work – I’d sneaked into the local pub on the way home and some-
one bellowed “Oi, I want a word with you” – (Bob the Barman) sound-
ing unusually belligerent.
“I want to make a complaint – I was playing round the Common
yesterday, and your blokes were there shovelling cow pats off the
fairway. I got into that nasty little quarry on the 10th and had
four or five shots trying to get
out (not much of a golfer, Bob
the barman) when one of your
blokes handed me this horrible old shovel with cow muck drip-
ing off it and said “Ere, ‘ave a
golf, decided to risk it and play
and missing their afternoon’s
between near-certain death,
of those faced with a choice
in. Yep, you’ve guessed it – most
situation and offering lifts back
around advising players of the
to clear the course. We toured
our way so we’d be well advised
cals had been released into the
cloud of potentially toxic chemi-
later game. One of them was
bragging loudly about encoun-
tering an adder on one of the
fairways and actually chopping
its head off with his sand iron.
Apparently there was a little old
guy listening at the other end of
the bar, and he asked how long
this particular snake had been.
“Well over two foot-six, grandad”
came the smug reply, “or at least
it was until it met me - har har”
“Do you realise,” continued the
gener, “if that adder really
was two foot six inches long, it
was well over 80 years old, and
you’ve just killed it with a golf
club for no good reason at all”.
There was complete silence -
the bravado just melted away,
and the golfer was apparently
inconsolable.

In 2007 there was a nasty
explosion at one of the chemical
works at Avonmouth (30miles
to the south). The police rang at
lunchtime to inform us that a
cloud of potentially toxic chemi-
cals had been released into the
atmosphere, and was heading our
way so we’d be well advised
to clear the course. We toured
around advising players of the
situation and offering lifts back
in. Yep, you’ve guessed it – most
of those faced with a choice
between near-certain death,
and missing their afternoon’s
go1f, decided to risk it and play
on. One player however, sniffed
the air and said – “Yes – I thought
there was a funny smell – quick,
take me in”. We did so, but I
didn’t have the heart to tell him
that he what he could actually
smell was the TX10 fertiliser
we’d put on the greens the day
before! I also had a nasty experience
on the course. Standing by our
lake in a quiet moment I noticed
a snow-white swan soaring
through the air to make a magni-
ficent landing on the water.
I was just thinking “wow” – when
it must have sensed me (unfortu-
ately not a nice purr-purr ringtone,
but an annoying needle-needle-
beep). This enraged the swan,
which emerged from the lake,
wings beating and hissing
menacingly towards me. I’m
now in full retreat, and for some
reason, still trying to take the
call. When I finally got the phone
to my ear, I heard the other end
realized there was an even bigger
menace on the line – Angela
- from Alpha (name changed)
Paints. I could just make out
disjointed phrases like “order six
cases before Xmas” and “15%
discount”. “I’m terribly sorry”
I blurted, “but I’m out on the
course, and I’m having a little
difficulty with a swan”. “Oh
dear” muttered Angela – obvi-
ously miffed that I’d deflected
her sales patter – “a swan – what
is it?” “Well”, I panted – “ it’s
a stonking great white thing with
a wing at each corner, and at
the moment it’s running across
the grass towards me”. “My God”
said Angela, (now sounding
quite concerned) – “You want
to watch out for these – they’re
strong enough to break your
arm”. “I couldn’t care less about
my arm” I bellowed”, it’s certain
other parts of my anatomy I’m
more worried about” – and then
she hung up. Women!
Okay – enough. The Section
held its 2009 Autumn Tourna-
ment and Annual General Meet-
ing at Saltford Golf Club in
early October. Course Man-
ger Darren Moxham, Lucy
Sellick and Matt Devlin were the
undoubted stars of the day – the
course was in fantastic condi-
tion with scarcely a blade of
glass out of place, and yet due to
illness, these are the only three
greenkeepers currently avail-
able to work on it. They are my
heroes, and definitely win this
year’s prize for Course Presenta-
tion. Thanks very much guys
we really appreciated it. The
competition results were as fol-
loows - 1. Matt Worster, Minchin-
hampton, 42pts; 2. Simon Kew,
Shirehampton, 40pts; 3. Darren
Moxham, Saltford, 39pts.
The AGM itself was held

Firstly, I would like to welcome Jill to the Team
at Headquarters, she joins the Sales Department
following the departure of Sharon in July.
Her arrival is very timely with work on Harrogate Week start-
ing to pick up pace. The exhibition is filling up nicely and as with
everything it could be a lot better, but I do feel that in the present
climate it could also have been a lot worse.
Learning and Development is a major part of what BIGGA is
about and watch out elsewhere in this edition of Greenkeeper
International for details of the show seminars. A quick reminder
that full information on these, and all aspects of Harrogate Week
including exhibitors, can be found on www.harrogateweek.org,
which can also be accessed through a link on the home page
of the BIGGA website.
Many of you will be aware that the Association has been
approached by Pitchcare with a view to working together on
the development of a new trade show that would embrace all of
sports turf and sports facility maintenance and management.
Based on surveys that they have carried out, they believe that
this is what the industry would support and their suggestion
is that we consider a change of venue from Harrogate - their
preferred option being the NEC, in Birmingham.
This proposal was considered by the BIGGA Board at its
meeting in October and, for the avoidance of any continued
speculation, I wish it to be made clear that at this moment in
time the Board do not wish to pursue the matter any further.
The Association is committed to building on the existing suc-
cess of Harrogate and while the current two show position
(Harrogate and SALTEX) may not be ideal for some companies,
it never-the-less provides a workable compromise.
While on the subject of rumours I would also like to clarify
the position between BIGGA and the IoG. Merger talks may
have broken down at the end of 2007 but the two organisations
are not at odds with each other. BIGGA’s move earlier this
year to allow sports turf groundsmen to join as Full Members
was not an act of confrontation merely a natural extension of
business following the recognition of the synergy between
greenkeeper and groundsmen. I am in communication with
Geoff Webb, CEO of the IoG, and we are looking at what, if any,
common issues can be addressed by working together. This is
no different to the approach that I am taking with other CEO’s.
Within the sports industry there is a great deal of Best Prac-
tice that can be shared and it’s long overdue that we all sit down
and helped each other!
There is a meeting of Section Secretaries planned to take
place at the end of November at Headquarters and this is an
opportunity for members to have their views brought to
the attention of the Staff. Market research and feedback
is important and over the coming weeks we will be sending out
surveys to certain groups of the membership. Please take time
to respond and thereby help us to improve the value of being a
member.

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