A privilege under threat?

One issue which the Association will need to address this year is the use of membership cards for seeking courtesy of the golf course. This is a privilege extended only to full greenkeeper members who are reminded on the reverse of their membership cards of the etiquette involved. These cards are most certainly not a passport to free golf and they need to be used both sensitively and conservatively. The majority of BIGGA's greenkeeper members respect the privilege of obtaining courtesy of the golf course and benefit greatly from the opportunity not only to play golf but to experience other golf courses in many varied conditions, thereby enhancing their knowledge and expertise. Long may this continue but some notes of caution need to be struck.

Whilst we are talking of a small minority, there is increasing evidence of misuse of cards not only by greenkeepers seeking to use cards over frequently and for purely social purposes but by members in categories of membership other than full greenkeeper, who, quite simply, are not entitled to seek courtesy of the golf course.

It is essential that members becoming aware of card misuse report such instances to Headquarters in order that appropriate action be taken. Turning a blind eye will achieve nothing other than I suspect an increasing reluctance by golf clubs to grant courtesy. During the course of BIGGA's review this year we shall be looking to tighten our procedures still further to protect this privilege and ensure the continued cooperation of the many golf clubs across the country who welcome our members onto their golf courses.

Appeal for books

The news of an R & A grant of £10,000 to establish an Association library is a major coup. The aim of this library will be to provide and maintain a comprehensive collection of both hard copy and electronic material of interest to members of the Association and the wider turfgrass industry.

It is essential that we achieve our objective by forming an Association library that is going to be an authentic library and is not going to be purely a collection of second-hand material. Unfortunately, the professional staff who will undertake the acquisition of books have no warehouse facilities to store the books and will require the assistance of members to store the books at their own premises. It is essential that members do not donate books that are not rich in its literature particularly parts rich in dust and see if they can discover some long lost literary masterpieces which might be better located at BIGGA Headquarters.

The R & A grant will provide a substantial amount of money which will enable us to move forward with the Association library. However, it needs the support of all members who are reminded that the Association library will only be a success if there are concerted moves within the membership to support it.

Your views wanted

In the February issue of 'Greenkeeper International', I wrote of your Board of Management's decision to implement a review and prepare a five year plan. Regions and Sections were invited to contribute to this process and it is envisaged that the views of members at section level will continue to be bemoaned the lack of a vital resource in disseminating information and enhancing the learning process. So whilst an authentic library is not going to appear overnight, I would urge the readers to blow away the attic dust and see if they can discover some long lost literary masterpieces which might be better located at BIGGA Headquarters.

Book donations, loans or sales will all be welcomed and this library will only be a success if there are concerted moves within the membership to support it. Let's hear from you. In thanking you for your Board of Management's decision to implement a review and prepare a five year plan. Regions and Sections were invited to comment on the structure and workings of the Association in its entirety. I could not agree more. Indeed this was never the intention in implementing the review. Of necessity much of the work required to be undertaken by your duly appointed professional staff who will report in the first instance to the Board of Management. There will then be circulation of an initial draft to Regions and Sections in the early summer for comments to be forwarded by the beginning of September. It is during the autumn that the final plan will be drawn up for approval by the Board of Management and ratified at the 1995 Annual General Meeting. However, as of now and throughout the process, any member either independently or through the Headquarters office can put forward a view. Views can be submitted either individually, by sections or by regions. You may wish to see a change in procedure or policy at section, region or national level. If so, please let us know. If you have a concern communicate it to Headquarters. Members should not see this as an intimidating oronerous task – it was never meant to be and the administrative details will fall on your Headquarters office.

This exercise should not be viewed as an attempt to restructure the Association. We would not be the growing and successful organisation we are today if our structure and policies were fundamentally unsound. Essentially we are seeing where the existing structure and policies can be improved and strengthened. Viewed in this context I hope that many members will feel able to make a contribution to the present exercise.

With regret...

In this issue you will read of the passing of John Shildrick. I first had the privilege of meeting John when the Association commenced its activities at the Sports Turf Research Institute in 1987. Shortly after in 1988, John retired from the STRI and became Chief Executive of the National Turfgrass Council. In that capacity he continued to work closely with BIGGA. Like many others I had a tremendous respect for John – his knowledge, his grasp of detail and his willingness to wish to see the industry develop and prosper. At all times, often under acute pressure, he remained friendly, approachable, compellingly industrious and willing to offer advice and guidance. Within the Association as elsewhere in the industry, he will be sadly missed.