Thornness would seem to be an awful long way out on the Suffolk coast but it didn’t deter a large number of South East Region members from attending their annual Seminar there. This was another place that I have visited for the first time this year and another one pencilied into the memory box to return to, on a holiday next time. The Seminar was excellent, all the speakers were so interesting, talking about the ‘Future of Greenkeeping’. Mind you it was sometimes a bit scary when you get a glimpse of what lies ahead and when I see the enormous advances made in recent years I sometimes think I’m glad I’m coming to the end of my career. Thank you to the South East Region - their Chairman, Ray Day, and RA, Derek Farrington, and especially to Ian Willett who seemed to be everywhere making sure all was well, he even appeared next morning to advise me on the road conditions. Thank you all, I thoroughly enjoyed my time.

The two main questions I have been asked are “What was the highlight?” The answers are of course I have, and there are no highlights as such, just a lot of involvement with greenkeeping associa-
tions, new friends, and education, qualities of Ronnie’s which many young greenkeepers should aspire to.

Well this will be the last column that I will write as your Chairman before handing over to Clive at the AGM at BTME. The two main issues I have been asked are “What year was enjoyed your year?” and “What has been the highlight?” The answers are of course I have, and there have been no highlights as such, just a lot of educational and interesting and rewarding experiences. Attending the Education Conference and the FELOG Conference and communicating on greenkeeping matters with so many different nationalities, including delegates from Russia, Europe, and a number of other countries. 

Unfortunately because I had to go to Germany I was unable to attend the Presentation of the Environment Awards held this year at the winning club the Dyke GC. My congratulations to David Ansell and his team and congratulations also to the runners-up, although you did not win you must be pretty good to get this far. My thanks also to Clive for standing in for me.

I must offer a word to an old friend at this point after having won through to the final of the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping and the Environment Competition and just missing out both times. Ronnie Bunting, from Kilmaurs, must have been a bit gutted, but he has now been one of the first to achieve the Committee of Green Recognition. Well done Ronnie. You deserve it and knowing your determination I know you will be back. Ronnie was my first assistant many years ago and I was amused one day on approaching the workshop to hear Ronnie talking to a piece of machinery which we were having a problem with. As he wrestled with a seized part, his words were “You’ll go.” By jingo you’ll go! “You little b youH go.” by this time his voice was getting louder. However, another two threats not to be repeated here and an exultant “I told you you would go”. A determination never to be beaten and a passion for nature, learning and education, qualities of Ronnie’s which many young greenkeepers should aspire to.

We have a life by what we give. We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give. Usually when people have worked so hard over a considerable period of time receive their Master Greenkeeper Award. Taking an ear bashing at a Section or Region event from a member not happy about something.

When I look back at all these experiences I think to myself I know 10 years ago greenkeeping never had these opportunities. As I have travelled round the country I have spoken with many guys, who give up some of their free time to run Sections and Regions. They are doing it for their own good but for the better good of greenkeeping. An old friend of mine used to say that if every member of an association spent only two years on their local committee there would never be a shortage of committee members. One thing I have learnt in my many years involvement with greenkeeping associations has been that I could never change anything from the outside.

I would like to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to serve you as Chairman and I thank everyone who welcomed me and looked after me at all the events I attended this year. To all the staff at Headquarters, the Regional Administrators for their assistance and their hard work in running our Association and to my Vice Chairman, Clive, and the Board of Management and Trustees for their diligence and support throughout the year my thanks to all you.

I must also thank my club, Tulliallan, the Captain and Council for their tremendous support during this year and my staff, Kenny, Mark, David, Stuart and William who have done an excellent job on the course all year. Thanks lads.

And finally to my family, Gary, who is not a greenkeeper and so he does not talk about it, which is a good thing at times, Craig, who is a greenkeeper, and who is not slow to let me know when he thinks I’ve said or written something wrong, and that is a good thing at times and, of course, Edna for her support and encouragement as well as her practical work in many ways over many years. Thank you all.

My final thought is;