An Incredible Year

So the end is near! For some of you the last 12 months may have seemed like a lifetime, for me it seems like only five minutes since I took over the Chairmanship from George Brown.

An incredible year, one which started at an extremely low ebb with the passing of Neil but then offered all that is best about our profession. Travel to new places, visits to some truly great golf courses and, most importantly, the friendship and companionship of some outstanding people.

Wherever you go in the world of golf there are individuals who give freely of their time, who share their knowledge and experiences in humble ways and are prepared to offer their support and guidance when necessary. They know who you are and to you all my thanks for everything you have given me.

It would be remiss of me at this time if I were not to mention a few special people who gave me the support, often when times were hard and my brain not particularly well engaged, when the desire was strong but the knowledge too weak, that helped me in a position that allowed me to accept the opportunity to become Chairman.

Len Sproston, my first Head Greenkeeper at Chester GC, who gave me the foundation on which to build; Bill Lawson, for his continuing encouragement to this day and his passion for BIGGA; Keith Holmes, Terry Adamson and all the ‘old boys’ from the EIGGA days and lastly but not least, my mum (who will be looking down on all this), who sadly didn’t live long enough to see her wastrel son do something with his life!

Enough then (at least for now) of the emotional stuff - what of the challenges facing BIGGA? As forecast some of our trade partners continue to threaten the future of BTME and therefore BIGGA itself, with their proposals for alterations of show scheduling or even worse withdrawal. This is the ‘new’ associations.

Where the issues, and to provide better value for the pounds your benefit. It’s traditional to thank ones family and employer at this time and for once I will be conformist. To my boss, Hamish Ferguson, and all at De Vere many thanks for your incredible patience and support. To my team simply I am very proud of you. I ask you simply this: who represents the Greenkeeper and his/her future best and has done so consistently for the last 18 years? I know the answer isn’t those who seek to form ‘new’ associations.

This apathy must somehow be defeated - and yes it’s a tough one, but only the members themselves can really make this happen. Sadly most members have never visited BIGGA HOUSE to see the work that goes on or the manifestation of the Association’s progress that is the building itself - personally I feel some of the Section, Regional and, if necessary, Association funds should be made available to correct this.

Thankfully it’s not all doom and gloom. The Association enjoys strong relationships with most allied associations around the world and while it frustrates me that some of our initiatives take longer than they should to impact on our members, I’m sure it won’t be too much longer before we are able to make real progress.

I’m comforted in that aspect that the incoming Chairman, Kerran Daly MG, is an honest man, given of great wisdom and with the welfare of our members very much at heart. I look forward in supporting him in the same quiet but strong way that George Brown has supported me. Good luck Kerran and don’t worry about buying an atlas, I have one you can use! You are all more fortunate than you know in that at BIGGA HOUSE you have a dedicated team who work tremendously hard for your benefit. I thank them all on your behalf for their efforts and sincerely hope that sometime real soon we stop treating them in the same terrible fashion that some (thankfully declining) golf clubs treat their greenkeepers. These people are professionals deserving of your respect, if they are treated as such they can and will perform all the better for it. Likewise you have a talented and committed Board who use their intelligence and informed debate to move your Association forward for your benefit.

I think that’s most people in the ‘clique’ thanked - damn big, all embracing clique eh! In the civilised world it’s known as an Association of like minded individuals. What a shame that the negatives at our periphery who put nothing in but expect everything out and who are thankfully in the minority, choose to use the word clique to define us. It’s traditional to thank ones family and employer at this time and for once I will be conformist.

To my boss, Hamish Ferguson, and all at De Vere many thanks for your incredible patience and support. To my team simply I am very proud of you. Lastly to Cameron and Claire, you know how I feel about the time away and now it’s your turn. For anyone out there with thoughts of serving the Association at Board level, do it. It’s extremely rewarding to be able to put something back in to our profession, but make sure you have the support of your family - you will need them more than you ever thought possible.

I suppose I should finish with ‘face the final curtain’! I hope not and in any case I would rather just say thank you for your support, and the privilege of being your Chairman, I did it my way (with guidance)!

Best Wishes for the New Year to you and your families.

Andy Campbell MG GCGB