

The BIGGA delegates pictured alongside Matt Shaffer (fourth from left), the former superintendent at Merion



The 2023 BIGGA Delegation:

- / Alex Brougham, assistant course manager, Trentham
- / James Bruder, head greenkeeper (Old Course), Walton Heath
- / Michael Budd, course manager, Shirley Park
- / Scott Corrigan, course manager, R&A Lethamhill
- / David Edmondson, head greenkeeper, Prestwick
- / Andrew Kerr MG, course manager, Surbiton
- / Steven Thomas, head groundsman, Hibernian FC
- / Brian Toall, course manager, Baberton
- / Jeremy Ward, head greenkeeper, Renishaw Park
- / Bradley White, senior greenkeeper (West Course), Wentworth Club

This opportunity is made possible by BIGGA's Premium Partner, Bernhard and Company



BERNHARD

The BIGGA Delegation 2023

These BIGGA members sampled the best of America turf management, courtesy of Bernhard and Company

The BIGGA Delegation to the GCSAA's Conference and Trade Show is renowned as one of the most inspirational initiatives in the BIGGA calendar.

Every year 10 BIGGA members are flown to the United States courtesy of BIGGA Premium Partner Bernhard and Company, where they not only gain access to the world's largest golf course maintenance exhibition, but they also participate in exclusive education opportunities and field trips to some of



The delegates were invited to play at Lake Nona

golf's most famous courses.

In February the delegates were flown to Orlando, Florida, where this year's trade show was taking place. In addition to taking time on the BIGGA stand to represent the association, the delegates also took in visits to Bay Hill, home of the Arnold Palmer Classic, and Lake Nona.

The delegates also enjoyed an exclusive chat with Matt Shaffer, the former superintendent at Merion who oversaw the hosting of the US Open, among other elite championships.

Over the following pages we caught up with the delegates following their trip to discover more about their experiences. You can read each story in greater detail on the BIGGA website.

Our thanks go to Bernhard and Company for providing this incredible learning opportunities for BIGGA members. Applications for the 2024 delegation will open later this year.

What was your favourite moment from the entire trip?

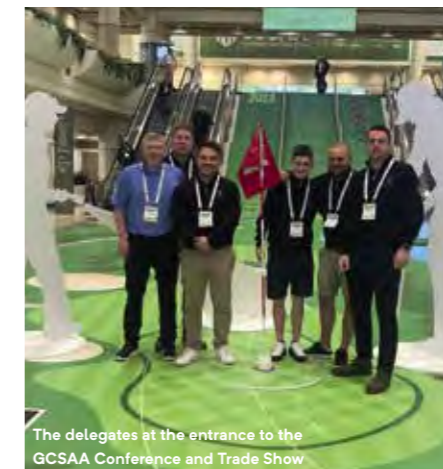
David Edmondson: I enjoyed every part of the delegation, from meeting the guys in Harrogate, to meeting up to travel at Gatwick airport. It was great to hit it off from the very first moment we were introduced and this continued throughout the entire trip.

The education aspect of the Conference and Trade Show was very enjoyable and I took a lot from it. The site visits were top notch and it was brilliant to visit Bay Hill three weeks out from the Arnold Palmer Classic and see the course in top condition. It was also excellent to listen to the staff of the club and the USGA agronomist with regards their work scheduling and preparation for the event.

I particularly enjoyed the VIP session with Matt Shaffer. It was so inspiring and it was great to listen to Matt's experiences that he had gained throughout his wonderful career. I, like the other delegates, walked out of this meeting feeling extremely motivated as to what can be achieved with hard work, dedication and passion. It was amazing and a moment I will never forget.

Michael Budd: We have all had a discussion and honestly can't pinpoint one standout moment. Trip to Bay Hill? That was great, but then what about the education seminars? What about hearing Matt Shaffer and hearing his story? What about playing golf at Lake Nona? A great day was always followed by another great day and so this is impossible to answer.

The trip has been one of the highest points of my career and offered me so much that when I returned to my team, I explained that in an eight-hour day I couldn't possibly pass on all we had experienced and learned.



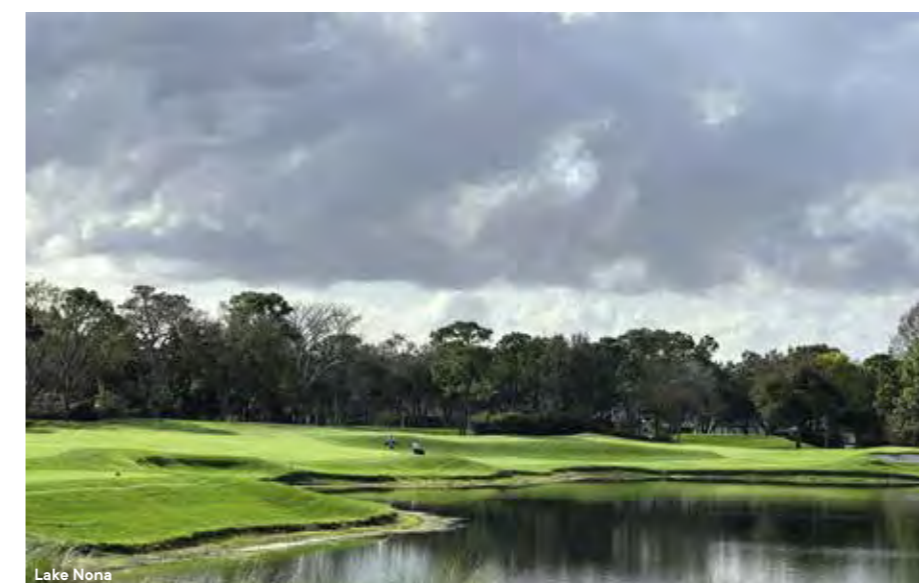
The delegates at the entrance to the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show

What did you learn from your fellow UK BIGGA members that you didn't know before?

Brian Toall: I learnt that no matter what position or role you hold within your club and whatever budget or size of course we worked on, we all had the same passion, love and goals. These goals were to be and do the best we can and help push on and create fantastic golf courses.

Brad White: Chatting to the rest of the guys was brilliant on a day-to-day basis as they are all in more senior positions than me, so to get knowledge about management and how they look after their course is something I'll keep with me.

Alex Brougham: One thing I loved about the trip was how quickly we bonded as a team. Everyone was very open, honest and non-judgemental, which meant we could confidently share ideas and discuss our personal highs and lows and learn from each other's experiences. Some hot topics that we discussed were machinery and tree management. I particularly enjoyed discussing tournament support and how best to apply as I would like to volunteer for more tournaments in future.



Lake Nona



Congratulations to the following members who achieved CPD Approved status this month:

- / Adrian Adascalitei, Roehampton
- / Peter Allam, Verulam
- / Alan Boyd, Bothwell Castle
- / Tom Bromfield, Trentham
- / Alan FitzGerald CGCS MG, LedgeRock
- / Taylar Foley, Frilford Heath
- / Scott Gardner, Heswall
- / Les Howkins MG, The Richmond
- / Richard Johnstone MG, Nairn Dunbar
- / Matt Kitson, Royal Mid-Surrey
- / David Langheim MG, Woking Football Club
- / Matthew Milligan, Ridding Park
- / Chris Naughton, Bothwell Castle
- / Ryan Oliver, Hornsea
- / Johnathan Peacock, Luffenham Heath
- / Craig Potts, Ingestre Park
- / Andrew Ritchie, St Andrews Links Trust
- / Luke Scuri, Thetford
- / Christopher Sharp, Wycombe Heights
- / Peter Smith, Stirling
- / Michael Sparke, Kings Hill
- / Ian Wade, (The) Rolls of Monmouth
- / Patrick West, Sweetwoods Park
- / Marc Wilcock, Conwy
- / Kimberley Yeldham, Flempton

Congratulations to the following members who achieved their CPD Milestone this month:

- / John Anderson, Prestwick
- / Allan Black, Royal Jersey
- / Graham Burnett, Nairn Dunbar
- / Craig Mackay, Royal Dornoch
- / Ryan Oliver, Hornsea
- / Richard Ponsford, Clevedon
- / Steven Thomas, Prestonfield
- / Patrick West, Sweetwoods Park

Keep your CPD record up to date:
www.bigga.org.uk/member-homepage/continuing-professional-development.html

The delegates had the opportunity to wander the halls of the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show



Participation in the education programme was part of the delegation

What did you learn from the American aspect of the trip?

James Bruder: I'm really encouraged by the way American golf courses like to train and promote within the agronomy department. They have very large teams in comparison to the UK, but they really invest a lot of time and money into training members of the team to take on that next role.

Andrew Kerr MG: The American way of greenkeeping is very technically oriented and everything is bigger. When I say bigger, I mean huge! The conference, the courses and even the irrigation systems are many times larger. We have smaller, intricate golf courses and the Americans go for big statements, which are impressive to see. However, it does go to show that even with smaller budgets, we can create excellent golf courses.

Brian Toall: America and the UK are both leaders in many things and golf courses are no exception. I learned that the UK is miles ahead of our American counterparts in that we grow grass in a

“ At 42 years old this trip gave me the injection and kick I needed to continue producing the course conditions that I'm known for.

more sustainable fashion, with low inputs and fewer chemicals. The Americans are stripping and growing, throwing tonnes of seed, fertiliser and chemicals to make their courses. As the world changes and chemicals continue to get banned globally, the Americans will have to adapt to our style and they are aware of this.

How will the trip change how you work going forwards?

Michael Budd: Improvements to my maintenance facility are already underway. I will be doing some other tweaks to improve my team's workplace, so they remain happy and we retain staff.

The use of growth regulators is something they are big on in America. It makes sense that for my site, with a small team and a busy course, that we push this more. Coverage should improve after feeding and using growth regulators and this will hopefully improve our surfaces.

Brian Toall: At 42 years old, having been in management from the age of 20, this trip gave me the injection and kick I needed to continue producing the course conditions that I'm known for.

Brad White: It gave me a good opportunity to see where I want to go and what I want to do in the industry. Learning off everyone on the trip was really helpful for my career.

Alex Brougham: I think the education



Andrew, Alex and Michael with a representative of Lake Nona



Michael Budd tees off

was exceptional and the information gained will help my knowledge of things, such as disease management and understanding golf course architecture.

The trip also opens your eyes to the other styles of management practices that could be used and adapted to suit your own site or staff needs.

James Bruder: I would like to take a stronger stance on in-house training and promoting from within.

This was a fantastic opportunity that you can't get in a lot of other industries, so I will pass it down through the team and outside the industry to encourage the next generation of greenkeepers.

Andrew Kerr MG: If I had the budget, I'd make a lot more changes! I have started to think about taking half a day each week to concentrate on the finer details on the course, just to take the presentation that little bit further. I'll also do more team building exercises to boost morale and I'll use my new group of colleagues for support.

Jeremy Ward: The trip has allowed me into a circle of fellow greenkeepers who have ideas, experiences and potential answers to situations I may face in the future. Will it change the way I work? Maybe not, but it has allowed me to see



Brad White, Scott Corrigan and David Edmondson chatting to Bernhard and Company's Angelique Crosnier

how the other side lives in terms of budgets, staff, climate and available machinery. Maybe one day I might have a slightly bigger budget to work with — here's hoping.

David Edmondson: I took part in an extremely interesting seminar on work-life balance while in Orlando and took an awful lot from it. Being someone who is turf management and

greenkeeping mad, I realise that I had to spend more time with my wife and family, something that I had been working on since moving back to the UK.

Life is short and it's important that guys in the industry share their time, not just with their golf course but also with friends and family.

It's all about finding the correct balance at the end of the day.

The leading fine-leaf perennial ryegrass range just got better!

Ultrafine

Fine-turf that demands close-mowing, weather resistance and high wear tolerance.

BARENBRUG

Ultrafine Ryegrass reinforcement for fine turf.

#notallgrassesareequal

www.barenbrug.co.uk/ultrafine