**Chairman's Column**

**Christmas Message**

With Christmas just around the corner my year as Chairman will soon be over. Predictably, it has flown by, so before I take my leave I thought I might share with you some of my reflections on BIGGA 2005. I thought I would start with the last verse from a popular seasonal song, which has always rung true for me.

'I could have been someone, well so could anyone
You took my dreams from me, when I first found you
I kept them with me babe, I put them with my own
Can't make it all alone, I built my dreams around you

The boys of the NYPD choir were singing 'Galway Bay'
And the bells are ringing out for Christmas Day'

(Kirsty MacColl and the Pogues: Fairytale of New York)

The lines, 'I could have been someone' and 'Can't make it all alone' seem relevant to our own search for advancement and our understanding that together we can achieve it. They hint at the reasons why we are all part of our Association. During my year as Chairman I have heard every conceivable point of view from 'The Association should become a union and strike in support of down-trodden greenkeepers everywhere' to 'The Association should not waste its time and money trying to support and educate those who refuse to help themselves. Put the subs up really high and let's have an Association which provides high quality assistance to those who will pay for it.'

I stress that these are the extremes, the dogmatic stances that the few. The vast majority of members I have had dealings with have had dealings with lie somewhere in the middle. They believe in the general principle that the Association should be accessible to all and provide the same level of benefits and opportunities for all. There are of course varying opinions on how best to achieve this.

I would just like to thank all those who have given their opinion either in person or through letters or the bulletin board. Your passion, whether in support of or against what we are trying to do, is much appreciated. Just knowing that our prosperity and strength lies in the close bonds we have developed with all of the above. Our futures are interdependent and neither we nor anyone else can afford to be insular and ignore the needs of others. I was fortunate enough to attend the Secretaries Association conference in Liverpool this year. I was struck by the similarity of their problems with ours such as the interference and lack of respect from some members, the low budgets and the resistance to change.

The recent initiatives for us both to share a platform on golf club wages and to draft a joint document on risk assessment are massive steps forward. We all go through ups and downs but as long as we can share our difficulties we can maintain our optimism and rise above the humdrum. It is the greatest folly of any Chairman to start giving advice, so here goes. I would advise that this Christmas you park yourself on your most comfortable sofa, get yourself a bottle of your favourite tipple and plug yourself into Kirsty MacColl and the Pogues most joyous celebration of the frailties of the human condition. It is our basic need for acceptance and the necessity of our dependence upon each other, which in the end unites us all.

'The boys of the NYPD choir were singing 'Galway Bay'
And the bells are ringing out for Christmas Day'
Happy Christmas, have a good one!

K. Daly

Chairman