In early July the telephone system at BIGGA House will be updated to include an automated answering service together with a host of other features that are now possible, thanks to the wonders of modern science. Like them or hate them such systems have become a part of every day life and for the Association it presents the opportunity to make some substantial savings. Callers will be offered a short menu of options, one of which will be to speak to an operator for help. The financial gain comes as a result of the changes in jobs for Rachael and Brad who were originally employed for reception. Their original posts become redundant and their non-telephone duties will be absorbed elsewhere in the office. Brad has accepted the position of Memberships Services Assistant and Rachael will become Sami’s assistant in the Education Department, both of these are replacement jobs and not new ones.

There seems to be a great deal of interest, debate and speculation regarding BIGGA’s talks with the IGL. I can only repeat my earlier comments, stressing that it is not a ‘done deal’ and that any firm proposals will have to be approved by the members of both organisations. How this will take place, if we get that far, has yet to be determined. One solution, and arguably the fairest, may be by an independently controlled postal ballot. We are a long way off that stage and I cannot hold out that some of the Chinese whispers are being blown up out of all proportion. If any member wishes more information or clarification on a matter then I suggest that they contact me direct by telephone, letter, email or in person.

I often see it stated that BIGGA is at a crossroads. Quite frankly I do not think so. As you have already seen, the IGL was only ever a mechanism for bringing the two parties together and I cannot see it as being either a positive or negative factor for BIGGA. I do see it as a change. The resulting decisions shape our life and how we look at a path for growth. It always requires that we make choices - to change. The IGL provides an opportunity for us to map out our course, to change. That’s what it’s all about after all.

As Chairman of the Central Section I have to say that the first golf tournament of 2007 was a great success, having 60 members of the Section playing Fairumere Golf Club on a perfect sunny day says it all. On driving up to the course you are presented with a fantastic view of the course and clubhouse. My first impressions then were that we were in for a great day. I was not disappointed.

The hospitality we received from the Golf Club was first class, and many thanks go to Secretary/Manager, Charles Phillip, for taking such good care of us and for presenting the prizes at the end of the day. His warm words of appreciation to the greenkeeping profession were very encouraging. The food and the service from the staff were all first class, and the clubhouse had a fantastic atmosphere.

Congratulations to Gary Nicol, the Course Manager, and his staff for presenting a great challenge for us on a fantastic course with some tricky pin positions. It was clear to all why it deserved to be chosen for the upcoming Open Qualifier. Many thanks Gary and best of luck when it comes.

Thanks also go to the BIGGA National Chairman, Billy McMillan, and the Scottish Chairman, Stuart Greenwood, for taking the time to attend our Section outing, and to Billy for his kind words of support at the prize presentation. Having the opportunity to play with them both, and Gary, on the day was very enjoyable. With Gary onside I was looking forward to some local knowledge to help us all round. I think my score tells you how well Gary knows his course. I enjoyed your company and thanks for a great day. Well played all the winners on the day with some really good scores, on such a challenging test of control. To see the winners and scores for the day and photos visit our website (see end of notes).

Billy caddied for Andy Molton for the last two holes as a reward for finding his passport, which he had dropped on the 4th hole. Unfortunately Andy couldn’t play as well as Billy could caddie. Billy’s patience with Andy’s wayward game was admirable. Last I heard Andy was rethinking his grape/groom planting policy at Elmwood, and asking his team to hand in any lost balls they find.

Note to Billy: You don’t need a passport to get into Scotland (Not yet anyway), but rest assured you will always be very welcome anytime.

The Patrons play a big part in supporting us locally, and I assure you that your commitment to the Section is very much appreciated and commented on among the members. A huge thank you to all our members who made it on the day. It’s you who make this Section the success it is, and it was great to see so many new faces along with the old ones. I’ll let you decide which you think you are. The Section is growing all the time and more events will be organised to suit the needs of the members.

Last, but not least, I’d like to thank the rest of the committee. I know they don’t do it for the thanks; they do it because they enjoy being part of BIGGA, and the benefits of associating with their fellow greenkeepers. That’s what it’s all about after all.

Oh I have to tell you that, if any member is going to mainland Europe this year, contact Paul at Dowfield he has some Euros ‘that he has been trying to get rid of. I think he forgot he was dealing with a Fitter when he tried to slip a 5 Euro note into the raffle instead of a £5. Paul, you need a long spoon to sup with a Fitter.

I’m looking forward to the Scottish Tournament which is being played over the border on the superb links course at Gwawick on June 23. Hope as many of you as possible can make it. I look forward to the same support this autumn when we make the trip to The Dukes - another fantastic venue.

Any news, queries or info contact us and we’ll pass it on.

www.bigga@service.uk.com 01334 658914

Chairman: Derek Scott
Secretary: Andy Molton

SCOTLAND – EAST

As I write this report in early June, the dry weather of April and early May has given way to the more typical Scottish climate at this time of year - sunshine and showers!

I commence this month’s news with an update on Graeme Wood who, as most of you know, is in the Strive Recovery Unit at the Royal Victorian Hospital in Edinburgh. I have been advised by Stuart Greenwood that Graeme is making slow but steady progress and is starting to put back on some of the weight he lost - initially, aided by some chocolate bars brought in by the aforementioned Mr Greenwood!

I have a few dates for your diaries which have been passed on to me by your Secretary, Stevie Dixon. The Willie Woods Tournament will be held this year at the spectacular moorland setting of West Linton GC on August 23. The Autumn Outing will be held at Ratho Park this year on September 18, which will give everybody an opportunity to see the environmental improvement works carried out by Tom Murray and his team. I have been assured that entry forms for both events will be going their way to you shortly.

This year’s annual Dinner Dance will once again be held at the Kilspindie Hotel in Alderney on Saturday, December 8. To reserve accommodation and take your tickets, please contact Stevie Dixon in the first instance on: 031 443 0235.

On the educational front, the committee have asked me to advise that they are looking to run ODP Courses (Continuous Personal Development) at Outrider College on Management topics. These are credited units which would count towards gaining a Level 4 Certificate. The courses are due to start on September 7, 2007. For further information and/or, to book your place, please contact Stevie Dixon or any committee member as soon as possible. NB - A minimum number of 10 are required to make these courses possible.

On a sad note, I have to advise you that George Thompson’s father passed away at the end of May, he was 95. Like his son today, John Robert Thompson, to give him his full title, was a dedicated greenkeeper working as Head Man at Goswick from 1948 until his retirement in 1977. On his retirement he passed the reins to his son who remains there to this day. Our deepest sympathies are extended to George and his family at this time.

On Sunday, May 6, close friends and BIGGA Members, Andy Forrest and Chris Yeaman, took part in the BUPA 10km Great Run in Edinburgh to raise money for the Chris Yeaman Jr Charity Day which is held annually at West Linton GC. They were joined on the day by Andy’s wife, Kirsty, and the trio completed the run in a commendable time of 1hr 8min.

Not to be outdone, yours truly took part in the MacMillan Corbett Challenge on Saturday, May 26th with Rob and a group of friends, (A Corbett is a peak more than 2000’ above sea level but less than 3000’). We started the walk at Grey Man’s Tai car park with our destination being the White Comb which is high above Loch Skene in Dumfries and Galloway. In all, we raised over £1000 for MacMillan Cancer Research.

Finally, I am sure John Philip and his team will have Carnoustie in excellent condition for the Open Championship this July.

Mike Dooner

SCOTLAND – NORTH

I am a bit late with this piece of information but Colin Russell, who was Head Greenkeeper at Turiff GC, left in June 2006 to go to Muckhart GC, near Glenrothes. Jim Smart, who was Deputy at the time, was given the job on a temporary basis until September 1, 2006 when he became Head Greenkeeper. He has done some sterling work since then on the golf course, which has been noticed by the members and they appreciate his hard work and application to the job overall. Good luck with your new position Jim and sorry for the delay in letting people know.

The Spring Outing took place at Oldmeldrum GC on May 17. Most importantly well done to Robert D O Donnell and his staff for the excellent condition of the golf course on the day. It’s never easy when a bunch of greenkeepers turn up for the day, but you had nothing to worry about Robert the course was great.

The one noticeable issue from the outing was the lack of numbers that came along. More than half the field was made up of committee or trade members, which is very disappointing for the host club and also the committee. Hopefully the members will not be put off by the lack of numbers and are concerned that the drop in interest in the golf outings is now...