Taking the time to reflect...

I sit in front of this computer composing my regular Editorial just five days after the horrific events in the United States and it is fair to say that my mind, as well as those of my colleagues in BIGGA, is still reeling from the horror, the stories which have emanated from the States of personal and collective tragedy, have touched me, and many others, in much the same way as if we had. What has happened will impact on many aspects of our lives from now on whether it be travel and the restrictions we will face every time we leave these shores to the possible recession such a strike on the world's principal financial centre could accelerate. But in our world of golf one of the immediate casualties has been this year's Ryder Cup which has just been postponed for 12 months. I'm sure you will join me in sending our best wishes to Dave Sammels and his team at The De Vere Belfry who have just seen all their work, aimed at three days in September 2001, knocked on the head. Such a crushing let down, even if it is seen in the entire scheme of such a disaster, must be extremely difficult to take and motivation over the next few months will undoubtedly be hard to come by.

I recall talking to Dave a couple of months ago and him telling me that every eventuality had been considered and contingency plans put in place. It would have required a crystal ball of considerable sophistication to cope with these developments.

One can only imagine the thoughts of everyone involved as they dismantle the grandstands and the tented village knowing that the job of erecting it all will go a long way to making up the rest of the money they donate to the Education and Development Fund.

The Stakeholder Pension Scheme

John Pemberton, BIGGA's Administration and Finance Manager gives some important information about company pensions.

As you may be aware most employers with five or more employees must, by law, offer a Stakeholder Pension arrangement to their staff. Each employer must choose whether or not to join the scheme. BIGGA has a solution that could be of assistance to you and your club. Stakeholder Pension schemes have been introduced by the Government to encourage employers to provide financially for their own retirement through a low cost savings scheme.

A Stakeholder Pension is a savings fund that belongs to the individual. The Government encourages savings into the fund by paying tax incentives. A gross contribution of £100 actually costs £78 after tax relief at standard rate. Anyone below normal pension age, working or not, can invest up to £3,600 gross each year. The contributions can be invested in a range of different funds to suit the savers requirements. Contributions can be as little as £20 per month. On retirement the fund is used to provide an income for life. There is usually also an opportunity to take part of the fund as a tax free cash sum.

The advantage of the Stakeholder pension over other plans is that there is no initial charge. The annual charge is limited to a maximum of 1% per year and there are no other charges. There are no penalties for stopping or changing contributions and there is also no penalty for switching the pension fund to another provider.

To fulfil the legal requirements an employer must offer a scheme but does not have to make a contribution, although many employers may choose to do so. The main duty of the employer is to deduct contributions from wages and pay the pension provider the premium within fixed time limits.

BIGGA have enlisted the help of an Independent Financial Adviser, Walsh Lucas and Co of York, and chosen Standard Life as a preferred provider. Standard Life is one of the world's leading mutual financial services companies whose mutual status is a key to their success. Walsh Lucas and Co has been known to BIGGA for several years and has the expertise to provide the additional financial advice that will be required by many Clubs and members.

Arrangements have been made that any member of BIGGA or employee of a Club joining the scheme can have free independent financial advice over the telephone. Anyone wishing to join the scheme can also do so by telephone.

Further details are available from Geoff Steel of Walsh Lucas and Co, 33 Micklegate, York YO1 6WE. Tel: 01904 610495

Andrew and Ian receive special medals

Andrew Wood and Ian Smith have each been awarded a special medal by the City & Guilds in recognition of the high standard of work they have achieved during their studies. These awards only go to one in every 3,000 people.

Andrew is studying NVQ Level 3 Sports Turf Maintenance at Plumpton College while Ian, who is now at Menhmore Golf and Country Club, is studying for his National Certificate in Greenkeeping at Oaklands College.

Pictured are: Andrew, centre, and Ian, right, with Ian Merrick, City & Guilds Team Leader at Oakland College.
The Northern Ireland Section had a very successful day at Royal Portrush at the end of August at which Andrew Wray, from Castle Rock GC, and Noel Crawford, Royal County Down, each won a place in the BIGGA National Championship field following fine performances over Portrush’s Valley course.

Cyril Johnston and Co donated a fine Golf Trophy to Section, which will go to the best golfer from the competitors played this year. Sam Thompson from the sales team presented the trophy to Chairman Jonathan McCabe.

**Bunker Competition winner presented with Hayter prize**

Mark Garrod, winner of the Great BIGGA Bunker Competition held during this year’s Open Championship at Royal Lytham and St Annes was presented with his prize by Kim Macfie. Sales and Marketing Director of Hayter Ltd at Brocket Hall.

Mark, who in addition to being the Golf Correspondent for the Press Association is the Secretary of the Association of Golf Writers, came closest in his estimate of how many balls would find sand during the four days of the Championship. A grand total of 1383 balls found one of the 197 Lytham bunkers and Mark’s accurate estimate earned him a superb Hayter Harrier lawn mower donated for the seventh successive year by Kim Macfie.

Many thanks to Hayter for their wonderful support of a competition which always attracts a lot of attention in the Open Championship Media Centre and to John Wells and Brocket Hall for providing the venue for the presentation and for kindly giving a tee time on the Melbourne Course so Kim, Mark and your Editor could show off their skills.

**Surf to Turf relaunch from Avoncrop Amenity**

Avoncrop Amenity Products has re-launched its range of seaweed products Surf to Turf.

The new improved range will offer turf managers a wider choice of liquids and a new and enhanced Soil Improver. Both Avoncrop Amenity and Aitken's will jointly market the New Surf to Turf range, giving nationwide availability.

The New range consists of one granular Composted Seaweed Soil Improver with 7% Potassium and five Seaweed Liquids, Triple Seaweed containing 27% seaweed extract. Seaweed plus 6% chelated Iron; Seaweed with 20% Nitrogen, Seaweed plus 12-0-7 + 1% chelated Iron and finally Seaweed plus 2-0-15 + 0.5% chelated Iron. This liquid range offers the turf manager analysis to compliment almost all nutritional programmes for use throughout the seasons. They will encourage deep-rooted healthy turf as well as stimulating beneficial organisms.

The Soil Improver is a powerful fermented seaweed rich in trace elements, carbohydrates and plant growth stimulant, providing sustained nutrition for plants and beneficial microorganisms. Soil Improver also releases alginate gel once moist, which helps tillth and crumb structure in all soil types, aiding aeration, moisture and nutrient retention. The added potassium helps to produce tougher harder wearing turf.

For further details contact Chris Briggs, Avoncrop Amenity Products Ltd on 01934 820868.

The Scotts Company has appointed Matt Reed as its new Managing Director of Scotts Professional Business Group UK and Ireland. This follows the departure of Bernie Ford, Managing Director of UK & Ireland Professional Business Groups, who has left the Scotts Company and returned to the USA.

Matt, who takes up his position from immediate effect, has been responsible for business development and legal activities that across the international division of Scotts and has previously helped senior financial roles within both the UK and the international management teams. He has worked for Scotts since 1997 when Miracle Garden Care was acquired and has been heavily involved in building Scotts’ international business through a series of acquisitions and strategic supply agreements over the last five years.

He will be based at Scotts Headquarters at Bramford near Ipswich.

**Parkstone GC launch website**

Parkstone Golf Club has launched its own website and members are invited to take a look on www.parkstonelgc.com.

**The Missing Link**

The final paragraph of Daniel Binns’ article in on Soil Analysis in last month’s magazine should have read:

There are now a plethora of greenkeeping products available on the market and we are constantly bombarded with information on the latest developments that will make all the difference to our turf. In terms of nutrition, try not to be blinded by science; instead keep it as simple as possible. The most important factors in maintaining healthy, disease tolerant turf are the physical maintenance of the rootzone and sensible nitrogen fertiliser applications.

Apologies for any confusion that may have arisen.
Tribute to former Turnberry Head Greenkeeper, Jimmy McCubbin

Jimmy McCubbin, who died after a long illness, born without complaint and cared for by his devoted wife, Agnes, on July 29 aged 83, was a great friend of mine.

We first met when he took over the head post at Turnberry in the run up to their 1977 Open. He was responsible for the huge success of that event and in particular for restoring, in a very short time, links which had been neglected and mismanaged.

We had three years to get what was almost total disaster into condition suitable for the world’s most important Championship. This was achieved to the surprise of many pundits, and illustrate how it could be done, in a very short order by following traditional methods and not taking too much notice of the members!

Although Jimmy had served his greenkeeping apprenticeship at Maybole, when he joined Turnberry Hotel in 1935 he started literally at the bottom in the kitchens before becoming Head Gardener, from which post he moved to take on the management of the course. When he retired in 1982 he had 47 years service with the Hotel.

When the R&A gave me the task of getting back Mackenzie Ross’ wonderful links I needed someone with an instinctive feel for traditional greenkeeping and Jimmy came with no baggage! For over two and a half years I walked the course every month with Jimmy and for his dedication to the course, his devoted team, faithfully implementing an agreed policy. The result was a highly successful Open for which Jimmy rightly took his deserved plaudits, showing what could be done in a very short time to restore any course ravaged by the feed and water school.

The 1977 Open was the jewel in Jimmy’s crown!

Jimmy was a quiet man of total integrity, who could and did inspire loyalty in his staff and got the best out of them. He trained many youngsters in the sound basics and many of them have gone on to very senior positions. I am not alone in remembering him with affection and respect but so many of his contemporaries have left the fray. One thing of the old Scots toast ... Here’s tae us. What’s like us? Damn few. An’ they’re all dead!

Jim Arthur