A year after becoming a Head Greenkeeper, Clive Osgood prepared courses for a Ryder Cup match which featured the best Ryder Cup team ever to compete for the famous trophy. But BIGGA’s new National Chairman says that he didn’t probe Past Chairmen too deeply about the role as it probably would have frightened him. He laughed as he said it but you can be sure that for him the responsibility of leading the Association for the next 12 months is a challenge that compares to 1981 when he ensured that Walton Heath was at its best for the historic Ryder Cup match. Of course he’s jesting when he says that he didn’t look into the workload that a modern BIGGA Chairman can expect, Clive Osgood is a thoroughly professional man who doesn’t approach important matters lightly.

Knowing the commitment that is required, he gave the matter serious thought before accepting the role. He is the first to admit that he is a home-loving family man and wouldn’t have taken it on unless there was the support of his family. “The club has also been very supportive and they look upon it as a great honour for Walton Heath as well as for me.”

“I’ve certainly gone into the Chairmanship with my eyes open and I’m now looking forward to getting out and meeting people. I know I shall gain a great deal from the experience and so will Walton Heath Golf Club as I shall be looking for ideas as I go round having the pleasure of meeting fellow greenkeepers.”

Walton Heath boasts a large greenkeeping staff to maintain the two magnificent courses currently running at 17 including a mechanic and a gardener. “We have absolute confidence in the team and in my able Deputy, Mick Haynes, that they will work well during the periods that I’m away from the golf course on BIGGA duties.”

As he settles into the role he has firm ideas of how he would like the Association to progress over the next 12 months. “I’d like to think that the membership will continue to rise. I believe there is still scope for that to happen and it is good to see that the numbers have organised into a more orderly fashion.” So you can already see that Clive Osgood is a man of firm ideas with a quiet determination to move the Association forward and it is just those qualities which has seen him ensure that Walton Heath Golf Club has maintained its place as one of the country’s foremost golf clubs over the last 20 years. A local man born and brought up in Walton-on-the-Hill – he’s lived there all his life apart from a two year spell in Bexhill – who says it with pride and quality which has seen him ensure that Walton Heath Golf Club has maintained its place as one of the country’s foremost golf clubs over the last 20 years.

The new BIGGA Chairman Clive Osgood begins his year in office with some strong views on how the Association should proceed in the future, as Scott MacCallum found out...

Passing the baton

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The highlight for the greenkeeping...
staff came when Lee Trevino popped into the sheds and had a chat with the guys.

"It was early in the morning and he came in looking for an axe because the clubhouse was closed and he wanted to get in to change his shoes so he could go and hit a few practice balls. It made everyone's day when he came over," recalled Clive.

Since then Walton Heath has hosted several European Opens and many top amateur and ladies events and Clive admits to enjoying the buzz of preparing for tournaments although they have caused headaches.

"In the old days entry was free and there was no problem but the course is on common land so in more recent tournaments when entry fees were charged this meant extra work. An Act of Parliament allowed us to enclose the course for one week in the year but we had to erect fencing with the help of the local Artisan Section just before the start and then bring it down as soon as the tournament was finished. We had four and a half miles of chestnut fencing at one time but the arrival of the M25 cut access on one side so it made it a bit easier for us." 

Clive is proud of the course for which he has had custodianship over the last 20 years.

"I'd like to think we have kept it as a true heathland and that has involved a constant effort to keep the trees and scrub at bay. Surrey is the most heavily wooded county would you believe, and if you stand in the middle of the course you are surrounded by trees but for our little patch and we want it to remain as it is, a heathland habitat with a feeling of openness.

"Heathland is just a semi permanent state and there will always be encroachment. At the moment we are in the middle of a big project dealing quite an acreage," he revealed.

While much effort goes into retaining the heathland qualities of the golf course a great deal of change, and for the better, has taken place in the maintenance facilities.

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