On April 21 I attended the AFA Conference and Luncheon at the Savoy Hotel, London. I arrived in Paddington at 9.35 am and took a taxi to the Savoy. Once in the cab I made my first mistake by telling the driver I had to be there by 10 am, leaving him just 12 minutes. Now, I have been on the big dipper at Blackpool and the "Back to the Future" ride in Hollywood, but nothing prepared me for this. We squeezed through gaps you wouldn't believe, missing bodies, buses, lamp posts and cars by a coat of paint, all at a speed I dare not check. So when we reached Arch and traffic was at a stand still, I sighed with relief, but not for long. The smallest gap appeared and we were through, going in and out of lanes like a scud missile, finally screaming to a halt outside the hotel on time.

As I went inside I must have looked a little white because I was immediately given a drink which went down without touching the sides, and my recovery was under way. The conference speakers were very good and the luncheon excellent. I was, however, a bit confused by Elliot Morley MP's after dinner speech, but then that's nothing new as MPs and I often seem to be on a different wavelength. At the end of the day I hailed a taxi back to Paddington but this time made sure to think of all you lucky greenkeepers out there worrying about the weather and the course, but in my experience all types of weather has some value, even cold and wet which must be worst of all, does anything to cut grass and cut out play down and allow a little time for recovery. Take the wet spring we have just had, it will have helped links courses particularly the fairways just so long as we have done enough aeration when it was dry. That's the story of greenkeeping, doing what we can when we can. Never put a job off when the weather is right for tomorrow it may change.

I am pleased to see that our new HQ building is coming along well, and the contractors are confident of finishing on time. Don't forget the draw for the "Buy a Brick" Fund started at the BTME will be made on June 2 so if you haven't got your tickets yet give your Section Secretary or Regional Administrator a call and get them now. The fund is doing well but could be better with a little effort. Your Board members have put a lot of work into it and deserve your support, so come on one last push!

It's competition time again with Toro's Greenkeeping Excellence Award and Student of the Year competitions, along with the Amazone Rhône-Poulenc sponsored Environment Competition. There will be a lot of greenkeepers and golf clubs trying to impress over the next few months. The judges again will have a tough job on their hands with more nominations and entries than ever. I am sure they will make the right judgments. I can only wish everyone the very best of luck and thank our sponsors for their continued support in running these events. They give the motivated greenkeepers and golf clubs a great incentive.

Gordon Child