Immediately after finishing this column I go on with the great pleasure of travelling up to Stoke Park to present the club with its Golden Key plaque. As we have said before we are all delighted that Stoke Park has shown the foresight in being the first golf club to contribute so generously to the Education and Development Fund through the Golden Key programme. We do hope that more clubs become involved because, after all, it is the golf clubs which ultimately benefit from all the good work that is carried out as a direct result of the existence of BIGGA'S Education and Development Fund.

I'm also pleased to be making the visit because I haven't been to Stoke Park for many years and I am looking forward to having a good look at the golf course. Talking about presentations, I can't go on without congratulating Walter Woods on becoming the next recipient of the prestigious Old Tom Morris Award, made annually by the GCSAA. We are all very proud of Walter who was the Association's first Chairman in 1987 when he combined the role with his demanding "day job" of maintaining high standards, at the St Andrews Links courses. He has done huge amounts to advance greenkeeping as a career in general as well as given so many young greenkeepers a boost in their own career development.

Past winners of the Award include Arnold Palmer, President Gerald Ford, Bob Hope and Jaime Ortiz-Patino, while the last winner was Tim Finchem, Commissioner of the US Tour. So you can see the exalted company Walter is keeping. It is a great honour for Walter, particularly as it is in the name of a fellow St Andrews man, and a great honour for our Association.

I'd like to thank all the members who took part in the recent R&A funded survey conducted by Mike Williamson. The Board are currently looking at the responses and we shall report back at a later date on the findings. While in Yorkshire for the Board meeting to discuss the report I took the opportunity to call in on Simon Haynes, at Skipton Golf Club. Simon used to work for me and has been made welcome by the locals on his move north.

His golf course was surrounded by sheep but the course was still open. In contrast we've just returned from a short break in the South West - a bit like Tony and Cherie Blair - and there is still a great deal of evidence of the Foot and Mouth outbreak. It seems there are different rules in place for different parts of the country. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish Dave Simmonds and his team at The De Vere Belfry all the very best for the Ryder Cup later this month. Having been in the same position myself in 1981 I know the pressures involved in preparing a course for a Ryder Cup. With the way the Cup has grown over the last 20 years they are even greater now, so I hope that Dave and the team get the weather to show the course off to its best advantage and none of the problems adverse weather can bring.

Salthill is just around the corner and I look forward to seeing many of you in Windsor. You know you are all welcome at the BIGGA stand for a chat, information or just to say hello. Just before I finish I'd just like to say that working on a heathland golf course I particularly enjoy this time of year when the heather is in full bloom and everything is looking very nice. It makes you forget the problems of earlier in the year... or very nearly does at any rate.

Clive Osgood, Chairman