You might be forgiven for thinking that you had been sent a cinema magazine, and not your regular issue of Green's Golf Course International, by mistake.

However, on this occasion "Back to the Future..." does not refer to Michael J. Fox's travels through time in a DeLorean car, but to BIGGA Executive Director, Neil Thomas' article of the same name. Neil looks back at the growth and success of the Association over the last 15 years and then to the future, explaining some of the initiatives which are being put in place to ensure that such progress is not only maintained, but accelerates, over the next few years.

The motivation for the article is to highlight to you, the reader and BIGGA member, that despite the undoubted success of the Association since its formation in 1987, there is no resting on laurels by the Board of Management or the staff in their efforts to improve.

Why now?

Well, following the Mike Williamson survey which many of you took part in last year, there emerged a feeling that now was the ideal time to take stock of what the Association does and how it goes about doing it. In other words the famous old adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" was measured against the not-quite-so-memorable adage "If you don't take time to examine things every so often they might just break".

Next, there followed the flood of letters inspired by Duncan McGalvey's original "Should we lead or be led?" article in the November magazine, which demonstrated that there were many greenkeepers keen to take more control of their own destiny.

It became clear to the Board of Management and the Headquarters staff, therefore, that the time was ripe for the next stage in the development of the Association and the profession. Neil has outlined what will be happening but we want to hear from you, whether it be through the magazine or through direct expression of your views to the Association. Don't worry if what you want to say is not complimentary. We are keen to hear criticism, particularly the constructive variety, because if members have taken the trouble to make their voice heard it proves they care about their Association. The one sort of criticism which is not so welcome is the sort which merely plays on people's fears.

"By doing so, we would avoid losing a great many historic courses (especially the traditional links courses) simply because they are no longer long enough for championship play. "Thankfully," Patino wrote in his annual report on golf in Europe, "the USGA has announced plans to implement new test methods which will better determine whether golf balls conform to the Rules of Golf. It has held extensive discussions with the R&A, which I understand intends to follow the same methods. This is to be welcomed, as long as both organisations agree on a championship ball with reduced performance. Should this be the case, we might be able to dispense with regulations on the spring effect of metal woods. "It is of considerable concern to many prominent figures in the world of golf that some of our great courses are under threat, and that championship golf is becoming a drive and wedge game. It would indeed be a pity if the game were reduced to simply breaking records, and if future generations were to be deprived of such magical moments as Gene Sarazen's remarkable shot at the Masters in 1935, when he made an albatross at the 15th his second shot being played with a 4-wood over the lake that borders the green. Tales of this marvelous shot reverberated around the world, and will be forever recorded in the annals of golfing history. By comparison, Tiger Woods generally plays a 7 or 8-iron for his second shot. "Despite his undoubted genius, to me he is quite simply not playing the same game that Gene and his contemporaries played 50 or more years ago. Mr. Patino points to statistics to substantiate his charges about the impact of technology.

From 1968 to 1995, the players' average drive on the USPGA Tour increased just one foot a year. From 1995 until 2001, the drives increased 7.2 feet each year. "This is due to a combination of increased spring effect since 1995 and the introduction of new golf balls." Mr. Patino is quick to add that he does not advocate any changes for the vast majority of golfers, and that he believes that even the finest courses need to be "refashioned from time to time to keep up with the changing nature of the game. This can be accommodated within the parameters of the game as we know it. But continued increases in the distance a ball can be struck is something different. There has to be a limit. "Tournament golf is the showcase of the game, and that should include strategy and finesse as well as just power. Golfers have the right to watch the great champions of today play the traditional and famous golf courses worldwide that will become obsolete unless we do something to control the distance that the leading players today can achieve with modern technology both in the dubs and balls they play."

The prospect of affordable "golf for all" is being brought closer through a new venture from Open Golf Centres, which has chosen Toro turf equipment to maintain the 15 golf complexes it plans to build.

Open Golf Centres aim is to combine top-notch pay-and-play facilities and friendly service with top tuition at The Monty Golf School, which is supported by seven time European number one Colin Montgomerie.

The venture is the brainchild of Stephen Bridges and Martin Wright, who opened their first complex in Christchurch, Dorset, this year after extensive research they undertook showed an appalling lack of opportunities for UK pay-and-play golfers to enjoy high quality, affordable golf.

The result was Open Golf Centres, where golf is available to everyone with tuition being paramount.

As part of providing its customers with the best, the organisation entered into a five-year exclusive partnership with 'Toro'. A wide range of the company's turf machinery is already used to maintain the two 18-hole courses at Christchurch, including the putting and chipping greens, bunkers and split-level, 60-bay driving range.

And the company expects to spend between £2.5 to £3 million over five-to-seven years putting Toro into all 15 of its complexes.

Monty launches his Golf Schools

Jaime Ortiz Patino:

Limits needed to protect the game of golf

Plea to introduce Tournament Ball

Scott MacCallum

Editor
Steve appointed as new Textron MD

Steve Chicken has been appointed to the position of Managing Director of Textron Golf, Turf and Specialty Products International, with effect from 3rd April 2002.

Announcing the appointment, Dennis Schweiger, Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products said, "I am delighted that Steve will be leading the excellent team based in Ipswich. Together they are charged with developing our International business to be a significant player in the global golf and turf markets."

"In February 2001 Steve accepted an assignment, based in Charlotte, North Carolina, with a promotion to Vice President of Engineering for the Turf business. During his time in the USA he has gained a broad understanding of the Golf and Turf business, and has also earned the enormous respect of the Senior Management Team. He is, in our view, the obvious candidate to lead the International business during a very challenging period."

Steve is a B.Sc graduate in Aeronautical Engineering, from Salford University and a M.Sc. and Ph.D in Aerospace Vehicle Design from Cranfield University.

Following a successful career as a Professional Engineer Officer with the RAF, Steve joined the Ransomes organisation to head up the Engineering function in November 1997. Following the acquisition of Ransomes by Textron in early 1998, Steve was promoted to the position of Engineering Director for Golf, Turf & Specialty Products - International, prior to his assignment in the USA.

Steve will be relocating to Ipswich with immediate effect and will be followed home shortly by his wife Sally and daughters, Caroline and Elizabeth.

Announcement as Peter Bell leaves Textron

Textron has announced that Peter Bell has left the company.

Peter is moving to take up the position of General Manager of Ardex UK Ltd, a manufacturer of industrial adhesives and sealants based in Haverhill, Suffolk.

Steve Chicken, the new Managing Director of Textron, Ipswich on making the announcement commented.

"The business will miss Peter’s leadership qualities and his drive. He has made a major contribution to the business over the years, firstly as Managing Director of the Jacobsen EZGO Textron company in Kettering and then latterly in Ipswich in both Sales Director and Marketing Director roles."

"He will also be missed within the golf and turf industry for his business acumen, commitment to new product development and his support for training and best practice initiatives."

"We wish Peter, his wife, June, and their family every success in the future and thank him sincerely for his contribution over the years."

Second Conference Due for Gleneagles

Jimmy Kidd, Golf Courses and Estate Director at The Gleneagles Hotel has announced that the second Gleneagles Golf Care Conference, sponsored by Textron Golf, Turf & Specialty Products, will take place from November 24-26.

This year’s conference has the support of FEGGA, The Federation of Golf Greenkeepers Association and will focus on a range of operational issues surrounding the management of a successful golf course.

It is aimed at attracting an audience that includes Directors of Golf, Course Managers, Superintendents, Professionals, General Managers and Secretaries/Treasurers.

"The inaugural conference last November surpassed all my expectations. Our aim was to enlighten, entertain and educate and, without fear of contradiction, I can say that we achieved this...and more," said Jimmy.

"We had a diverse range of delegates from all parts of the globe and it provided the ideal forum for them to expand their knowledge and understanding of the golf industry. The speakers, many of whom had travelled from across the world, were first-rate and question time at the end of each session provided the opportunity for a lively debate on the various issues raised," he added.

Glynn Patrick, Sales Director at Textron added, "Through Jimmy’s vision and the efforts of everyone involved, last year’s inaugural conference was an tremendous success and achieved its goal of providing a forum where best practice could be explored to the benefit of all the participants. I’m sure that this year’s event will be equally successful and we are delighted to continue our role as principal sponsors."

New Environment leaflet available

As part of the Briggs & Stratton UK Care programme, the company has launched a leaflet - "Caring for our Environment". This contains important information on the steps local authorities, contractors and other users of outdoor powered equipment need to take if the minimum amount of pollution is to be released into the atmosphere.

"As market leader, we take environmental issues very seriously. Exhaust emissions on our new engines are the lowest they have ever been and noise levels are down to a minimum. If the user of a Briggs & Stratton engine wishes to protect our environment is going to be won, then once the engine has been purchased, it is up to the owner or user to make certain that it is maintained correctly. Our leaflet explains the necessary procedures to follow and would be ideal for distributing to operators," said Bryan Peachey, UK General Manager of Briggs & Stratton UK.

For free copies of “Caring for our Environment” contact Briggs & Stratton on 01708 335616.

Marty Jones leaves Myerscough College

After 20 years service, well known face in the fine turf world, Martyn Jones, has left Myerscough College to pursue other interests within the industry. During this time at the College, Martyn was instrumental in the setting up of the turf programmes at ND, HND and BSc levels; he designed and built the College golf course that demonstrated a wide variety of construction methods, initiated links and developed internships in America, and has gained an international reputation as a speaker and agronomist.

"Martyn has taken early retirement in order to pursue other areas of activity in developing links with the sports turf industry and increasing research opportunities. It is intended that Martyn will retain his links with Myerscough as a visiting lecturer and in other ways," said College Principal Professor Moverley.

"I am sure that I speak on behalf of all his colleagues in thanking Martyn for the contribution that he has made to Myerscough and in wishing him every success and good health in the future," he added.

Email your news, views and letters to scott@bigga.co.uk

Royal Inverdivot GC...
Promotions at Hayter

Hayter have announced a major restructuring of their commercial sales team to take place with immediate effect.

Robin Boyes becomes National Sales Manager-Commercial Products. His responsibilities will be to work closely with, and support the specialist dealers throughout the UK. Reporting to him will be Territory Managers, Mike Lincoln-Smith and Barry Hills. Hamish Macfie becomes National Accounts Manager-Commercial Products and will be responsible for developing national account business. Both Hamish and Robin will report to Kim Macfie, Sales and Marketing Director.

Commenting on the changes Kim Macfie said, "The industry in which we operate is changing dramatically, particularly in the way that local authorities operate. With the increasing use of contractors and the trend towards long term hire agreements, it is essential that we have somebody to work closely with companies providing those services. Hamish's responsibilities will also be to work with other companies operating on a national basis, particularly in golf, which is becoming an increasingly more important part of our business. The changes in respect of the way that we handle national accounts do not mean that our overall distribution policy is changing. We firmly believe that the only way to support our products, whichever type of customer we are dealing with, is through a network of independent dealers. The appointment of Robin will mean that our support for these dealers will be strengthened."

Kim Macfie went on to say, "We have thought very carefully before making these changes and have also used independent consultants in the selection process, to help with our deliberations."

Northern Irish Conference a big success

Barenbrug UK's recent Turf Conference 2002 gave grounds care professionals throughout Northern Ireland the chance to hear industry experts report on the latest developments in turf care and grass breeding. Attended by an invited audience of soccer and rugby groundsmen, golf greenkeepers, landscaping contractors and local authority personnel, the event provided an update on research into seed production and quality control, turf diseases and grass nutrition, together with news of Barenbrug's new cultivars for 2002.

Highlights of the Conference included Jayne Leyland, Barenbrug UK'S Area manager (North), and herself a former greenkeeper, who gave an overview of the company's latest high-ranking varieties for different applications, which answered many questions that delegates raised during the Conference about cultivar selection.

She provided details of Barcampsia tufted hairgrass, a shade and wear tolerant variety that combines well with fescues and perennial ryegrass to form a robust sward, and which is being used at increasing numbers of modern, high-sided stadiums.

Jayne also told delegates about Barkoel crested hairgrass, which shows outstanding tolerance of drought, salt and limestone soils, as well as Barbinze tall fescue that can help pitches prone to waterlogging when sown as an 80% proportion of a mix with perennial ryegrass. New Barenbrug cultivars for 2002 that she described, included Barifera creeping bent for fine turf applications, bred for European conditions; Bargold, the perennial ryegrass whose exceptional fineness of leaf makes it possible to be used for golf greens; and Barlouise, a perennial ryegrass with disease resistance and slow regrowth characteristics suitable for use on low maintenance lawns. Other presentations included papers from David Johnston, in charge of breeding new grass varieties at the Northern Ireland Horticulture and Plant Breeding Station at Loughgall, in which he outlined the desired characteristics and evaluated strategies for new introductions. Simon Barnaby, Technical Manager with The Scotts Company, spoke on the science of turf nutrition and how organic fertilisers can be included as part of an overall management programme, while Dr Kate Entwistle, founder of The Turf Disease Centre consultancy, warned of potential threats to turf that grounds managers should be aware of, and how they can be prevented.

"We covered some very technical issues and we tried to strike a balance between science and practical applications," commented Ben Pettijean, Barenbrug UK'S Sales Manager.
This month we look back on one of BIGGA's most successful conferences - the National Education Conference which in 1992 was held at Cirencester Agricultural College.

The ambitious programme covered contributions from the Royal Liverpool's Derek Green, presented a paper on 'Dry Patch'. In Hoylake was certainly no recent back in 1920. Laurence Pithie spiced an altogether fascinating talk with his own highly professional slide presentation in talking of 'Golf Course Development'.