As I write this, my final column, the weather in early December is still very mild and wet. This is the first year for some time that many of our inland courses in the southwest have had to close before Christmas due to waterlogging; it's marvellous how Mother Nature tries to put her house in order.

Happy New Year to one and all!

So what's Harrogate Week got to offer you?

Yet again many Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers are feeling the strain of their members' demands to play golf in any condition, and usually these members will be the first to point the finger in early spring if the course isn't like Augusta! By the time you read this the festive season will be well and truly over, I hope that all of you have had a stress free period with the course fully open and your members purring about their clubs the other half gave them for Christmas.

So January is here, still with those miserable days when we start and finish work in the dark, those spring days seem so far away. Harrogate for me is a refreshing break from those January blues when you can meet new and old offers educational opportunities to absolutely everybody should take advantage of. So January is here, still with those miserable days when we start and finish work in the dark, those spring days seem so far away. Harrogate for me is a refreshing break from those January blues when you can meet new and old colleagues who are in the same boat as you. Sometimes it's no use talking about your problems will lift the stress from your shoulders; quite often someone has been through the same problem as you and can advise on the best way through it.

Time to vote with your feet

Happy New Year to one and all!

As I write this, my final column, the weather in early December is still very mild and wet. This is the first year for some time that many of our inland courses in the southwest have had to close before Christmas due to waterlogging; it's marvellous how Mother Nature tries to put her house in order.

Yet again many Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers are feeling the strain of their members' demands to play golf in any condition, and usually these members will be the first to point the finger in early spring if the course isn't like Augusta! By the time you read this the festive season will be well and truly over, I hope that all of you have had a stress free period with the course fully open and your members purring about their clubs the other half gave them for Christmas.

So January is here, still with those miserable days when we start and finish work in the dark, those spring days seem so far away. Harrogate for me is a refreshing break from those January blues when you can meet new and old colleagues who are in the same boat as you. Sometimes it's no use talking about your problems will lift the stress from your shoulders; quite often someone has been through the same problem as you and can advise on the best way through it.

So what's Harrogate Week got to offer you?

The Continue to Learn programme at Harrogate Week offers educational opportunities to absolutely everybody within the turf care industry. From the Course Manager to the trainee greenkeeper there will be something for you and many of the seminars are free!

We also have plenty of educational opportunities for Groundsmen, Golf Club officials and club owners, Secretaries/Managers and Professionals, so if you are connected to turf you should be there.

Over the course of the five days there will be five two-day workshops; 11 one-day workshops and six half-day workshops for Greenkeepers and Groundsmen. In conjunction with BIGGA, the English Golf Union and the Association of Golf Club Secretaries, there will be two half day workshops and six seminars and for the first time the Professional Golfers Association will be holding its three day UK Coach Certificate course during the week. The R&A is also holding a one-day workshop on Sustainable Golf, which is already sold out.

Harrogate Week exhibition is now completely full and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our exhibitors for once again showing their support to our industry and continuing to make Harrogate week the largest indoor trade show for our industry outside the United States. The talking has now stopped and it's time for one and all to support your own trade show, so lads and lasses it's time to vote with your feet and make this the event no one can afford to miss.

Recently I was invited to the South Wales Christmas event held at Pyle & Kenfig GC. After working that morning I rushed home at lunchtime and had a quick clean up before heading off to arrive for their Christmas dinner. As I expected Peter Lacey, the Section Secretary, ran the day in superb fashion. Peter is a true supporter of our Association and always asks questions about the Association he cares passionately about, through the Section and Regional boards. Peter is without doubt a Champion of BIGGA, the evening gave me a chance to meet many members for the first time, I did get slightly depressed when two gentleman informed me that their course maintenance budget was just 13k a year! Local involvement at Section level can help if only to give support and encouragement.

Well my year as Chairman is nearly over now, I would like to thank everyone I have met throughout the year for the hospitality shown to me. It's been an honour to represent you, the members, at events and meetings throughout the year. I believe as an Association we have continued to look to the future which is a credit to the democratic system we have in place, we as an Association must continue to look forward as we owe it to the membership not to stand still and be left behind.

At the AGM I will pass the stewardship of our Association over to Billy McMillan whom I know will be a great ambassador for our Association.

Champion of BIGGA

My final champion of BIGGA is all the National Board members who give up their own time to benefit each and every member. Many of the board will travel six hours to attend meetings at Aldwark which is then followed by sub committee meetings from 1pm to 5pm followed by the full board meeting the following day at 8.30am, running to about 1pm before making that long journey home. I would like to thank each and every board member for their professional approach throughout the year and the due democratic process.

Richard Whyman
Chairman