual rainfall on their beautiful site by the banks of Loch Lomond! Major drainage, turf health and bunker reconstruction work have been

implemented ensuring this busy facility is providing a more satisfactory golf experience. We also visit Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club (see page 26) in the South East of England where Chris Mitchell is the third generation of his family to have the custodianship of this beautiful course at which the governing Conservators ensure that the land is managed in a very natural way.

Only a few short weeks after BTME 2013 concluded and already the signs for 2014 are extremely promising. Following the very successful exhibition in January, sales for next year have been extraordinary with many of this year's exhibitors increasing their stand space - making it tough to fit in those companies who want to be part of 2014 but weren't present this year. The sales team have done a great job in trying to accommodate everyone's needs and it looks at this early stage as though we may have all the available halls completely full within the next few weeks. The success of the last two BTMEs in particular has shown how important the exhibition and the associated education programme are for the industry. We are now working hard on the content for the Turf Managers' Conference and Workshop/Seminar Programmes, watch this space for details over the next few months.



Enjoy the read.
Jim Croxton, Chief Executive

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Thomas's travels

TORO Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Thomas Flavelle tells us about a life-changing eight weeks in the States, his reward for scooping the coveted prize last September

I felt very nervous as I sat on the plane about to fly out to the States. On arrival I found myself waiting at a very cold bus stop, which a large pickup truck pulled out of the hotel car park and the driver leaned out and offered me a lift - a big thank you to Mike Prescott from turfcontractorsportspage for that.

At first it did seem to be back in a classroom, taking notes and crossing bar charts at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMASS). The college day consisted of two-hour lessons from 8am-2pm with subjects including Entomology, Pathology, Turf Management and Soil Science. I enjoyed learning to some very interesting guest speakers such as Bill Speers, Superintendent at the Boston Country Club which held the 1999 Ryder Cup.

I expected the American way of doing things would be totally different to ours, and in ways they are, maybe less environmentally friendly, but the biggest hurdle was learning the different grass species for the cool season grasses. The lessons were very informative covering topics new to me. Networking with the other students on the course was priceless - I discussed the different techniques they use as well as how their courses are run.

As a part of my prize I was lucky enough to attend the GCRAA golf show in San Diego. I would be travelling there with Dave Casteney - the American Tour winner. Unfortunately our flight to Chicago was delayed, and with only 40 minutes between flights I could see it was going to be tight. Fluffy headed in the wrong direction through the huge airport, but after a rabbit chase with an official we turned around and ran back the way we came, just making the flight and collapsing back in our seats.

San Diego was like landing in a different country - it was warm and sunny with palm trees. That evening I attended the opening ceremony, with some very interesting speakers. After that I joined our tutor, Jonathan Knowles for some dinner and explored a few bars around the Gaslamp Quarter. The show itself was very interesting, with lots of products that are easily used in the UK, including big fans to improve air circulation. It was great to catch up with people I already knew but I also met many new people. I also managed to make time for a tour of the USS Midway Aircraft Carrier which was very interesting.

I know the trip home was also going to be eventful when I discovered snow. Snow was forecast to dump three feet of snow on the road coast. Even though my flight from Philadelphia to Hartford was cancelled, I decided to take the flight to Philadelphia. On arrival I was informed that there would be no flights for two days which created a weekend in Philadelphia for me, and what a beautiful city it is. I then headed to Washington.

We began by visiting some of the local bars and restaurants and had some great nights out at baseball and hockey games. I was lucky enough to watch UMASS beat the number one ranked Boston College 5-1. It was a great atmosphere.

Unfortunately my trip to Boston got cancelled due to the snow, but the final leg of my trip went ahead - a visit to the Toro factories in Minneapolis.

This was an amazing tour full of information about Toro as an employer as well as the production they produce. Standing at the start of the production line was very cool, as you looked down the line a shell turned into a mower. I was so awed that the end of the trip was now, I would like to thank Toro, Terry and BRIGGS for organising this award, as it gives an amazing opportunity for visiting greenkeepers to progress their knowledge and careers. I had a fantastic time in America, making some lifelong friendships along the way, and these people made the trip so much fun.

It truly was a once in a lifetime experience, and I wish I could start it over again. I would strongly recommend to any enthusiastic greenkeeper who wants to stand out from the crowd and study at a highly recommended University while having the time of their life to consider the Toro award. I will never forget the experience that I had at UMASS and the people I met there.



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20 Four seasons in one day at The Carrick on Loch Lomond



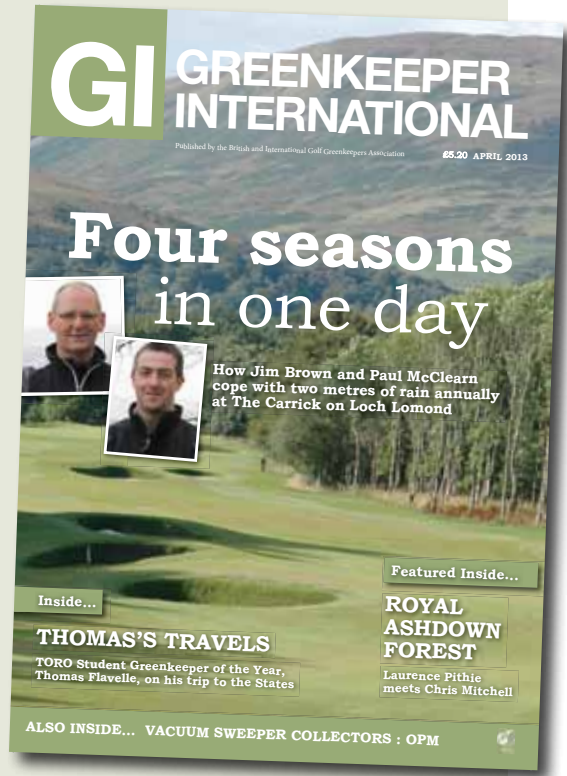
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The official monthly magazine of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association Limited



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Tony Smith, gives his thoughts for the month

On the road with BIGGA

My hectic schedule has shown no signs of letting up over the last few weeks. I returned from the FEGGA Conference in Zurich and immediately headed straight to the Scottish Region board meeting.

Not only was this very well attended - it was also very constructive. This was followed up by one of the Regional Roadshows which Jim Croxton, Tracey Maddison and I have been involved in these last few weeks.

The roadshows are titled 'Working together for the future success of BIGGA' and the aim is to engage at a local level with Section and Region Committees to ensure that the Association's plans and ambitions are more widely known and supported.

We believe it's vital that we all work together to increase the profile and appreciation of the profession of greenkeeping.

The Scottish Roadshow was a very constructive exercise - as it also was in the Northern and South West and South Wales Regions - as it provided all parties with food for thought along with a clear understanding of how we can move forward.

It was then time for the Scottish Regional Conference in Dunfermline - and what a Conference it was. The programme was superb with some exceptional speakers and most importantly, over two hundred delegates in attendance.

Representatives from some of the finest golf courses in the world passed on their expertise, knowledge and opinions and I know feedback on their presentations was excellent, and this is no surprise now I've had the pleasure of enjoying them in full flow. I'd like to wish Grant Frogley at Roxburghe Hotel & Golf Course, Chris Haspell at Castle Stuart Links and last but not least John Bambury at Trump International Links the best of luck in their quest to continue to improve these fabulous courses.



Scottish Regional Conference in Dunfermline

The fourth roadshow was held in the Midlands Region with the final roadshow in the South East. In particular, the Midlands roadshow was an interesting day where it seemed my passion for the Association, and in particular my attempts to encourage members to play a part in its success, may have come across a little strongly. I make no apology for this and the chance to discuss it openly was very productive. I am passionate about the part members play in helping us promote BIGGA, after all, this is the key reason behind the roadshows. We need to shout about the role that BIGGA plays and the value of being a member.

Some members know some of these benefits very well as they're currently celebrating being selected to work on the Support Teams for the BMW PGA Championship in May or The Open Championship in July.

Their work really is vital - to find out more about this and how the teams were selected turn to page 32. Many congratulations to those who have been selected and to those who haven't, don't be too

Over two hundred delegates were in attendance at the Scottish Regional Conference

disappointed - come back and try again next year.

Additionally, twenty other mainly young members have won a fantastic opportunity to be part of the Future Turf Managers Initiative made possible by Jacobsen. I am very much looking forward to meeting them all in Ipswich this month and witnessing the fantastic educational and mentoring opportunities on offer.

I was delighted to finally see some dry spring weather at the start of last month although sadly winter soon returned and much of the country has been badly affected by snow and strong winds. I know of one club in the South East who abandoned a tournament because the balls were being blown off the tees! Hopefully the weather will relent so we can get out and do some cutting on the courses, which is something we're hoping to focus on at Teesside.

Contact details

Tony Smith
07988 838956
tony.smith48@ntlworld.com

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FUTURE TURF MANAGERS - DELEGATES ANNOUNCED

The successful applicants for the inaugural Jacobsen Future Turf Managers' Initiative have been announced by BIGGA.

Twenty greenkeepers from across the UK are now looking forward to an intensive two days of seminars and workshops covering a range of subjects designed to equip them for success in their future careers. These include in-depth courses on communications, budgeting, organisational politics, CV writing and interview techniques plus breakout sessions looking at other key subjects.

BIGGA and Jacobsen faced a tough decision selecting 20 names from all the candidates who completed an application form designed to find out more about them and their aspirations. They are



now preparing to head to Jacobsen's Ipswich headquarters for two days in April for the sessions which complement BIGGA's Assistants Development Programme that Jacobsen kindly agrees to sponsor.

One of the successful candidates was James Bledge (shown inset), Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club in Kent.

He said: "I was delighted when I found out I'd got a place. I always try and further my education as much as possible, whether that be at BTME or at other BIGGA events, and these sessions cover exactly the sort of areas I'm looking to increase my knowledge in.

"I've got a plan to hopefully make the next step in my career in two or three years, and modules such as budgeting and CV writing will really help me so I'm looking forward to it."

Lorna Sheldon (below right) and David Bancroft-Turner – who gave hugely successful presentations at the Turf

Managers' Conference at BTME – will be again passing on their extensive knowledge of professional communication techniques and dealing with golf club politics respectively.

Delegates will also be given budget guidance by Lee Strutt MG - Course Manager at gWest – plus advice on further educational opportunities within BIGGA.

BIGGA's Learning & Development Executive (Technical) Stuart Green added: "There has been an excellent response to the initiative, with 45 applications received. This made the process of selection all the more difficult as we felt that all the applicants would have benefited. However, this is not the end of the journey for the successful applicants but the beginning of the next phase in their future turf manager careers."

Many thanks to all who applied, and look out for coverage of the event in next month's Greenkeeper International. For the full list of successful candidates please turn to page 14.



NEIL BAKER APPOINTED COURSE MANAGER AT LITTLE ASTON

Neil Baker has been appointed the new Course Manager at Little Aston Golf Club in Staffordshire.

He's been Course Manager at Tandridge Golf Club in Surrey for the last seven years and takes up his new post after

working to bring Tandridge back to its original Harry Colt design roots.

He said: "My new position fulfils a career goal, and my main aim now is to help the club further enhance a very special golfing environment.

With its history and private feel I couldn't turn down the chance to join this esteemed venue."

A spokesman for the Club said: "We were very impressed with the professionalism of all the Course Managers we

interviewed, however Neil was the clear choice.

"We are sure he will lead the greenkeeping team so that we continue to have an outstanding golf course enjoyed by members and visitors alike."

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES AT WOODSIDE



David Jones has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Woodside Golf Club in Cheshire – after a

chance encounter in the Club's Pro Shop.

Three handicapper David, who previously worked at Vale Royal Abbey Golf Club, turned up at nearby Woodside for a round, and ended up chatting to some of the family who own the course.

He then found out they were on the lookout for an Assistant Course Manager so he sent in an application. David takes up the story:

"I was keen to make the next step up in my career and make my own mark somewhere. I was chatting to them and thought I'd send in my CV for the Assistant's role, but unbeknown to me the Head Greenkeeper had actually left so they interviewed me for that position.

"I was really pleased when they offered me my first Head Greenkeeper role here and it just goes to show where a conversation can lead you."

The pay and play in Cranage offers a 5900 yard par 69 course, as well as a short par three course and driving range, and employs just two other greenkeepers as well as David.

He added: "I've been so busy I haven't had a lunch break all my first week! There's a lot to do, mainly presentation issues, and the par three course has been neglected so that needs an overhaul.

"There are only three of us, we've obviously got limited kit and a limited budget but I'm determined to really make an impression here."

Everyone at BIGGA wishes David all the best in his new role.

FULL HOUSE AT BIGGA SCOTTISH CONFERENCE



BIGGA's Scottish Regional Administrator John Young reports from a packed Scottish Regional Conference

Was it good planning or good luck? Neither, it was the quality of the speakers that drew a fantastic 210 delegates to the Scottish Conference on 5 March at the Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline.

Iain MacLeod, Conference Chair, welcomed delegates by promising an excellent array of speakers and providing details of the format for the day. He then introduced the first speaker, Ronnie Malcolm, who presented 'The Role of the Modern Head Greenkeeper', concentrating on the methods of management available to course managers and head greenkeepers to cope with current work pressures.

Grant Frogley from The Roxburgh Hotel and Golf Club then told his story 'Taking the Next Step', the journey he has taken over the last 12 months from being in a Deputy's position to that of Course Manager.

Our final speaker of the morning was Chris Haspell, Head Greenkeeper at Castle Stuart Golf Links. The audience were enthralled as they listened to the landslide problems experienced during the 2011 Scottish Open and the fantastic effort of the greenkeepers to get the course

available for play on the final day - then to hear of the great success that was 2012.

After lunch Andy O'Hara, Scottish Regional Chairman, stated his ambition of improving education opportunities for all and to make BIGGA a must join association. He then presented the Harry Diamond Award to the Scottish Student of the Year, Chris Watson.

The afternoon session provided technical presentations for the audience. Firstly Bill Lawlor from the Xact Group hosted a Q&A session on the importance of Health and Safety for greenkeepers.

This was followed by Dr Christian Spring from the STRI presenting an excellent seminar on 'Earthworm Control and Developments in Turfgrass Pesticides'.

Next up was John Bambury, Links Superintendent at Trump International Golf Links in Aberdeenshire. It was a very detailed presentation on the creation of the championship course and his team.

John also provided insight into the workings of the Trump Empire and how he enjoys being part of this organisation. One highlight was when John

explained the requirement to 'strim' 35 acres of rough each fortnight - which drew an audible gasp from the audience.

Andy O'Hara closed proceedings by thanking our speakers and indeed the delegates for making the day extremely successful.

A special thanks was extended to Peter Boyd, former RA for Scotland for interrupting his retirement to provide support throughout the day.

Elsbeth Coutts from Greens Progress said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and I felt that all presentations flowed together very nicely". Gordon Moir, Director of Greenkeeping at St Andrews Links Trust, added:

"I haven't been to all the conferences over the past five years but I thought this was one of the best I've attended.

"There was a great variety of seminars and presentations - something for everyone".

Looking forward to 2014, an exceptional line-up is already being put together for the conference on Tuesday 4 March with Steve Chappell of Gleneagles booked to provide a presentation on the run up to the 2014 Ryder Cup. I look forward to seeing you there.



SOUTH EAST GOLF DAY

Play unfortunately had to be abandoned due to incessant rain on the Old Course at Walton Heath – but the terrible weather did not dampen spirits at the South East Golf Day.

Despite the great efforts and hard work by Alan Strachan and his team to prepare the Old Course, heavy overnight rain followed by more rain during the day forced members and guests off the course. They took refuge from the elements and enjoyed the refreshments kindly provided by Johnny Beck and James Watson of Sherriff Amenity at the 11th hole.

Competitors were able to enjoy the warm hospitality of the Clubhouse before over a hundred sat down to an early meal in the Holderness Dining Room. Chairman Tom Smith introduced BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton who thanked the Club for, as always, making us so welcome on the day before proposing the toast to Walton Heath Golf Club and their guests. This was followed by Captain Michael Vaines who welcomed everyone to the club.

This year's guest speaker John Paramor, Chief Referee of the European Tour then entertained us with some fascinating and humorous stories experienced during his duties around the world.

The South East Region of BIGGA is most grateful to the following companies for their very generous sponsorship and help with this event: Avoncrop Amenity Products, Blade Amenity, BSM Golf, CMW, Ernest Doe Power, Everris, Golf Mats UK, Grass Roots/Dryject UK, JSM, P Tuckwell Ltd, Rigby Taylor, Sherriff Amenity and Speedcut Contractors Ltd.

Clive Osgood

BTME TO BE EVEN BIGGA FOR 2014

Following the success of last year's show BIGGA are gearing up for a huge BTME 2014, as it returns to a four hall exhibition with the world's major machinery manufacturers preparing to head to Harrogate.

The Harrogate International Centre is sure to be bustling next January with the likes of John Deere, Toro and Ransomes Jacobsen joining Kubota, RECO and New Holland at BTME 2014.

Many of last year's happy exhibitors are also returning with many increasing their stand space. After a surge of early bookings over 85% of stands are already reserved with eager companies determined to showcase their latest products. BIGGA are pleased to welcome a whole host of returning exhibitors including Baroness Mowers, Campey Turf Care Systems, Syngenta, Everris plus dozens more.

Jim Croxton, CEO of BIGGA, said: "We're delighted that the exhibition will once again feature four halls. This will allow us to both increase the number of exhibitors and attract even more visitors from all corners of the turf management industry.

"I'm particularly encouraged by the number of exhibitors who have already rebooked after last year's show. Many have also increased their stand space which is a reflection of how they see BTME as the place to meet potential customers and do business."

Discussing the success of BTME 2013,

Croxton continued: "This will be BTME's 25th year and it's becoming increasingly popular. The feedback we've received from exhibitors, buyers and guests has been extremely positive and we anticipate that returning to four halls next year will extend its appeal even further. It's a very exciting time for everybody involved."

Europe's leading turf care exhibition – which next year begins on Tuesday 21 January at the Harrogate International Centre – showcases market leaders from all sectors of the turf industry, including artificial grass, course furniture, drainage, fertilisers and top of the range machinery, to name just a few of the highlights.

BTME 2014 will also boast a terrific educational programme, with the extremely popular Turf Managers' Conference again returning to the week when the industry converges on Harrogate. There will also be more workshops and seminars through the superb 'Continue to Learn' programme with a terrific range of knowledgeable and passionate presenters – keep an eye out for the confirmed speakers over the coming months.

BIGGA is urging anyone looking to reserve a stand to call now to avoid disappointment. There is still limited space remaining and places are being taken quickly. For your opportunity to exhibit at next year's BTME, contact Jill Rodham or Matt Wignall on 01347 833812 or 01347 833 832.